REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION

REVIEW OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOL CURRICULUM

CORRECTED

At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney on Monday 30 November 2020

The Committee met at 9:30.

PRESENT

The Hon. Mark Latham (Chair)

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam
The Hon. Wes Fang
The Hon. Scott Farlow
The Hon. Courtney Houssos
Mr David Shoebridge

PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. WES FANG: Good morning and welcome to the second round of hearings for the Portfolio Committee No. 3—Education inquiry into the review of the New South Wales school curriculum, which was led by Professor Geoff Masters. The Chair, the Hon. Mark Latham, is currently tied up with another activity. I will be acting as Chair until he returns. This review will examine the findings and recommendations of the review and the New South Wales Government's response, which were both released earlier this year. Before I commence, I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I thank them for their custodianship of the land, and for looking after the land that this Parliament has sat of for many years. Today we will be hearing from a number of stakeholders, including from the independent and Catholic school education system; teachers associations; the Parliamentary Education and Engagement team; a policy think tank; Dr Ben Jensen, an education expert; and Professor Masters, who led the review. While we have many witnesses appearing in person, some will be appearing via videoconference. I thank everyone making the time to give evidence to this important inquiry.

Before we commence I will make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing. Today's hearing 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. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, I remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. While parliamentary privilege applies to evidence given today, it does not apply to what witnesses might say outside of their evidence at the hearing. Therefore, I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments they may make to the media or to others after they complete their evidence. Committee hearings are not intended to provide a forum for people to make adverse reflections about others under the protection of parliamentary privilege. It is important that witnesses focus on the issues raised by the inquiry's terms of reference and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily.

All witnesses have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the Legislative Council in 2018. There may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time. Written answers to questions taken on notice must be returned within 21 days. If witnesses wish to hand up documents, they should do so via the Committee staff. To aid the audibility of the hearing, I remind Committee members and witnesses to speak into the microphones. As we have a number of witnesses appearing via videoconference, it may be helpful to identify who a question is directed to and who is speaking. For those with hearing difficulties, the room is fitted with induction loops compatible with hearing aid systems that have telecoil receivers. Also, several seats have been reserved near the loudspeakers. I ask that everyone please set their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing. I ask those participating by videoconference to mute their microphones when they are not speaking. I welcome our first witness.

JENNY ALLUM, Chair, Curriculum Review Working Group, Association of Independent Schools of NSW, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

STEPHEN KINSELLA, Executive Director of the Anglican Education Commission, sworn and examined

JOHN COLLIER, Chair of the Anglican Education Commission and Headmaster of St Andrew's Cathedral School, sworn and examined

The Hon. WES FANG: Would anyone like to start by making a short opening statement?

Mr KINSELLA: My name is Stephen Kinsella from the Anglican Education Commission. I have 43 years of experience as an educator in government and independent schools in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, and with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. I have experience as an examiner with the New South Wales HSC, Northern Territory Certificate of education and the International Baccalaureate Diploma**.** I have 17 years of experience as a headmaster, five at Kormilda College in Darwin and 12 at The Illawarra Grammar School in Wollongong.

My colleague Dr John Collier has 48 years of experience as an educator in schools. He is the chairman of the Anglican Education Commission. He has told you that he is the headmaster of St Andrews Cathedral School and Gawura school. He has 30 years of experience as a principal of four schools in both government and independent schools, and wide experience with the New South Wales curriculum and the programs of the International Baccalaureate organisation [IBO]. Together we have 91 years of experience in education, 47 years as headmasters and/or principals. The Anglican Education Commission has 40 Anglican schools under its umbrella with enrolments exceeding 40,000 students each day. The key points in our submission started with the statement:

> The reforms embedded in the Review have the potential to bring learning in NSW schools into the 21st Century, improve student learning outcomes and the overall state of student wellbeing. These outcomes will not be achieved without sufficient enabling resources and the united support of community leaders.

We made seven specific recommendations.

Ms ALLUM: I am speaking on behalf of the Association of Independent Schools, an association educating over 200,000 students or 17 per cent of the State's students. The breadth of the independent sector is sometimes or often misunderstood. I would refer the Committee to the range of schools which are members of the Association of Independent Schools that is in the submission that has been made to you. I have been 25 years as a principal at SCEGGS; I have spent over 40 years as an educator. I will just make a few points. The independent sector thinks that the Masters' review is an excellent review—well researched, well written, outstanding content and we support all of the recommendations.

There are a few recommendations which we would say needed to be more fully explored before they came with our full support, but as a starting point we thought they were all excellent. We had told him to be bold but there needed to be brave changes to curriculum in order to benefit all of the students in New South Wales. I believe that he has done that. His review is well needed and well overdue. I am sorry about the shortened time frame which the Government has put to the NSW Education Standards Authority. It is a shorter time frame than what was envisaged by Masters. The implementation of the recommendations of the Masters review should be systematic, staged and well resourced. New South Wales has a history of consultation [inaudible] teachers and make sure that things are going in a staged and considered fashion. We would expect that this would happen with the curriculum review too.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Thank you to all the participants today. I want to start by making the observation that the Government has suggested that the curriculum review is the core of its solution to declining results at an international and domestic level. I want to posit to the panellists today the question of whether the core of the declining results is this notion around crowded curriculum. Is that the reason why results are declining on international and domestic measures or is there something more complex in terms of explaining the decline in results? I might just open that up to the panel.

Dr COLLIER: Might I begin with that, please? The Anglican Education Commission, Stephen Kinsella and I personally support the Masters review. It is an excellent review and I would like to affirm it to you. One point that the Masters review makes, which I think is relevant to your question at this stage, is that curriculum needs to be able to pursue depth and at the moment it pursues breadth in that there are so many outcomes to achieve. There has been some narrative that we might improve results internationally if we get back to basics. Masters is asserting the exact opposite of that. Where Australia is caught out in results such as the Program for International Student Assessment [PISA] is our inability in our current curriculum to pursue depth. So we need

the opportunity to go into that depth and the only way that can be done is to abbreviate the amount of content that needs to be covered. We cannot have both breadth and depth simultaneously in the same block of time.

I would in fact like to challenge in any case the notion that education is in some kind of downward spiral. I do not believe that the quality of education in this State can be summed up simply by PISA results, which are fairly light, brief samples of some year 9 students every few years. I want to put it to you that education is a lot richer and a lot more important than simple performance in tests. You may wish to pursue this further but I also want to suggest to you that the main issues with an alleged a decline in Australia vis-à-vis other jurisdictions are cultural, not educational.

Ms ALLUM: I agree with Dr Collier in that I am not certain about the decline in standards. Certainly if you look at HSC results over a long period of time through the standards referencing model, standards are increasing so I do think that there is a question over to what extent are results declining. With respect to the answer to your question about whether the reduction in content is the sole cause. I do not think in education there is much that is caused it just by one single factor. I think it is an important factor but I think there are lots of other factors which interact to ensure that I think there needs to be some changes to curriculum.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Could you perhaps elaborate on that just in terms of the other factors?

Ms ALLUM: Quality of teaching, compliance constraints that continue to be imposed on schools. I am sure that there would be other things that I could think of too.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I might ask you, Ms Allum, about a comment you made regarding the implementation time frame. There is a submission from the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta suggesting the exact opposite. They are saying that the Government is going to slow and that it should actually be implemented quicker. Can you just elaborate further on why you think an extended time frame is required?

Ms ALLUM: I am sorry, I have not seen the Catholic Parramatta Diocese submission. Geoff Masters recommended a time frame of 10 years. There are 191 syllabuses in New South Wales. You cannot expect schools or the NSW Education Standards Authority at [NESA] develop those, that number of do syllabuses, in under four years and you certainly cannot expect teachers and schools to adopt that number right away. If you think about primary schools, for example, there are at least six syllabuses. If you are going to impose six new syllabuses across all of the P learning areas in, say, two years, teachers will just flounder.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I turn now to—

Mr KINSELLA: I am sorry, can I make a comment?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Yes.

Mr KINSELLA: I do not think you should underestimate the complexity of what is happening here.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Yes.

Mr KINSELLA: In the context of enormous paradigms shifts—some say the most significant since the printing press with the imposition of the digital age on us and the complexity of that—the cultural change is a context that also needs to be considered. Our world is changing significantly. The Masters review picks that up. We are in a really complex situation and you will have read from our submission that there needs to be a united community position on this with all the stakeholders saying, "We're going to go to something different and we're going to put the resources and the time in it necessary to achieve a great outcome." Shortening the time period, not putting in the resources and being swayed by particular interests by some of the players instead of focusing on what we want—we want to take a great curriculum and make it even better—unless that is the focus there is a great risk that we will end up with same as, same as, with a new label.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr Kinsella, could I just jump in? My apologies. Just on that comment you mentioned the influence of some of the players. Could you expand on that just a little bit more? I ask that in the context of, in effect, you would be one of the players, no? You and the Anglican system.

Mr KINSELLA: If I can just—I am just trying to get my thoughts together there.

The Hon. WES FANG: I appreciate that. I guess I am just thinking about the elucidation on that point because with all change of this nature, stakeholders obviously will be looking to input their thoughts and desires into the process. I am just wondering what your thoughts are on that and how that differs from, say, your position.

Mr KINSELLA: Well, I think the great thing about our society is that we have all sorts of different positions and perspectives. Through processes like this we can share those and bring a commonality of opinion, of ideas, together to move forward. That requires a commitment by all the players. It is wrong, I think, to pick out one group. I mean, families have an interest, the schools have an interest, politicians have an interest, businesses

have an interest, but there is a higher interest and that is we want an education system that positions our students well for the twenty-first century and twenty-first century learning. We hold the position among Anglican schools that is not part of that greater sharing of ideas and coming together and saying, "We want to do this better and we're all going to do what is necessary to make it happen", then we are going to have something that is quite fragmented and not achieve the outcome.

There are three heads here. We have seen changes to curriculum and when it is not given the time and the resources necessary to achieve the outcome, then we end up with a change of label and what we end up with is teachers reshaping what they are doing in the classroom and not significant change that is systemic. We will end up with something cosmetic.

Dr COLLIER: May I add some elucidation? There is the danger with the Masters review that it will go through a great deal of stakeholder consultation which, in effect, dilutes the impact of the review. I think we have seen this with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] curriculum where multiple stakeholder groups assert their own propositions as to what must be retained. Usually the outcome of that is a somewhat lowest common denominator, where instead of diminishing the content we maintain a very wide sweep of content to satisfy all stakeholder groups, and therefore we actually end up in a position that is the opposite of what Masters has argued, which is the need for capacity to go deep in some areas. So I would argue that we need to be careful of that diminution, and that it would be good for NESA to maintain what is allowed during the COVID-19 season, and that is for some outcomes to be optional, and to identify those syllabus outcomes which are critical, because that is one way of reducing mandatory curriculum coverage.

The Hon. WES FANG: I should probably just declare before we continue: My children are in the independent system. In Wagga Wagga we have an Anglican school, and they are all likely to go to that school. So I wanted that declared on the record before we continued on.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Just touching on the comments just made about the possibility that the proposition from Masters would be whittled down. One of the core elements of the Masters proposition is this move to untimed syllabuses. We have heard from the representatives of NESA that there is some uncertainty about whether that element of the proposal will even be supported by the Government in implementation, and I wanted to get your thoughts on the practicality of the untimed syllabuses and whether you think that is an essential component for the overall change to the syllabus that is being proposed by Masters. That is to all of the panellists.

Mr KINSELLA: The notion that all children learn at the same rate and in the same way is absurd, but that is the system we have developed since the industrial revolution. So this is why I am making the point that we have to properly resource this. Our schools are built on the assumption that—with a very tiny number of exceptions—every student will graduate from one year group to the next year group at the end of January each year. And if we want our students to have a wonderful experience in their learning and to actually fulfil their potential in learning then we need to, in a holistic way, address that issue. If our schools assume everyone moves at the same time then we are creating winners and losers, and we have got the whole set of infrastructure based on that notion.

If we are going to say students need to learn at the pace that is appropriate for them—be it quicker or slower—then we have to rethink how our schools are built, we have to rethink how our timetables are constructed, we need to rethink how our teachers are upskilled in this new world and we need to understand that there will be a lot of work to be done with, for example, families. Families might say. "That is a great idea but I don't want my child to be held back or advanced." It is not just one concept, there is a whole lot of things that need to be done around it to achieve the outcome. That is why I am saying it needs a unified approach across all stakeholders in education to actually get that outcome.

Ms ALLUM: I do not think we in the independent sector were worried about untimed syllabuses. We saw it as an opportunity to explore a whole range of different models, and different schools could do different things. Indeed, I worked at the precursor to NESA, the Board of Studies, many years ago now, and the whole idea of stage one, stage two, stage three, stage four, stage five, stage six syllabuses is to take it away from year groups. We have moved back to year groups mainly because of the compliance requirements on schools not to start syllabuses and not to end syllabuses but for certain times and to have a certain number of hours being taught, and so on.

The idea that you might at schools—first of all, NESA in the design of the new curriculum and the idea of being on track to achieve a certain standard at the end of, say, year 10 or the compulsory years of schooling, what that model might look like is something which would take time to develop. I hear that you are speaking to Ben Jensen today. I have seen the Learning First report, and I know that their view is that in a short time frame the biggest, I would say, bang for your buck is to reduce content rather than try to think about untimed syllabuses.

I think that is not a bad way to go, if everything has to be finished in four years rather than the 10 that was being outlined by Geoff Masters.

Dr COLLIER: I believe the idea of untimed syllabuses is educationally excellent but will impose considerable difficulties for schools organisationally and structurally. So it will need a good deal of thinking if we are to move in that direction, and therefore a certain time frame to undertake that thinking. I do want to endorse Ms Allum's comments.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In terms of the untimed syllabus—that is a shorthand for I think recommendation 3:

> Make new syllabuses untimed, with students progressing to the next syllabus once they have mastered the prior syllabus. Students who require more time should have it; students ready to advance should be able to do so

We asked NESA about what their planning was for that and they said it had not been adopted yet, that they had not signed onto it, it was not an official part of policy. Have you had any feedback like that from the State Government or from NESA?

Dr COLLIER: In short, no. We are waiting for the promulgation and adoption of various Masters review findings.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I was surprised at their answer, I will be quite frank, and it seemed to be a shorthand way of dealing with some of the problems that arise with untimed syllabuses. I think, Mr Collier, you were touching upon some of that. I put the fairly obvious proposition—and it is something parents ask me about the untimed syllabus—what if a student is going from year 10 to year 11 into year 12, and they are progressing at their own pace, and they are halfway through the curriculum when they get to year 12, what do we do? Do you know?

Dr COLLIER: What you are talking about, Mr Shoebridge, is what we call acceleration in schools, where we endeavour to accelerate students either for a whole grade skip or more, or accelerate them in particular subjects. To be anecdotal, we have just graduated a child at St Andrew's Cathedral School who is a triple accelerant. That is to say he is 15 years of age, he completed half his Higher School Certificate last year and the other half this year. What that has required is one of two methodologies. Firstly, the teacher in his lock step class needs to be able to advance him—that is to teach him, in a sense, separately in a more advanced manner—or this particular child needs to go to the higher subject in a more advanced year. That becomes structurally very difficult because it assumes that, let us say, mathematics is on in, let us say, year 12 at the same time as year 10, which in itself would be unlikely. So there are structural difficulties and schools come up with various solutions, the worst of which is to ignore the needs of the child, and therefore schools tend to endeavour to adopt one of the other regimes that I have described.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Dr Collier, I probably did not express myself well, and I might throw it to the whole panel. I was not actually talking about accelerated learning. And in fact, I think we have all seen that—kids moving forward. In our own personal experiences we have seen that happening, and it creates some difficulties. I was talking about something quite different: I was talking about a student who is progressing well at their own pace, but by the age of 17 they are in year 12 and they are halfway through the maths syllabus. What do we do? It is quite a different thing to the acceleration. I understand how acceleration works. Ms Allum?

Mr KINSELLA: Somebody at the school should have done something long before that, because if you are talking about, say, 11 years of compulsory schooling and they are halfway through—I understand you to be saying that they are at about a year 6 level. How they got to be in year 12 and at a year 6 level is beyond me. Something should have been done much earlier. That is what Masters is saying: that you could establish or write attainment levels so that you could see from the very beginning when someone was not on track to be able to achieve the standard that would be required at the end of the compulsory years of schooling.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That was partially the answer we got from NESA. It must be my inability to understand. If you start from my assumption that kids learn at different paces—do we all agree that is an assumption?

The Hon. WES FANG: Is it an assumption?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is grounded in educational experience. Kids learn at different paces, right?

Dr COLLIER: It is a reality.

Ms ALLUM: It is true. I do not know what the word "assumption" means. It is a truthful statement.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Then part of the recognition is that some kids will learn slower and it will take longer to bed down the basics and fundamentals. The idea that, somehow, by doing this untimed syllabus everybody is going to be super-observed and brought up to speed and everybody at year 12 is going to be at that graduation point does not seem, to me, to reflect that basic truth that some kids will learn slower. Maybe it is all just going to be magically worked out and everybody will graduate at year 12 with untimed syllabuses, but those two thoughts seem to me to be counterfactual.

Ms ALLUM: My view is that when you take individual recommendations of the Masters review and single that one thing out, you miss the whole complexity of what he is talking about. So, yes, I agree with you. But if you do a whole range of the other things—you reduce the amount of content in syllabuses so that teachers can spend more time on the main ideas of the syllabus, and you identify as early as possible who is not on track to obtain the required standard—then you will have a package which allows a much greater understanding of the progression of students than the scenario you are presenting.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There seem to be so many assumptions of success in that: the hyper-observed nature of students, looking at their individual achievements, throwing the resources in. There seems to be a lot of hope in that analysis. I come back to the point that if you are assuming that some kids will learn more slowly and some kids will learn more quickly, it will not just be what Dr Collier said about some kids graduating when they are 12 or 13 or 14. There will be some kids who are not ready to graduate when they are 17. I still do not have an answer.

Mr KINSELLA: Perhaps counterbalancing what you are saying would be to look at what the current system is, and that is you progress whether you are ready or not. By the time you get to year 12, you could have had any number of years of failure to master, and therefore failure being reinforced upon failure.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is not an argument for the status quo.

Mr KINSELLA: Is it better to get through to year 12 and not understand a word of it, or is it better to take a slower pace and actually master up until the level that you are at at graduation? Why is graduation at age 17 or 18? There are all sorts of questions to be worked through, and rushing through curriculum change is not going to address that.

Dr COLLIER: I want to confirm the assumption that Mr Shoebridge is making, which is we certainly have an issue there with the different progression rates of children, and it needs to be addressed. Professor John Hattie has published extensive research which shows that in any class, by high school there may be a gap of six years of learning between those who are most advanced and those who are least advanced. This is an issue in terms of special education or remediation. The jurisdictions which seem to deal with this best are those that are often looked to for PISA success, such as Finland and Estonia. What they have managed is to identify such children very early and target significant resources in order to remediate the issues before they become entrenched. The problem with that, course, is we are talking more resources in education. We are talking more salaries. But that is what those jurisdictions have managed to do and it is highly likely, I would imagine, that that has played into the PISA results of some of those jurisdictions.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you very much for making yourselves available both here and on Webex. Dr Collier, one of your earlier comments—and if I am incorrect, please correct me on it—said that when it came to the Masters review, it was not a return to basics. Is that correct in terms of what you are saying?

Dr COLLIER: Yes, indeed. Masters is arguing for greater depth at the cost of less breadth.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: One of the items in terms of the curriculum review that has been the marketing of the curriculum review is that it is a return to basics. What has been proffered is that actually cutting back on the syllabus is returning to basics. You do not see it that way?

Dr COLLIER: "Return to basics", to educators, means putting all of the stress on literacy and numeracy, in a sense ignoring the other syllabi and the other outcomes. If that is what it means then I do not agree, and I do not think most educators agree, that that is the best way forward. The best way forward is to reduce some of the content in order to allow greater depth, not just in literacy and numeracy but in science, history, geography and on it goes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I note in your submission you talked about a lot of the additional items that you are required to teach, which includes things like breakfast clubs—I note the Hon. Courtney Houssos' great support for things—breakfast for students, morning exercise, student wellbeing, multicultural and other perspectives, gender identity counselling, mandatory reporting, financial literacy, learn to drive and community service. Are these the sorts of things that you would like to see removed from the syllabus and removed from teaching?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Point of order: Since when has breakfast been part of the syllabus? Since when have these things been based on the syllabus?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The question is based on the witness's submission. It does not require a point of order.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Okay.

Mr KINSELLA: I would like to answer that.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Kinsella, would you like to discuss those issues?

Mr KINSELLA: I put that list down as a way of indicating that as our society has changed, schools are more and more being seen as the way to deal with societal issues. There are schools in New South Wales that are addressing the issue of proper nutrition. It is certainly something I dealt with directly in the Northern Territory: What is the point of trying to teach someone if they are malnourished, basically, and do not have the energy to concentrate in the classroom? What has happened over time is more and more is being shifted to the expectation that schools will deal with these things. Schools are populated by teachers who basically love the students and want to do the best for them, so more and more is being passed to them. Plus, things from time to time come up in society and people say, "Well, the schools should think about doing that." So we have learn to drive there, and financial literacy.

There was something in *The Daily Telegraph*, I think, last week about how teachers should be trained as counsellors or have some training in counselling because more and more of their work is frontline support for students, particularly in the COVID world we are living in. You do not go to one school and say they are doing that list of things, but the expectation is that schools will fill the void that is being created by dysfunction in what were some of the pillars of our society.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Kinsella, to pick up on that point, these are things that are not necessarily included in the syllabus but are taking time away from being able to teach what is in the syllabus, is that correct?

Mr KINSELLA: Teachers who are doing these things are not preparing their lessons because they are doing these other important things.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Aren't all those elements in the PDHPE syllabus? All of those things touch on elements of PDHPE, surely.

Mr KINSELLA: Something like a breakfast program for students who are hungry.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Well, that is about nutrition, is it not? That is about nutrition.

Mr KINSELLA: That does not feed someone who comes to school hungry.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: How does it compete with the syllabus if you give a kid who needs food and breakfast in the morning? How does that compete with the syllabus? It is a false competition you are putting up, Mr Kinsella.

Mr KINSELLA: I do not think so.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr Shoebridge, I will allow you to put a proposition to the witness but I will not allow you to tag it with a predetermined position.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am putting it to him clearly that breakfast happens before school starts because kids need nutrition to learn.

The Hon. WES FANG: And Mr Kinsella has acknowledged that. Please put a question or a proposition to him.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Let me finish. It does not compete with the curriculum. In fact, it enhances the kid's ability to study and digest the curriculum. Putting it in that list, as you say, consequently the broader curriculum of schools and limited resources available to schools have been averted to address broader social issues fails to acknowledge, does it not, Mr Kinsella, that they work together?

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr Shoebridge, there needs to be a question.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Having kids who have proper nutrition, who otherwise do not get it, they are going to learn and day just the curriculum. It is for the good of the curriculum that you do it, contrary to what you say, Mr Kinsella.

Mr KINSELLA: It takes time. It takes money. Where does that come from? It comes from the teachers time. It comes from the very limited budgets that schools have. There is an opportunity cost there.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Thank you all very much. I am flying blind on the internet, so bear with me. I cannot see you at all. That is probably a sad thing. I wanted to ask a couple of questions about the submission from the Anglican Education Commission. In particular, on page 6 there is a discussion about the attitude and values framework of the new curriculum, which will be a fundamental challenge for the writers of the new curriculum documents. I note that recommendation three is that the personnel chosen to write the curriculum documents emanating from the review should hold attitudes and values proportionally representative of the attitudes and values of parents that make up the social fabric of mainstream Australia. Perhaps I could ask Mr Kinsella and Dr Collier to expand on that. In particular, how do we determine what the attitudes and values are of mainstream Australia?

Mr KINSELLA: It is a huge issue. I note that I have changed the wording slightly of my recommendation. "Proportionally representative" was clumsy and I have changed that to "that reflect the attitudes and values of the parents". What we cannot do is think that the new **c**urriculum and the documents that go around it and then what flows from that—the various textbooks and learning aids that are provided to teachers—we cannot assume that they are values free. There is no such thing as teaching something that is values free. There are values embedded in everything that we do and say and write, and that certainly applies to the curriculum. What I am suggesting here is that our parents expect that curriculum is broadly reflective of what they see as important. To define that is a very difficult task but it is something that cannot be ignored, otherwise the values embedded in the curriculum will be a reflection of the people who are writing the documents and all the things that go around it. If thought is not given as to the people that make up those committees that do the writing then it will we be just random. There is opportunity there for individual interest to usurp the wishes of the parents.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In relation to the process that is envisaged for looking at each of these syllabi in terms of stakeholder groups, pilots and testing et cetera, are you confident those sorts of issues will be picked up in the context so that the syllabus is reflective of the values and attitudes of mainstream Australia, as you put it?

Mr KINSELLA: I am not familiar with the process that is being applied to put together the people who will be doing that writing. I cannot answer that.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Okay. Do you have a view on that, Ms Allum?

Ms ALLUM: I do not believe that there is such a thing as the values of mainstream society, particularly when the schools are so diverse. Of course, there are some core values, but diversity is so great as to make that rather hard to try to think about what—sorry, I was struggling to think about that now. My genuine belief is that of course there are values that are written into syllabuses and wired into a lot of knowledge and schools of understanding and values and attitudes, but I do not know that those other sorts of values that we would be talking about when talk about the values of any mainstream society. The values of individual schools are so different that I am not really sure where the Anglican Education Commission is going with that idea.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Okay. Can I put to you that the current NESA values are excellence, respect, responsibility, equity and justice, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability. Do you think those values should remain in the new curriculum?

Ms ALLUM: Did you read that somewhere? Is that articulated somewhere?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It is articulated by NESA.

Ms ALLUM: Sure, okay. I was just checking because I would want to make sure that I had thought through whether there was anything missing there, but if that is how it is articulated that seemed a perfectly reasonable set of values. I would think that that would need to be continued.

Dr COLLIER: The issue of values education is a contested area. We have come through the era in the nineties of allegedly values-free education, which I think is essentially nonsense. It is not possible to conduct education in a values vacuum. In the 1980s Dr Fenton Sharpe as director general introduced *The Values We Teach*, which is a very widely respected generic document. In this century we have had Brendan Nelson's Commonwealth values which related to funding and which were so generic as to be difficult to fill with any specific content. In terms of Mr Mason-Cox's quoting of the NESA values, the values themselves are excellent but we need to fill them with content and that is where we become difficult. The Anglican Education Commission is aware of the growing interest across the western world in character education. In some countries trusts are being set up specifically for that purpose. We believe it is not only inevitable but desirable. Our argument would be that there needs to be wide stakeholder consultation as we are not attempting to affirm either a progressive interpretation

and agenda as such, nor are we trying to affirm a regressive agenda, but to try to establish values which have the general support of the community. The only way I can see that that can be tested is by extensive consultation.

The CHAIR: I thank all witnesses for their time today and for the very interesting and useful submissions that have been lodged. At a broader level, are you surprised at the nature of the review itself? When we heard from NESA it was described that the Masters review is a broad architecture of a curriculum with no deep dive into the detail. We heard from Greg Ashman, for instance, saying, "If you want to declutter, why don't you look at the detail in each curriculum area?" In his assessment for science, a third of it is content, a third of it is scientific method, which he thinks is way too much, and then a third is fairly nebulous stuff that could go called science in society. Have we not got to a strange situation where there is a curriculum review that did not really look at any of the detail of the curriculum as it stands today and it is going to be rewritten, whether that is consistent with the broad architecture or not? Obviously, some of these ideas are unworkable. We have really got a situation where there is a blank cheque for NESA to fill in all the gaps that were not examined in the review by looking at any of the detail of the syllabus.

Ms ALLUM: I do not think you could possibly have expected Masters to get into the particular aspects of what should be in various different syllabuses. We then spend 50 minutes talking about untimed syllabuses might relate to deciding what are the main ideas of a syllabus and how that might relate to a reduction in content and a whole range of other things. If you expected Masters to get down to whether we should be teaching matrices or calculus in years 11 and 12 maths and doing that for 191 syllabuses, he does not have the time, the expertise to work on the syllabuses and to be able to consult with teachers in every different area. I think describing at a high level how we reform education and then you get to the next step down you start to do the implementation, that takes a long time. I completely support what Masters has done, which is not to say what should be in any particular syllabus.

Dr COLLIER: I was not at all surprised by the Masters review findings because he reflected extensive consultation with schools and therefore articulated what teachers and principals had been saying for decades. I agree with Ms Allum that Masters' remit was not to examine specifically individual syllabuses but to look at the curriculum as a whole and I think it now does come to NESA to apply the Masters framework to each individual syllabus.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr Kinsella, do you have anything to point out?

Mr KINSELLA: No.

The CHAIR: The submissions mention the wellbeing for students and everyone wants the best outcome there, obviously, but have you looked at the extensive research paper commissioned by the education department, Telethon Kids Institute, that is quite an extensive literature search and metadata analysis of: Can any of these programs actually work? Of course, not all problems are capable of being solved and perhaps if schools cannot have a positive impact in these areas there is an element of wasting time and resources. It seems in the Telethon Kids Institute report, which is out of Western Australia, they identify wellbeing programs with zero impact or very, very small impacts. Is the experience of your schools counter to any of this? Are there any high-impact wellbeing programs that actually exist that schools can use?

Dr COLLIER: I think schools are in the process of trying to discover what those programs are. The school in which I server has appointed two staff with the portfolio of Director of Student Wellbeing. This is an acknowledgement of the mental health crisis that appears among teenagers across the western world. I think we are in the early days of working out which interventions are most likely to be effective. We need clinical data on that. But, yes, I do take the point that some programs may not be effective while others may prove to be effective and we need good information on which are which.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you very much. I will keep it brief because a lot of my questions have already been covered this morning. Thanks for your time and thanks for your submissions. I just wanted to ask you about some of the evidence that we have received already, which is that NESA is essentially going to be implementing what Masters has undertaken, yet NESA has just completed a series of reviews, as it does, reviewing the various syllabuses. Can you provide us with any feedback, first of all, on whether you think that the most recent reviews of the syllabus have done what I think we all agree on, which is strip out the unnecessary content and make sure that they are focusing on the deep knowledge. Do you think the most recent syllabuses have done that?

Dr COLLIER: I would like to suggest in terms of witnesses before you this morning that Ms Allum has the best expertise on that question.

Ms ALLUM: I do not think that NESA has done what you said, which was a stripping away of a significant amount of content and outlining what might be the main ideas of individual syllabuses. That is the whole point.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: They have not been doing it previously?

Ms ALLUM: Not particularly, no. That is what Masters has supposedly recommended that they do.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is useful feedback for us because it seems as though it has gone back to NESA to implement Masters' curriculum review and yet we are going around in the same circle again. Dr Collier, can I ask you and Mr Kinsella this: Mr Ashman provided us with some interesting ideas during our last session and he talked about, again, the question of decluttering the curriculum is actually about what you are taking out. What is that you are saying we need to be stripping out so that it allows deep knowledge to be pursued, which I do not think anyone is disagreeing with? What is it? Can you give us some specific things that should be cut out of the curriculum as it currently stands?

Dr COLLIER: They can be answered on two levels. The first is the actual curriculum content and you would need someone from each syllabus area with expertise to suggest what they would be. As a historian I cannot suggest to you what elements of the science curriculum are disposable. It would be impertinent of me to do so, so certainly expertise is required at that point. Secondly, to go back to the comment that Mr Kinsella made earlier we need as a society to decide to what extent the schools are about teaching and learning and to what extent they are about ameliorating social issues and covering grounds that used to be held by other institutions that are now in decline.

That comes to a debate about the whole purpose of education and we have a difficulty with that partly because on the one hand we want schools to be able to focus, I think, on teaching and learning and excellence in that area. On the other hand, as Mr Kinsella has said, if students are starving, then they are not in a position to learn so schools, because of their care for individual children, give time to ameliorating those concerns. But a relevant question is: Should schools be doing bike education, for instance? I do not want to particularly pick on bike education. It is just an example. Should schools be taking up time to do that instead of teaching literacy, numeracy and other cognate areas? That is an area where there needs to be debate and discussion, I think.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Kinsella, you talked a lot about the need for resourcing if we are actually going to do this untimed. Let us really unpack what you mean by that? Is that talking about more money? Is that talking about more support for teachers? What do we actually need to do if we are going to implement untimed learning, which I am not entirely sure we have a clear understanding of what that actually means. We got that from Professor Masters and we have not really got a clear answer on that. You said there is a need for more resourcing. What does that mean? We have seen huge amounts of money going into our schools from the public purse but yet we have still seen—and I know we can have a debate about whether we have seen a decline in education standards or not. Are you saying that there needs to be more if we are actually to rethink how we run it?

Mr KINSELLA: Yes, I am. The money that is going into schooling it goes into multiple targets—schools, salaries, building projects and so on—but it is going into what is basically an old framework, an industrial framework, and the Masters review is saying that we need to think differently about all this and we need to come up with solutions. The very shape of schools requires—if we are going to change the shape of schools to cope with flexible progression then that requires money. If we are going to have teachers teach differently, that is going to require money. We are not talking about—the Masters review is not saying put more money in and you will get a good result; the Masters review is saying we need to approach this in a different way, and that requires funds. So unless those funds go in—at the moment the point of flexibility where the pressure is being felt is actually in workloads of teachers. That is not right, and that does not allow them to teach well.

Ms ALLUM: I just want to say that NESA needs more resources to do the amount of work that is required by the Masters review.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Kinsella, going back to the list you have on page 3 of your submission—you have a list starting with things that I assume you say should be optional: breakfast for students, morning exercise, student wellbeing et cetera. Am I reading that as things you think are—

Mr KINSELLA: I am not saying they should be optional, but what I am saying is that those expectations are being placed on schools and teachers, but still the same building formulas, staffing formulas remain the same, all the funding formulas remain the same as if we live in a world back when I started teaching. These are things that have come into the expectations for schools. They have to be properly resourced or, as I just said, the pressure point is on teachers and their workloads.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You described them as "a distraction from mainstream teaching." I am reading directly from your submission.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr Shoebridge, is there a question there?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is that how you view them—a distraction from mainstream teaching?

Mr KINSELLA: If you asked me to do a whole lot more without giving me the time or reducing other expectations then teachers are in the position of, "How do I do all this?" They either work long hours at night, on the weekends or whatever, or they have to make judgements about where the need is. And sometimes the need of a student who is suffering in terms of their wellbeing is so immediate, so emotionally draining that it requires all their energy. Why were they employed? To be a science teacher, to be an economics teacher.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What really I find deeply troubling about your list is the inclusion of mandatory reporting.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr Shoebridge, this is not an opportunity for you to espouse your views.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In a long list of things that are said to be a distraction from the Anglican Education Commission, they include mandatory reporting. It is as though Case Study 42 of the royal commission did not happen.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr Shoebridge, please cease—you are not a witness here.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is as though we have not had a history of decades of child abuse, and they include mandatory reporting as basically a distraction.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

GREGORY WHITBY, Director Learning, Catholic Education, Diocese of Parramatta, sworn and examined

MAURA MANNING, Executive Director, Catholic Education, Diocese of Parramatta, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Would you like to start with a short statement or go straight to questions and answers?

Mr WHITBY: I am currently executive director of Catholic Education at the Diocese of Parramatta. I have been there since 2006, and before that I was the executive director in Wollongong for seven years. I am currently in my 22nd year as an executive director of schools, and still enjoying it. We have in Parramatta about 43,000 students across 84 schools, seeing a very diverse cultural mix. It is an extraordinary privilege that we have. By way of opening, our response to the Masters report—and I think it is a very competent, very capable report. Nothing in it, in a sense, was surprising, I think as the previous evidence has been given. It follows in a long line of those reports, as this Committee probably well knows, going back even before the Metherell 1988 work. In a sense we have seen a continued progression, but over that time, despite the issues that are raised, nothing seems to have changed. The issues that were raised in 1988 and pre-1988 were that things are not getting any better—things are getting worse—and in fact it is costing more and more. It leads you to some fundamental questions about are the right questions being raised and are they being responded to?

From my point of view, I look at a couple of things. When you look at attendance rates across schools in New South Wales, and across Australia, you see there is a deep concern. Sometimes there is a 60 or 70 per cent attendance rate on any given day. If you look at student engagement, you are seeing them drop off and a whole range of reasons are given—it is the IT that is causing it, whatever—but we are getting kids increasingly disengaging in learning. Finally, in particular in our patch of the State, the equity issue. We are finding that those with more are getting better and those with less are getting worse. I certainly am not of the view that we need more resources. We probably need a rethink. At the heart of our submission is that we have played the improvement game for a long time. It is about time that we looked at the structural issues, and these are deep structural issues that need to be addressed before you even begin the issues around what is in and what is out of the curriculum et cetera. I agree wholeheartedly with John Collier about the depth; that is the critical issue. Our current syllabuses sell young people short because they are set at minimum standards and this whole issue of really extending them leads to part of this disengagement and attendance.

Finally, the proposition is that we have to be bold enough to move away from a one size fits all so that we can meet the very diverse needs of each learner in each community in the context that they find themselves. That is very difficult and it requires a framework. There are robust frameworks that you can put around it. But if we are truly going to make some changes, we need to let our talented teachers do the teaching, do it while they are continually reflecting on their practice, and put them in charge of making those decisions about what is in and what is out. It is not my job to tell a teacher what to teach and how to teach it. But we do know, even now, if we mandate exactly what is taught there is no guarantee that that will translate into the classroom, because once that teacher goes into that space they are in total control. We believe we need to open up and be brave enough, if you like, to step away from the existing model that is about 150 years old. We keep throwing money at it and we are less happy about the outcome.

The CHAIR: Thank you for your submission. I seek a point of clarity. At the bottom of page 1, there is mention of an online survey that then guides the content of the submission. What was the nature of the survey?

Ms MANNING: Yes. When we decided to respond, rather than making it a response from people in the office, we in fact opened a survey to all of our teachers and principals to respond to that and we ran a series of focus groups. So this does not just represent our views; this is the views of our teachers and our schools as well.

Mr WHITBY: Might I say, when I am talking about the engagement, we ask our parents and our students every year what they think—a whole range of questions. It is interesting, the honesty.

The CHAIR: What do they think of the curriculum review?

Mr WHITBY: We have not asked the kids about the curriculum review. We are just talking as a system, which has the opportunity to invite parents, teachers and students to give feedback on their learning experience.

The CHAIR: At page 5 of the submission, dealing with the extent to which the Masters review meets key government policy objectives, part (c) is "Declining school results". It is a government goal, we hope, to turn them around and have improving results. The submission states:

> There was concern expressed that this Government policy aspiration is reflective of misguided understandings of learning and is sensibly not a large part of the Review discussion.

There is a major disconnect there, is there not? The Government has not only said it wants Masters to turn around declining school results; it actually included the curriculum review in the COVID economic recovery plan—something economists are still trying to sort out for the short to medium term, at least. What do you mean that it is misguided in its understanding of learning for the Government to aim at turning around what appear to be the fastest falling school academic results in the world?

Ms MANNING: I think the intent there is actually that the curriculum is only one piece of what we do in schools. I think it is that sense that curriculum review upon curriculum review, changing syllabuses—those are sometimes distractors for teachers and for schools. I think that fundamentally, regardless of what is decided in terms of how the curriculum—what it includes, fundamentally teachers know students and we need to make sure that our teachers are equipped to be able to know their students deeply and to respond to the needs in front of them. The professional learning that we do with our teachers is really important so that they have enough in their toolkit to respond to whatever it is that presents with the students and their needs.

The CHAIR: But you do think it is a legitimate aim of government policy to improve our school results and reverse the slide of recent decades?

Ms MANNING: Yes.

Mr WHITBY: We support the demand for excellence. It is behind my introductory comments.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you for your time and for your submissions this morning. While I take Mr Shoebridge's point that he made at the end about mandatory reporting and put that to one side, I think there were certainly some commonalities between what the previous witnesses were saying and what you were saying, Mr Whitby. It seems that the question of decluttering needs to go further than the curriculum. We are putting more and more emphasis or expectations on what we want teachers and schools to be doing, when actually what we need to be doing is giving them a bit more clarity and saying, "We want you to focus on teaching and learning." As the Hon. Scott Farlow said, I am quite the advocate for breakfast programs, but that needs to happen before school so that kids are ready to learn when it starts. That should not be intruding on school time. Is that a more accurate reflection of what decluttering needs to mean—that it is not just when it comes to the curriculum, but it is also about what we are expecting our teachers and our schools to be doing?

Ms MANNING: I think that that sort of thing of a breakfast program before school is essential. It is not something that you can simply declutter, because the kids cannot learn if they are hungry.

Mr WHITBY: We run several buses around part of our area and pick up kids—actually have to go in and wake them up and get them on the bus and feed them, and to do the same coming home. The teachers in the school do not see that as extra.

Ms MANNING: That is our mission. I think in terms of decluttering—and I take the point that was made previously as well—many of those things that are noted are part of the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education [PDHPE] curriculum and they are part of just us knowing our students and ensuring they are ready to take on the world when they leave our schools. I guess that is the granular detail, that perhaps we do not quite have that yet. I suppose what we know so far is that that decluttering piece is looking at our syllabus documents, particularly those catered to curriculum documents, and it is taking out those content dot points from the English and maths syllabus. That is still not going to that point that was made around whether it is financial literacy or whatever those things are. I think that is all considered and it needs to be embedded in our curriculum areas and not seen as extra things, but we do have to make choices about what is taught. But certainly a breakfast program before school is not competing with the learning; it is complementing that learning.

Mr WHITBY: We tend to see these as building blocks that you just fill. We can have arguments this year or this decade what is in or what is out, but the same thing—we still have these building blocks. What I think is missing is this coherence of a learning continuum. We have now seen an acceptance of the importance of those early years of schooling, but linking that to an actual learning journey. We know if we are ever going to overcome the equity issue, every child needs to have that opportunity but it needs to be linked to a robust learning continuum that they can actually see. At the other end, in the previous submission, stop thinking about it as an endpoint. Once you get to 15, you have only got 16, 17, you do the HSC and it is all over. Recast the whole area.

We have a Minister for skills and higher education in New South Wales, looking after TAFE, and we have got a whole need in that 15-plus to do something different and we have a Minister for education—this continual disconnect, so that we do not leverage off that capability to answer those questions that you have been talking about, because they are fundamental to the nature of the learning and teaching, particularly in that 15-plus, as our workplace is changing rapidly. If I could make one comment about the speed issue, I disagree. Ten years—I am not prepared to let 10 cohorts go through with a substandard education. COVID-19 showed us what can happen when you shine the spotlight on it, and we fundamentally turned the system around across the country. So

the speed is not the issue. The issue is the coherence of the policy that will support that across a whole range of areas about the nature of teaching and nature of learning and nature of what is to be taught and how we are accountable for it.

The Hon. WES FANG: Sorry to interrupt, Mr Whitby. You just said "a substandard education", when you were talking about the current curriculum. Would it not be more accurate to say that where the current curriculum is appropriate, what we are looking to do with Masters is improve or excel in levels? I think we need to be really careful about the language we choose to say that students are not receiving appropriate education.

Mr WHITBY: I agree, but the point I try to make is the curriculum—whatever is or is not in it—is an artefact. What gives it life is the teacher. That is the focus that we need to put on. I think we could safely say from all the things you hear, there is deep concern about the standard now. I take your point. I was at pains to acknowledge Geoff's done a great job in this review.

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you, that was the only point I wanted to make.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Manning, I noticed you were nodding quite enthusiastically during some of our earlier discussions around untimed learning, and that is really the central point about the curriculum review. How would you explain untimed learning would actually work in practice? In particular—and I want to take the point that I think not just Mr Shoebridge but all of us are concerned about—for a child who is struggling, who is not meeting those standards, what happens? Do they just stay at school indefinitely? How does that happen?

Ms MANNING: I would make two points about that. At the moment, I am not long out of the classroom. I am a teacher, my heart is always in the classroom. As great teachers, we are able to meet those kids. Right now it is happening that there are kids sitting in classrooms and there is no mandate for an untimed curriculum at this moment, and teachers are responding to those needs. So we know that there are kids in year groups who are not at that level of the curriculum, and what the teacher does is tailors the response for those children—or child—in that class to ensure the kids can meaningfully engage at the level that helps build their esteem and helps to build them as learners. We do not just go pitching way up above while they sit not able to respond to that. The first instance is we are doing it, and I say that on behalf of classroom teachers everywhere.

In terms of what an untimed syllabus looks like, I do not think it means—and I take that point that Mr Shoebridge said, that if someone is progressing at their own level and then they hit year 10 and year 12, I think that is fundamentally the conundrum—that does not work. If we do have people progressing at their own levels, we have to then have different pathways for them. Right now there are kids sitting in year 12 classes who probably are not at the level that they need to be to be doing that year 12 learning, and that is in schools all across the State. We need to be able to respond to them and we need to provide them meaningful ways to engage in learning that is purposeful and useful for them as they move forward. Maybe it means that they take more time, perhaps, to engage with whatever the year 12 curriculum is, but maybe it also means that they are doing something different that does not take an HSC track. It is not a matter of one is better than the other, it is about tailoring that response for the child and their needs to help give them the very best start in life that they can have.

In terms of what does that look like? We are trying at the moment. We have a variety of different pathways that the kids can engage in. What would be even better would be to have that more endorsed by the NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA], because right now in New South Wales NESA has really the stranglehold on that leavers certificate for us. We need to be more broad about that, and I think if you look at organisations like Amazon and Google and all those sorts of places that are doing their own learning that brings their employees into their spaces, we need to be engaging with them and having those be the types of pathways that kids can be engaging with as they move forward, not just that traditional HSC; because that is not for everyone, we know that now.

Ms MANNING: One of the scary things about all this is that if you look at 2019—I cannot remember exactly where—the estimate was that we are spending $2 billion on coaching in our schools. So we are sending kids to school—you can now do a full New South Wales curriculum online from India for $15 an hour. Increasingly parents—and this goes to the attendance and engagement thing, why would I bother? Because there is something wrong with this system. In our schools we are encouraging—we have examples where we do not have kids working in cohorts, they work in teams because learning is a collaborative approach. If you want to have good teachers, good teachers have got to learn with each other, so you have got to keep them in the learning space, not have them go out and do some individual course. It is a team effort, so you have got to find new structures to work those through and then everybody takes responsibility for the learning of the students.

The other dimension to it is you do not make the judgement in a one-off sort of thing—well, they got this amount of the exam or this is what they should get when they do the HSC. There are multiple ways now with

portfolios in giving rich opportunities within that learning continuum that shows that they have achieved and can achieve, just in a very different way. It is very messy. When you try to describe it and people say, "Well, how do you organise it?" Well, good schools are doing it and we are not alone across the globe. That is what we are trying to do because if we do not, we are going to continue down the same path.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I wanted to pick up on your comments in relation to NESA, first of all, particularly, Mr Whitby, your comments that 10 years is a long time for [inaudible] and you do not want to see another 10 cohorts go through before something happens. The Government response is looking at a time line of four years. I wanted to get your thoughts on that in terms of whether that is a pace of change that you think is sustainable, and indeed the appropriate approach to take?

Mr WHITBY: Well, given the approach that they are taking in terms of the implementation, all I can say is the sooner the better. I cannot pick a year—four years is better than 10. I do not think that there is one answer to it—the sooner the better. NESA is a wonderful organisation and they do a very good job, but they are very risk-averse when it comes to exploring. We have had discussions with them about alternative models of schooling and it takes a long time to eventually get there and say, "Well, no, we will not endorse it." So I can only speak from that experience, but all I could say is the sooner the better. We are talking about kids' lives here. I am not trying to take the high moral ground—you are all doing this because you feel the same.

Ms MANNING: In terms of that time line, it is much quicker than what we have seen before in terms of curriculum development. If it is in fact a decluttering and we are staying the course, I think that we can move more quickly perhaps than building from the ground up. I think, in Parramatta especially, we have really been trying to ready our teachers to meet students at their point of need to learn deeply. So in some ways I feel—even though it will be more work for our teachers, and there will be an element of program rewriting and all of those sorts of things, we are in constant cycles of doing anyway, and we are constantly tailoring the curriculum to meet our students' needs. But if this is urgent, which I think we agree that this is urgent, that we need to do this, why wait 10 years? Because it is a long time—those are kids through our schools in those 10 years.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I noticed in your submission on the last page, item g, again in relation to NESA:

> … that NESA seems to be an organisation that self-perpetuates ie. it creates compliance measures to ensure its continued existence …

You refer to the New South Wales syllabuses when the Australian Curriculum document already exists. Can you perhaps expand on that and how you see the role of NESA?

Ms MANNING: I think with NESA, and I guess that is a New South Wales thing, the Australian Curriculum came about and then we wrote our New South Wales curriculum on top of that. We do have a tendency to be writing and rewriting and writing curriculum again, and that is something that NESA does. I will admit, I have been part of those committees previously. That is what NESA does. I am not saying that it does not make improvements to it, but it does seem to be a cycle of doing just that and then checking that implementation of that curriculum.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I just wanted to turn to your submission—and thank you very much for giving us that understanding in terms of the survey questions that were asked—and some of your concluding remarks for a little bit more insight. One of the comments you make is that "without equitable reform, inequality will continue." I wanted to get an understanding from you as to what you view equitable reform to be?

Mr WHITBY: It is a motherhood statement, where every child gets every opportunity to overreach their potential. I think it is the opportunity. It is one thing to say you have got this possibility here and another possibility there, but the whole issue of access comes into it. They are the things we have got to resolve, but we cannot work on the assumption and say that we have a system of education in New South Wales when the demographics say—where do the most experienced teachers end up teaching? Well, they do not teach necessarily in our patch. There is this gradual movement and it is a society issue. The schools that are more stable have teachers that tend to stay longer and more experienced leaders—all those sorts of things. We are not talking about that, per se, but that is what we would like every child to have the opportunity for. The answers are not with me; the answers are in the schools, as they deal with those sorts of things.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Just to pick up on that further, one of the themes in terms of your submission is effectively that the curriculum only goes so far.

Mr WHITBY: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The curriculum is one point, but we need to do a lot more around the edges when it comes to improving educational outcomes that cannot be reflected from a curriculum. Is that correct?

Ms MANNING: Yes.

Mr WHITBY: Yes. To be somewhat controversial, I have been on the record to say that curriculum is dead. I say that because I think it is the wrong terminology. This is about a learning framework constructed by professionals that is well taught, well resourced and well evaluated and reported on. We will not find the answers. Terry Metherell tried in 1988—and all those before him—and nothing has changed. In fact, the title of that review was *Excellence and Equity*. We are still asking the same questions. My question is: Which piece of concrete do I want to keep hitting my head on?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You would like sandstone instead, perhaps.

The Hon. WES FANG: The softest one.

Mr WHITBY: Yes, the softest one.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Thank you for your submission. It was an interestingly constructed submission but it was full of genuinely valuable observations, so I appreciate it. One of the things that flows from your submission and from what we have heard today is the idea that we have got this 10-year-long process that is going to achieve some kind of final outcome, when really the pace of change and where we are going to be in 10 years is probably quite distinct to where we are now. You say that 10 years is too long to wait. But the other side of that coin is that maybe in 10 years whatever destination we arrive at—if we start now, we will already be out of date. Is the whole idea that we do periodic reviews flawed?

Mr WHITBY: I do not think it is necessarily flawed. To come to your point, we do not have, "In 10 years, they will be there." What we say is, "What we are doing today will help shape that." The issue that people have not mentioned is that artificial intelligence and augmented reality are game changers. Predictive analytics in schools—we have been doing modelling where we looked at whole cohorts. We are predicting their performance before they actually do the NAPLAN test. We achieve up to 94 per cent accuracy, which would ask you to ask questions about what is being taught. Those kids already know what they already know at the beginning of the year. Are we going to put them through that before we do the test and do those sorts of things?

So, they are the real game changers that are going to force a lot of these things. I add to it the tutoring and online work. It is evolving so rapidly and unless we claim that territory with those robust frameworks that can stand the scrutiny—this demands excellence. We do know the academic world is in agreement. We heard about John Hattie; they all say the same thing. It is good teachers, well led, with teachers doing the job of teaching and everything being taken away from them. Then they will help design that future. Anybody who purports to tell you what we will be doing in 10 years—well, I certainly will not be around.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you think teachers have the level of involvement they should have in the curriculum review under the current structure?

Ms MANNING: Look, we are just in the process of nominating our teachers to be part of the TEN—I cannot remember what it means, teacher something review. It is yet to be seen, I think. It depends on how this plays out. It is very different than what we have done in the past, so I cannot quite say yet.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Okay. The one other thing I want to touch upon is that often we hear about the curriculum review—about being back to basics, as though there is some sort of a 1950s ideal where kids sat down and learned 20 core facts and then had it all under their belt. Your submission says:

> There was Agreement that knowledge and the curriculum are socially constructed artefacts that do not exist without human intervention. Student learning comes from building skills to discern how knowledge came to be – Who are the actors? Why now? Who benefits? Who doesn't? What does the knowledge mean when acted upon?

How important is that kind of concept to feed into a curriculum?

Ms MANNING: Any curriculum is socially constructed and, just as the previous group was talking about, values-laden and so forth. Even the curriculum as constructed by NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA]—when it goes into a classroom and into the hands of teachers or a particular school culture, there are different values that emerge through what is there. It is never a stable document. In terms of all of those other aspects—in terms of the back to basics versus what else is in there—I think back to basics or something else is not really a very helpful binary. The basics are there because that it what helps students then access all of the other parts of learning that makes it rich and wondrous. So, we are not ever arguing either-or. We are arguing that that is part of it and there is so much more to it.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There are foundational achievements that allow you then to take kids to the next step.

Mr WHITBY: There are things kids need to know. Look, we have had decades of back to basics and forward to fundamentals. In today's *Herald*, phonics has won and Reading Recovery is dead. I have been in this business for 47 years and I have seen them. It is a great tennis match. I think I could take on bloody Rod Laver or somebody.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: As long as it is alliterative.

Mr WHITBY: That is right—forward to fundamentals. Of course kids need to know how to read and write and add up. To equip them to be active participants in a future not our own is exactly what we are trying to do and build the model from. Those things will keep going. We have got no control over those, in that sense. As things shift and they do not work, any attempt to impose external targets in terms of literacy and numeracy across the globe and sustainable proof that they have made a difference—I do not know of them. I am not claiming to know everything. But certainly if you look at what happened in the UK in the 1980s where they tried to move to collaborative targets with health and education and trying to get their policy aligned—a big issue for us in having this discussion is this policy issue of getting a coherent policy framework from a government that goes from birth or certainly age three, because everybody agrees that early years is now so important.

A policy framework that goes into that—and stop thinking of TAFE. If you are a TAFE teacher at the moment, you are assessed in a competency base. You have got a different assessment regime. All this needs to be looked at and we do have the time. That is the area where we can do the time while we have got the teachers focused on doing the teaching. That is how we will, I believe, deliver some change and be the first Government across the globe that has got a learning agenda up into higher ed. Now, it is so porous. Stop thinking about kids leaving schools. Kids are coming back to schools.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I have had I do not know how many stakeholders and individuals contact my office and say, "A curriculum review that starts at kindergarten and fails to include early childhood learning, beginning at age three, is going to short-change the next generation."

The Hon. WES FANG: How many exactly have you had?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I would have had at least a dozen and multiple contacts with different teachers saying that when they get their kids—

The Hon. WES FANG: Could you table them and ask them to provide a submission?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Let us have a chat afterwards about your silliness.

The CHAIR: Let us get to the question.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If you have not heard it yourself, Mr Fang, you should get out more. Do you think some of the curriculum reviews should be pushing back into early childhood learning?

Ms MANNING: Yes, definitely.

Mr WHITBY: Yes.

Ms MANNING: All that early years and so forth—we do have some schools that have early years settings where we can build that coherence within our schools, but to have that sort of coherence across all schools would be extraordinary.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But it is not part of the Masters review at the moment. Do you think it is something we should be putting in as a recommendation that the curriculum review—

Mr WHITBY: I certainly believe that would be helpful. We did put the proposition and not everything we asked can be or was included. By its nature, that is what you would expect. But we certainly—the earlier years—have got to stop this mentality across the thing that you get to 17 December and summer holidays are here and you stop learning. Then you start at the beginning of February and you spend a couple of weeks trying to get them warmed up. It does not work.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That being said, I am looking forward to 17 December.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I also want to join Mr Shoebridge in thanking you for your submission. I found it very interesting and, in some respects, quite provocative. I wanted to raise the two observations you make in relation to literacy. One was about the problem of the specification around explicit curriculum for teaching and reading. You make an observation, which I think is also interesting, effectively

challenging this notion that the evidence base is settled, that there is some agreement and that we can all just move on. I wonder if you can offer some comments in relation to that.

Ms MANNING: I guess our approach is that we have a really comprehensive reading and literacy strategy. Our belief is that it is an integrated approach. I know it has been in the news this morning around phonics. That is a big part of our approach, but it is not the only part. We try to design a three-tier approach to anything that we are doing. There are the things for all students. There are the things for the students who need extra support. Then we have case management for students who have really outlined needs beyond what that tier 2 support can do. Our work is to ensure our teachers have the good evidence-based practice in that toolkit and good measures and data to be able to inform them what tools will best serve those students' needs. We have a terrific enterprise data approach where we have a range of assessments and so forth that are not just the assessment that is being spoken of today in the media where it happens in year 1. We have ongoing assessment that is constantly bringing up data for us to be responding to our students.

For example, students who are actually in that tier 2 of support who have been assessed below where they need to be—that is actually a daily data that is collected on them for teachers to respond to. We do not believe that there is just one way to do it. We believe that teachers need to have many tools in their toolbox and that they are making decisions based on what is in front of them. It is always a synthesised, embedded approach that is not just about one thing at one point. It is about that whole journey for all of our students with many safety nets that help to catch and support strong professional learning. We have other staffing supports that assist teachers to help our students to read and write.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You make an observation about the issue around reporting with the untimed syllabus. I wonder if you could elaborate. That is one of the things that I think I am having difficulty conceptualising: How will reporting work in an untimed syllabus where the kids are clearly not being assessed against common syllabus outcomes?

Ms MANNING: Yes. That is a good question. I think what we have at the moment is that many of our schools are trying to do that already with various progressions, rubrics and so forth. They are trying to have more real-time feedback for students and parents around how students are progressing. Recently one of our high schools in Rooty Hill has been recognised by the Australian Council for Educational Research for a terrific kind of writing progression piece that they have been doing where the kids can really see how their writing compares to standards and are able to talk to that in a plain English sort of way. Sometimes what holds us back in that whole reporting piece is we have those mandates from the Education Act around the (a) to (e) and the certain timing. But if you were to ask teachers, as we did during that COVID-19 period where we were able to loosen up how we reported, we saw wonderful things come out of that in terms of how teachers were working with parents to provide meaningful feedback. We saw students talking to their learning and setting goals with their parents in those conversations. If we could be freed from some of the mandates, we would see meaningful reporting emerging that is meaningful the student, makes sense to the parents and gives teachers a clear sense of where to next.

Mr WHITBY: I think the opportunity is there to sort of think about how and when we did that sort of data. If we come back to a continuum—let us demystify the year, for example. Every child should know what is expected of them in this year instead of waking up and seeing what is going to happen next week. You have got this continuum so that they can have a discussion with their parents and the parents can pretty much say, "Hang on. Your continuum says you should be here. You are reading to me tonight." Those sorts of things are going to be finding those answers. COVID-19 again proved to us that parents were starting to ask those questions. I had one parent say to me during the homeschooling, "I finish at midday. What do you do with them with the rest of the day?" I do not know the level of teaching that that parent was doing, but the point was not lost on me.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes, but you only have to talk to your own kids and others. Some teachers say that this is the goal for the next term or semester and they kind of bring the kids along on that journey with them. In other cases, it is kind of stumbling from lesson to lesson. You are not quite sure where you are going.

Mr WHITBY: It is like a lucky dip. I wonder how the teacher is going to be feeling today.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It does go to that question about communication with parents. I know you also raise this issue in your submission about ensuring the parents and community gain understanding of the curriculum review process in order to support the curriculum change process, but how might we improve the kind of mechanism for parent communication? Is that not just a further impost on teachers? They are already time pressed. How do we actually make that happen?

Ms MANNING: I think we came leaps and bounds during COVID-19 because we saw each other as essential partners. Really, the learning could not happen without that partnership between the teachers, parents and students. It is a three-way partnership. I think it is one of those things. It has just been exponential learning

for us in that in terms of how we communicate with our parents, what is meaningful to them and where they want to be in that learning. It is not—it is harder for some than for others, but we are seeing in our schools much more focus on the student-led conferences with parents. We have some schools using terrific technology called Seesaw in the very youngest years. That just opens up that pathway between what is happening the classroom and the parents. Because people got used to that during COVID-19, it has stayed nicely with.

We are looking at really trying to bring that across all of our schools. We have terrific Google technologies that enable parents to be able to see into what is happening in portfolio-style learning and then in the older years the students have different ways of being able to do that as well. We have come a long way. It is not so much extra work. Having those relationships with parents is there in our teaching standards. We have just not known how to do it in a more spontaneous, ongoing way. We have left it to what has been mandated: having a parent teacher night or reporting twice a year. We have not really experimented with that until COVID-19 has shown us how powerful it can be.

The CHAIR: Unfortunately, we have to wrap up the evidence in that part of the hearing for our morning break. Thank you very much to Maura and Gregory for your participation and involvement. I am sure many of the Committee members got good information from it.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

DANIELA GIORGI, Senior Education Officer, Parliamentary Education and Engagement, affirmed and examined

JEANNIE DOUGLASS, Senior Manager, Parliamentary Education and Engagement, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: It is indeed a pleasure to welcome our parliamentary education and engagement officers, who do such wonderful work with schools and other activities around the building. They are very much appreciated by members of Parliament across the spectrum and across the two Houses. I thank you both for your participation today and your excellent submission. Do either of you wish to make an opening statement or go straight to questions and answers?

Ms DOUGLASS: I will say a couple of words, if that is okay. Firstly, I thank the Committee for inviting us here to discuss our submission. Secondly, I just wanted to mention civics and citizenship education. I know there is a lot of confusion amongst teachers as to what that actually is. There is a discrete subject in the national curriculum called Civics and Citizenship Education, and for New South Wales it is embedded in the History and Geography syllabus. But for Ms Giorgi and I, and the Parliamentary Education Engagement team, by "civics education" we mean an understanding of the Parliament, of the legislature; of what the Westminster system is; of how laws are made; of the Australian Constitution; and of what happened at Federation. This is not mandatory anymore in secondary education. What we would hope, and what we will recommend, is that that topic—which is called "Making a Nation" and is currently optional in year 10—we would like to be mandatory. That is why we are here today, and that is our recommendation.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. I start by saying that that is the core of your submission. Could I get some of the background on where it all went wrong? It seems hard to believe there is a mandatory subject on Rights and Freedoms—they are obviously important, and you are recommending that stays as mandatory. But one would have thought that subject, Rights and Freedoms, would come off a base of an understanding of the institutions themselves that can confer rights and freedoms in a society. It is very lopsided to have the mandatory subject and then the non-mandatory one. When did it become non-mandatory? Going back, I certainly recall Bob Carr and others as leaders in this place talking about the importance of civics and the understanding of our institutions.

Ms DOUGLASS: My understanding is a new syllabus came out at the end of 2012, which was fully implemented by 2015, and it was taken out at that point. You have still got all the other topics that you mentioned there, like the 1967 referendum, for example—they are all still there—but the course that looked at Federation and the legislature was made optional from 2015; prior to that it was mandatory. Why that was taken out, I do not know. I do not know the answer to that, I am afraid, unless Ms Giorgi has some ideas.

Ms GIORGI: I do not have the answer, either. In my opinion, right back to two decades ago—when, in 1999, the previous history syllabus began to include civics and citizenship, and right through—there has always been a sense that teaching about the Parliament and teaching about those institutions is really hard and really difficult. I think teachers lacked confidence. There was the Discovering Democracy funding that came through nationally, which I think helped a lot. When that dried up, that professional development money was not there. I think the other thing is that previous syllabus had embedded civics and citizenship in the curriculum, but there was also the School Certificate, and civics and citizenship was a test in the School Certificate in year 10. That School Certificate ended. I guess that lack of confidence then made itself felt in teachers in teaching democracy by it being removed in the syllabus. That is my opinion of how it may have come about.

The CHAIR: Would you argue that it is more important than ever to have these mandatory learning areas? It is probably more the fault of us politicians than the education system, but generally trust in our political institutions and parties has fallen. There seems to be less public enthusiasm for the high ideals of democracy. It appears to be more important than ever, but is there a teaching method here to—the buzzword in the Masters review is "engagement" and students being excited about their learning. I suppose my observation is that students who have excursions to this building or to Parliament House in Canberra are engaged and excited by that because they can see the practical consequences and dimension of what they are studying. But is there something else that you would recommend to make this an engaged area of learning in an era of a deficit of democratic trust?

Ms DOUGLASS: I think that is absolutely true. Certainly the feedback from any of us who engage with students who come here, as well as my colleagues at the Australian Parliament, is that students love visiting the Parliament, and they learn a lot from going on their Chamber tours and having the workshops that we provide. I think that is absolutely true. But going to what Ms Giorgi said, we are hoping to create a lot of professional development for teachers so they can better understand how to teach the legislature. I think that would help to

engage students. I think it is really important that we go down that path to assist teachers in an area that they do appear to be quite confused about.

Ms GIORGI: I also think there is nothing like having to do something to build your confidence and build your knowledge. I do really believe, if we were to make that Making a Nation topic compulsory again, that teachers would engage. Once teachers are engaged, students would engage as well. It would give providers of civics and citizenship education such as ourselves the impetus to be able to support them fully. I think people will not engage in something if they do not have to. To just broaden it a little bit more, I think Australians, for example, engage in their elections because it is compulsory. You have other countries where it is not compulsory and they do not engage as much, until they kind of have to. Yes, I agree that it is an important area.

Ms DOUGLASS: We certainly think that mandatory voting is absolutely critical. But what you notice, for example, in the UK is that civics and citizenship—or a type of civics and citizenship—is taught from kindergarten all the way through because voting is not mandatory. I hope that we do not have a view here that you have to vote anyway, so it does not really matter if you do not understand it. It is really important to have that understanding of exactly what is going on in our democracy and in our legislature.

The CHAIR: Finally, from me: Have you got any data on the proportion of schools in Sydney-Wollongong-Newcastle that would visit Parliament House? Over the 13 years of schooling, what proportion of students would actually benefit from the excursion here? How organised are schools in pursuing the opportunities that you offer in the building?

Ms DOUGLASS: The biggest group that come here are stage three—that is, years 5 and 6. We get more than 10,000 students from years 5 and 6 coming to the Parliament. In Parliamentary Education, we run videoconferencing for all the regional and rural schools and we get thousands of primary school teachers. The issue goes back to the fact that this is an option in the syllabus at the moment in year 10. If it was mandatory, perhaps we would see more secondary student visitors. All of the secondary students who come here are Legal Studies and Commerce students, and that is an elective; the year 11 elective is Legal Studies and year 10 is Commerce. Of the about 3,000 secondary students per year who come here, they are all studying either Commerce or Legal Studies. We would like that to be part of the History—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry, you said there are more than 10,000 a year?

Ms DOUGLASS: Primary school students, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The 10,000 is per year?

Ms DOUGLASS: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And it is not mandatory in the primary school curriculum—

Ms DOUGLASS: No, it is in years 5 and 6. Many of them come here to Parliament and many of them do the videoconferencing. Then, of course, there are plenty of teachers who teach it in the classroom but do not go on an excursion.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How does it—and, again, this is reflecting back to my time at school—but how does a visit to the State Parliament interact with a visit to the Federal Parliament? Do you visit one or the other? Are students encouraged to do both? How does that work?

Ms DOUGLASS: I do not have any actual statistics on that, but probably around 60,000 or 70,000 primary school kids go to Canberra. If Committee members went themselves—and many of us went to Canberra when we were at school, a long time ago—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Not that long ago!

Ms DOUGLASS: You would go to Canberra for two or three days and you would go to the War Memorial, the Museum of Australian Democracy and the Australian Parliament. There is some funding attached to that to help you with the transport costs; we do not have that here. We are, I suppose, in competition with the Australian Parliament. But we do have some schools that come here and then they go to Canberra as well, but there would be very few of those. We could have more primary schools come here—it would be fantastic to drag them back here—but there is that incentive to go to Canberra because you get more bang for your buck, I suppose.

The CHAIR: Is that 60 or 70,000 a New South Wales figure?

Ms DOUGLASS: That is just New South Wales students going to Canberra.

Ms GIORGI: I want to go back to Mr Latham's previous question about why it might be that that change happened—that the "Making a nation" topic was pulled out of the curriculum. It does appear as compulsory in the

primary syllabus in year 5 and 6, and they do learn about Federation and they do learn about the three levels of government. What I believe, as well, is that the curriculum writers saw it as compulsory in year 5 and 6 and they have said, "It is not necessary in year 9 and 10." We really believe that it really is more necessary in year 9 and 10 because they are so much closer to a voting age. I do not think it should be taken out in year 5 and 6, but I do not know that it needs to be as deep and detailed in the primary curriculum as it is now, and that could be shifted to year 9 and 10 history. Sorry, that came to me when you were talking about primary.

The CHAIR: No, that helps.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: My understanding is that in the United Kingdom there is an understanding that every single student will at some point go through Westminster. Do you think we need to have some kind of understanding that kids—wherever they are from—need to be able to come to the Parliament at some point during their schooling career?

Ms DOUGLASS: Yes, that would be great. I do not know how you enforce such a thing. I guess that takes time to get teachers to recognise that this is a good thing to do. We try and reach out to students and teachers all the time and get as many to come as we can, but, yes, that would be fantastic to have that. But you are right—in the UK Parliament, everybody goes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I just wanted to associate myself with the comments of the Chair. We appreciate very much that the Parliamentary Education and Engagement office does. It is a fantastic resource for our Parliament in promoting our work that we do. Thank you.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I also thank you ladies for coming in. What a fabulous submission you have put to us; it certainly has woken me up. I was not aware that "Making a nation" topic, which is pretty fundamental, is sort of an elective in years 9 and 10. I found your comments on that really illuminating; thank you for that. I really just agree wholeheartedly with what you put forward, so I really do not have any questions except to say thank you, again, for coming in.

Ms DOUGLASS: Thank you.

Ms GIORGI: Thank you.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Thank you for your submission. I will take a bit of a contrarian position in relation to this. I think your submission actually highlights one of the fundamental tensions around curriculum review, which is that there are a whole range of interests that want to see their topic embedded in the curriculum. How do we reconcile this issue? Obviously you have come here; we are all politicians and we all love the idea of teaching kids more about politics and the political system.

The Hon. WES FANG: Members of Parliament is probably a better term.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Legislators.

The Hon. WES FANG: Legislators—members of Parliament.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: We are a soft audience, but ultimately there are many disciplines and subjects that have areas where they would like to see some expansion in terms of their discipline in the curriculum. How do we reconcile that tension with the process of trying to slim down the curriculum and get rid of crowding of it?

Ms DOUGLASS: I guess I would just say, the subject is already there, "Making a nation"; the thing is, it is an option. There are mandatory topics that a history teacher has to complete in year 10, but this one is not one of them, so we are just recommending that you make it mandatory. In year 9 and year 10, every single student in New South Wales has to do history; they have to do 100 hours in year 9 and 100 hours in year 10. We are recommending that of those 100 hours that this "Making a nation", which is about Federation, should be mandatory.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: If you mandate, obviously something else is either going to get squeezed out or you have to increase the number of hours. My view is that I think we have lost the balance in terms of the emphasis on literacy and numeracy to the exclusion of a whole range of other areas of the curriculum. Personally, I would be supportive of that, but what else would have to go? Or do you think that the mandatory hours need to be expanded in history to accommodate this change?

Ms GIORGI: I think there are enough hours to add that topic as mandatory and not take anything out because currently in year 9 and 10 it is not mandated how long you spend on each topic. So, to be honest, if you do not like it as a teacher, you can just spend a week or a day. However, if you say that it is mandated, a teacher will be forced to look at it, even in a small period, and you could mandate the amount of time that you worked on

that. I think when we have compulsory voting in Australia and in New South Wales we cannot say that it is a topic that we can or cannot do.

I think it is absolutely necessary, but I am a "civics-and-citizenship-o-phile" so I would say that, but we have to drive on the left, we have to vote and we have to pay taxes. I really see it is irresponsible that we do not learn about the basics of our Constitution and our democratic institutions so that we know how to make those decisions. I do not see it as, "It is too crowded a curriculum; this is a namby-pamby subject on the side." This is absolutely essential for any adult in Australia to know about. We have seen the consequences both here and overseas when people do not know who to vote for, or more not "do not know who to vote for", rather do not have the confidence to sit back and think about the institutions and what they want as our society—but I would say that.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Hear, hear!

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I was studying teaching back in the mid-90s and there was much talk about the civics syllabus coming through; it never seemed to make it. I just wonder whether maybe you could explain why we never ended up with a standalone civics and citizenship syllabus in New South Wales.

Ms GIORGI: I believe that the New South Wales Board of Studies at the time and a lot of the teachers felt that our curriculum in New South Wales was extremely strong as it was, and they did not want to add an extra subject. Also, a lot of people felt that civics and citizenship is best taught embedded within subjects like history and geography where you get a context for it and you get examples, and I have come to believe that myself actually. In the 90s I was a person that believed civics and citizenship should be taught separately. I still believe that but I have seen that previous syllabus to now—the history one in particular but also the geography one because that has been dramatically changed and civics and citizenship has been removed from that as well—and I saw those syllabuses and I really thought they were great in terms of how civics was taught.

So I have come across to that belief that it can be done in history and geography. New South Wales wanted to protect its history and geography teaching because we did feel that we were very good at that. In fact, I used to hear people say that we were leaders in Australia in our history and geography teaching so they did not want to take out the civics, they wanted it to remain as part of the history that was being taught. But, again, that is my view of it from then to now.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I could find time. We could just replace special religious education with civics and that would be great, wouldn't it? You could have time every week.

The Hon. WES FANG: Is there a question there?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I would ask you to comment on that, but I think it is unfair. Like the Hon. Anthony D'Adam, I see a whole lot of value in civics, but is it our job to actually mandate the outcome of the curriculum review? Or is it our job to say, "We think this is really important. We would like it to be in the mix when you are considering what the outcomes will be"? It is more the latter, is it not?

Ms DOUGLASS: Yes, we think it should be in the mix, definitely, and given we are not asking for a new subject to be written—the subject already exists—it is simply just ticking a box next to it and saying it is mandatory. It is pretty simple from my point of view.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes, but if there is one thing I am picking up from this Committee, it is that the curriculum review is anything but simple. There are a whole lot of complex value judgements and everything you choose to do is an opportunity cost about what you cannot do. I suppose, in light of that, is the recommendation you are asking for saying, "Yes, this must be" or "Yes, this should be in the mix and seriously considered." It is probably more realistically the second, is it not?

Ms DOUGLASS: Yes.

Ms GIORGI: Yes, I think so.

The Hon. WES FANG: Just playing devil's advocate, and I do not disagree with the premise you put forward, I guess I just know from my own experience that I did not have Civics—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You'd never know it.

The CHAIR: Okay, let us stick to the questions.

The Hon. WES FANG: I guess that is where I was leading to this. Is it important to have it as a standalone, or, I was going to say, playing devil's advocate, is it not more important to have it interspersed amongst all topics, not just history and geography so that it permeates the course throughout and it is not a distinct, separate

component, but acknowledged as something that needs to be viewed across the spectrum because it has many and varied instances in our lives? What would be your thoughts on that?

Ms GIORGI: It is currently in all the syllabuses in New South Wales. They have a learning across the curriculum section and Civics and Citizenship appears there in all of them. So that flavour of Civics and Citizenship, which does permeate everything we do in life and possibly all of the topics that we study, teachers are supposed to put that in and look at it from a Civics and Citizenship perspective. I think they possibly do, I do not know, but in that sense though those institutions that we are here to represent, like Parliament or knowledge of the Australian constitution, if you do not make that particular topic mandatory, that fundamental aspect may or may not be taught across the board. But I do agree with that idea that it should permeate a whole lot of things because it is part of our life.

The Hon. WES FANG: I was coming back to my own experience where I never had that as a standalone topic, but I guess I drew from the instances of which I was taught and that is sort of where my interest grew in politics. So, again devil's advocate, whether it is actually required or it is a further cluttering and it is not something that we can include into distinct components. But I take your point that it would make visits to Parliament, for example, hard.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I think we have had a few devil's advocates so maybe I will be the guider of the cause or God's advocate on this one. Just looking at other States, you mentioned before that there is a standalone civics course that is adopted in a lot of other States. Is it a compulsory component in other States to cover it?

Ms DOUGLASS: Yes. Civics and Citizenship is taught in every other State and Territory. Quite a few of the States have just adopted the national curriculum so they have it as a discrete subject and some have done the across the curriculum-type approach, but it is taught in every State and Territory.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So New South Wales is the only State then as an outlier where it is not mandatory. Is that correct to say?

Ms DOUGLASS: You do find it in year 10 Commerce and year 11 Legal Studies and it is mandatory in years 5 and 6.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: But year 10 Commerce and Legal Studies are also optional.

Ms DOUGLASS: They are electives, yes.

Ms GIORGI: The thing we are saying is it is not mandatory, that particular topic about the constitution and federation, but Civics and Citizenship itself is mandatory across Australia. It is what topics have been used or not used in the different States and Territories, that is up to the States.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: But your argument is that in terms of the history syllabus in year 10 that it is an optional component there.

Ms DOUGLASS: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to other nations, I think the Hon. Courtney Houssos raised the UK system where every child is expected to go to Westminster at some point. What is the approach to Civics and Citizenship in other countries around the world, from your knowledge?

Ms DOUGLASS: I would have to take that as a question on notice. I am not sure off the top of my head.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is a big question.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It is. I just wondered if there were any international examples that we could refer to as well.

Ms DOUGLASS: I would have to take that as a question on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Sure. If there is anything you would like to put forward to the Committee I would be very happy to hear it.

The CHAIR: Any other questions?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Just in terms of when students come in—and I am really thinking the band 3 kids—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Stage 3.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Stage 3 kids—do you have a system in place or a policy in place where you allocate MPs?

Ms DOUGLASS: When a primary school teacher makes a booking, that triggers an email straightaway to the member of where the school is located—so the electorate office of the member—and that member is invited. Some of them, if they are in vicinity or if it is a sitting day, for example, they will come and introduce themselves to the schools, but not too many members are able to come because with primary schools they tend to want to come on a non-sitting day and the reason for that is they want to go in the Chambers and do a role play and they cannot do that obviously if you guys are in the Chamber.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It might help the legislation-making process if they can come in.

Ms DOUGLASS: Okay, then.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So it seems to be on non-sitting days.

Ms DOUGLASS: Our primary schools tend to come on non-sitting days, secondary tend to come on sitting days because they want to see the Parliament in session. Our team runs a legal studies workshop where they come around 11 o'clock and we run a series of workshops looking at how the legislature works; they then go into both Chambers in the public gallery and watch the Parliament in session—not question time, the rest of the time.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So there is not really any structured involvement with the upper House with the primary school kids.

Ms DOUGLASS: They visit both Chambers, they have a tour of both Chambers, but no member of the upper House is specifically invited to go and visit the school group when they are in the Chamber. Is that what you mean?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is exactly what I mean. Is that something you would be willing to have a look at and maybe talk with the Clerks about having some, because there are two co-equal Chambers?

Ms DOUGLASS: Sure.

The CHAIR: I think in that regard, certain upper House members—I am one of them—probably more like regional type MLCs; south-west Sydney, my patch; I know Wagga and the southern districts for the Hon. Wes Fang, and the list goes on around the table—it might be useful just to survey upper House members to say if there are schools from a certain area "would you like to be notified and come along and have a chat with them?" We could not cover the whole State but you would probably find in the nature of our Chamber we would cover a large part of the geography and if there is no lower House member available—I know we are sort of a cut above them—you can bring us in and get a higher standard of presentation from the MLCs. It would help cover those gaps, would it not?

Ms DOUGLASS: Yes, it would. Certainly with our leadership program, we invite school captains from every secondary school in New South Wales and most of you have participated in that program. You come and speak, and I certainly know you have and so has Mr Shoebridge and Ms Houssos. We also have one for year 11, a Young Women's Leadership Program, and Courtney has also participated in that a number of times. So we do always invite the upper House members, but for the primary school program we have not, up until this point, but I am very happy to look into that.

The CHAIR: Technically, we represent them all, but I think there is an element of specialisation—the regions that we are interested in, and I think, particularly if the lower House member is not available, it gives them a politician, a representative to bounce some questions off. Thanks for that and thanks for the overall presentation, which I am sure will find its way into an important part of our deliberations and report. Thank you very much.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

BELLA d'ABRERA, Director, Foundations of Western Civilisation Program, Institute of Public Affairs, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you for your time today. Would you like to make a short statement at the beginning of your evidence or go straight to questions and answers?

Dr d'ABRERA: I think I would rather go straight to questions and answers.

The CHAIR: I might kick-off in that regard and just ask for the substance of what you are wanting the Committee to recommend, because one of the issues about the Masters review is that it is described as a broad architecture for the curriculum rather than a deep dive into the detail. But one of the points that I raised in my discussion paper was to say that it is possible for a student in the early high school years of studying history to choose the Ottoman Empire, the Khmer Empire and the Mongol expansion. By those choices and subsequent electives, you can avoid any history study of Rome or Greece through to the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the rise of liberalism. So is it your submission that we need to have mandatory areas of study in history that go to the core values, achievements and purposes of western civilisation?

Dr d'ABRERA: Yes, so my review deals with two of the terms of reference for the Committee. The second one refers to the adequacy of the content and depth of Australian history, pre- and post-1788, and, of course, you cannot really talk about "pre" and "post" Australian history without actually referring to western civilisation. And, as you pointed out, it is very easy for a student to get through most of their secondary schooling without knowing anything about western civilisation or Australia's debt to 2,000 years of history that came before 1788 in terms of European and ancient Greece and ancient Rome and everything else. So my recommendation is that this be incorporated into the curriculum and that students do have an opportunity to learn about the debt that we owe to western civilisation. For that reason, as part of my submission I included a western civilisation curriculum that we hope that the New South Wales Government will take on board.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Furthermore, one of the things I have been fascinated by is how Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu* has worked its way into our schools in preference, seemingly, to more established, better regarded historians from opposite ends of the spectrum like Geoffrey Blainey and Manning Clark. Do you feel that there is an overall decline in what actually constitutes history in the way it is studied in schools, that feelings are now given priority to actual historical fact? While it is a nice notion that the Indigenous at the time of 1788 had villages and advanced agriculture, it does not actually correspond with history. It is actually disrespectful to the Indigenous culture and the truth about it.

Dr d'ABRERA: There certainly is a moving away from teaching history in terms of facts and a linear approach to history, which has been very unfashionable for a number of years. Australia is following the United Kingdom in that respect. The United Kingdom has actually gone back to trying to teach a linear version of history because students just have no idea what is going on. They do not know that the Renaissance came before the scientific revolution or that the Enlightenment came after the Reformation. What has happened to history is that it has become a study of society and a study of contemporary issues, rather than things that happened 100 years ago or 200 years ago or 1,000 years ago.

So when you look at the New South Wales curriculum, which takes quite a large portion of how history is taught from the national curriculum, there is an emphasis on environmentalism, there is an emphasis on society, there is an emphasis on colonialism, there is an emphasis on Indigenous rights. And these are all decent topics in their own—these are topics that should be taught in the curriculum but not to the detriment of the teaching of history so that Australian students have an idea of what came before. At the moment it seems to be history classes are really becoming classes where students are becoming on the other end of political activism and are more aware of what is going on now than of what came before. This is a problem. This is why we need to go back to teaching straight history. It is not fashionable but people need to know.

The CHAIR: Right, and on that linear progression of history and the teaching of it, are you submitting that there should be smaller chunks of established learning in these areas, rather than whole units, a whole term, taken up with just one subject? I know of a school where, in year 7 and 8 history, they have spent a whole term on the Vikings but nothing on the importance of Roman and Greek empire history and what it means for our institutions today. So when you say "go to linear", are you saying smaller chunks of the bare basics or to maintain the current system where there is a very deep dive into areas whereby at the end of it the kids are wondering how much they really need to know or can they know about the Vikings?

Dr d'ABRERA: I think what needs to happen and what would be a sensible idea, and I think educationally would make sense, would be in the early years you get an overview of western civilisation, which is what our curriculum is about. It is designed to teach year 7 to 10 history and it is designed to accompany civics

and citizenship. It starts in ancient Rome and it goes through the ages and it ends up in modern Australia. There is a time line. There is a linear aspect to it that will educate the children about where it began, what happened in the middle, where we are now and where we are going. At the moment, as you say, they just get the Vikings, which is interesting and worthy of study—and all these topics alone are worthy of study—but how can they understand it if they do not know what came before the Vikings or after the Vikings?

Similarly in Australia if you miss the elective on ancient Rome or Greece, how are you going to know what—and you do not know anything about what happened in England between 1600 and 1750. That is completely absent from the curriculum. There is no mention of the civil war, there is no mention of the Glorious Revolution. There is absolutely no mention of the birth of liberalism. If you have no idea why we have the rights that we have—according to the curriculum, human rights were invented in 1945. There is no mention of Magna Carta. So, through no fault of their own, Australian children are getting glimpses into history but they are not getting the full, expansive "why we live in this country that we live in today and where our rights and freedoms come from" because it is this thematic and this deep dive into thematic history, which then bears no relation to what came before and what happened afterwards.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I appreciate your submission. I want to pick up the cross-curriculum priorities, which you identified in your submission. Do you really think it is preferable to terminate these cross-curriculum priorities or, indeed, add western civilisation as another? Which preference do you have?

Dr d'ABRERA: My preference would be to get rid of cross-curriculum priorities altogether because I think even adding another one, a western civilisation one, would overcrowd the curriculum even more. One of the things that came through the Masters review continually was the problem with overcrowding, and it does not make sense to add another one. I think it would be to the detriment of the teachers and the students if suddenly you had to put western civilisation in. It does not make sense. Why would you put a cross-curriculum priority about western civilisation in mathematics? Just as sustainability does not belong there and Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander histories do not belong in mathematics.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I suppose the same argument would be put in relation to including western civilisation in the current curriculum in the sense that it adds another thing. I understand that you are suggesting just take bites rather than doing deep dives in relation to context. You might have heard the discussion we had with the previous witnesses about the "Making a Nation" elective.

Dr d'ABRERA: No, I was not privy to that discussion.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Okay. We were talking about "Making a Nation", which at the moment is a history elective rather than a compulsory item for year 9 and year 10. Effectively it looks at how we have been established as a nation, the Australian Constitution, the Houses of Parliament and representative democracy. So are you suggesting that we rewind back to include whole institutions of western civilisation way back to the Magna Carta on that trip through history to our current institutions as part of a broad but defined and direct compulsory part of years 9 and 10 history?

Dr d'ABRERA: Yes, I think that would be a preferable resolution to the problem at the moment. I think it should be compulsory and I think a lot of school is compulsory for the reasons that Australians need to know this. And I think it would be a very wise idea to bring in this history in years 9 and 10, as you suggest; teach them about the last 2,000 years. It does not have to be incredibly deep but they have to have some understanding of where their rights and freedoms come from. At the moment they are just not getting that. I am a historian, so I am a bit biased, but I think history should be compulsory in years 11 and 12 as well. I think it is the most important thing apart from literacy and numeracy, which has its own problems at the moment. I think history is something that everyone needs to know. You need to know where you are coming from and you need to know what this country is in order to be future leaders. I think it is vital. That is another question, but I do believe that it should be compulsory.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you for your time today and for your submission. I just wanted to ask you one quick question. I should apologise because I realise that you cannot actually see any of us in the room.

Dr d'ABRERA: No, I really cannot.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you for being so engaging. This is something that I have raised with IT and with our Committee staff. I know that we are trying to fix it because it is a bit disconcerting. We heard from our previous witness—which you may not have heard—the Parliamentary Education Office. They put to us that in year nine and 10 history should be a compulsory part of the curriculum. It is called "making a

nation" and it involves a visit to Parliament and also an understanding of where our parliamentary system and democracy comes from. Do you think that should be a compulsory part of the curriculum?

Dr d'ABRERA: I think it should. It would make sense, though, if it was taught in conjunction with the idea that Australia is a product of liberalism and that they are connected. You cannot really talk about democracy if you do not talk about the history of [inaudible]. To have one by itself is a good idea, but it would be preferable to give them the whole package. Do not just say, "We are a parliamentary democracy." You need to talk about why. Where did this come from? What was happening in Britain during the Enlightenment? What was happening in terms of the suffragettes? What was happening in terms of voting? You need to know what was happening before 1788 in order to understand why the Australian early colonists went down the road that they did and why we have this liberal democracy today. I think it is an excellent idea, but it needs to be taught in conjunction with a decent discussion about what was going on in Britain that meant that we were part of this liberal project.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you very much, Dr d'Abrera, for being here today and being with us virtually. Just looking at your submission and some of the cross-cultural objectives that you outline in your submission, particularly when it comes to maths you mentioned several Indigenous examples where they were incorporated into the maths syllabus. I am just looking for your perspective. So, your contention is that that confuses children's learning when it comes to items like maths?

Dr d'ABRERA: My opinion is that they do not need to be in there. If you are trying to work out adding and subtracting, why would you bring in a method that is just going to distract the children from actually having to work out what 10 minus six is? It does not seem to belong there. Equally, putting something like that in languages—I was having a look through Arabic, which would be extremely difficult to learn, yet they have decided that you have to have the cross-curriculum priorities in Arabic when you are studying this modern language, which makes absolutely no sense to me. It is already difficult enough to grapple with English-Arabic translation.

Now that you are told as a student that you have to somehow think about an Indigenous word—that does not make any sense. Why not just leave it alone? Why bring in these cross-curriculum priorities when you are learning modern languages? There is no room for this ideology, because these cross-curriculum priorities are ideology. That is why they are called priorities. The IPA has been maintaining since 2014 that they have no place in the national curriculum and they have no place in the New South Wales curriculum because they do confuse. It is already difficult enough to learn these things as a student. Being told that you have to think about sustainability while you are looking at three-dimensional space does not make any sense.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Your contention would be the same if it was Western civilisation that was a cross-cultural priority, as you outlined to the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox before?

Dr d'ABRERA: Yes. It has no place in there, either. It is a completely different subject. This is the problem. You just need to teach them how to read and write. Do not bring an ideology. Do not bring in these extra cross-curriculum priorities. It makes it more difficult for the teacher, for a start. There are a lot of reasons why the literacy and numeracy rates are plummeting in this country. As I have maintained in my submission and as we have maintained since 2014, it is because they overcrowd the curriculum. You just need to stick them back, get back to the basics and start teaching children how to read and write without bringing in sustainability and all these other things, including Western civilisation. It would not belong in there either.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you. It is a little bit off topic, but in terms of the distinction we have in place at stage six of ancient and modern history, do you think that lends itself in some way to cutting out much of the significance of Western civilisation in the syllabus?

Dr d'ABRERA: Do you mean it starts at ancient history and then—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Well, you have two choices. You can elect to do ancient history in stage six or elect to do modern history. When it comes to ancient history, you are probably going back to a lot of the ideals of the Romans, ancient Greece and the like. When it comes to modern history, you are looking largely at the nineteenth and twentieth century. Do you think that leaves a very large chunk of formative history out of our education in the senior years, at least?

Dr d'ABRERA: Yes. Again, it would make sense to give an overview in the earlier years—in year nine and year eight—of Western civilisation, narrow down as you progress towards year 12, and then you can specialise just like a university degree. Ideally in your first year at university you get a broad sweep of the history and then you specialise. It does not make any sense to talk about ancient Greece. When they do talk about ancient Greece in the curriculum, it is mostly social. There is very little mention of democracy. It is mostly, "What were the ancient Greeks doing?"

It is good, but it does not really set the scene for what happens over the next 2,000 years and why Australia has a connection to ancient Greece. Leaving a gap in the middle is impoverishing students. You need to tell them what happened in between. It brings me back to my original point: History is linear. It does not jump all over the place. Ancient Greece does not make sense if you do not talk about what came afterwards. Australia does not make sense if you do not talk about what happened in England in the seventeenth century. It is very basic.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Following on from that linear point that you make, you mentioned earlier that some other countries are returning to a linear style of history teaching, rather than the thematic style that we engage in at the moment. Have you got any references to that or other countries that we should be looking at?

Dr d'ABRERA: I know that the UK does. I know that they had a review of their curriculum under Michael Gove about three or four years ago. I do not want to be quoted on that, so if the Committee does not mind, I will try and find that information and send it to you.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I am very happy for you to take that one on notice.

Dr d'ABRERA: I suspect that Singapore also teaches a very linear approach to history, as well, but again I am not an expert.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I think you mentioned in terms of your submission a reference to Singapore and other countries. Do any of those employ the cross-cultural priorities that we do in Australia?

Dr d'ABRERA: Australia is the only country in the world that has cross-curriculum priorities. No other country has those in the national curriculum.

The CHAIR: I could just add an extra question and that is along the line of these cross-curriculum priorities. We had an informal briefing with Professor Masters. I suppose if you read his report carefully, he seems to be suggesting that New South Wales should make a departure from the national approach. If you take the area of Indigenous, he is recommending a standalone subject and units on Indigenous studies, which would take in history, culture and so forth. That seems to be in lieu of abandoning the cross-curriculum priority on Indigenous. You could also fairly say that when that priority was established on engagement with Asia, it was really engagement with China, which is not going as well as it used to these days.

The final one, sustainability—why in a recession sustainability is more important that economic growth and providing jobs and material benefits for people is never fully explained. It seems that in light of what Professor Masters had to say one of the mysteries is—and we will talk to him later on—why there is no explicit recommendation about abandoning the cross-curriculum priorities. It just seems to be implicit in other things that he is saying. But across the board none of these areas selected in a different time in different circumstances seem to be going as well as they were meant to go.

Dr d'ABRERA: Well, the idea at the time was that they were fashionable. As you know, this is the problem with fashion. It is no longer fashion after five or 10 years. What was fashionable then is no longer fashionable now, so they have no business being there, not only because they overcrowd but because they are not relevant anymore. I also wonder why Professor Masters did not explicitly recommend the removal of the cross curriculum priorities. That is one thing that has prompted me to actually include them in my submission. We do actually have to get rid of the thing. I would be very interested to see what happens.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I just wanted to pick up that point. It seems to me that the Australian curriculum is putting this in play and we are picking it up from the Australian curriculum so far as these cross-curriculum priorities are concerned. It is a "damned if you do and damned if you don't" sort of approach. Obviously, what we do in New South Wales may have implications in relation to how we institute a review of the Australian curriculum. Maybe that is something we should consider. Is a review of the Australian curriculum something that you would be advocating as well in relation to this approach in the teaching of history?

Dr d'ABRERA: Absolutely. I think there is actually a review starting in January for the national curriculum. I will be making a submission to that and looking in-depth at the teaching of history again and the same problem with the cross-curriculum priorities. As I have mentioned before, the IPA has been recommending since they were incorporated and embedded that they be unembedded. I am going to be making a submission to that. I would hope that, if the national curriculum did finally rid itself of these cross-curriculum priorities, the New South Wales Government would also follow suit.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Bella, for your time and submission. Good luck there in Melbourne.

(The witness withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

GRANT BYRNE, President, Institute of Technology Education, affirmed and examined

JANE POWLES, Executive Officer, Science Teachers Association of NSW, sworn and examined

MARGARET SHEPHERD, President, Science Teachers Association of NSW, sworn and examined

DARIUS SAMOJLOWICZ, Executive Officer, Mathematical Association of NSW, affirmed and examined

KAREN MCDAID, President, Mathematical Association of NSW, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome the witnesses and reopen the hearing of our examination of the Masters curriculum review. I thank the representatives of the Mathematical Association of NSW, Science Teachers Association of NSW and Institute of Technology Education for being present. This is obviously our science, technology, engineering, and mathematics [STEM] panel, which is vitally important. I thank them for their submissions and time today. Would anyone like to make an opening statement to the Committee?

Mrs SHEPHERD: The Science Teachers Association represents the voice of over 2,500 New South Wales science teachers. We believe a full and complete implementation of Masters recommendations will support the development of a strong foundation for the future of our young people. This does not mean a reduction in rigour but will deliver a deep understanding of content knowledge and skills required to be internationally competitive. We believe Professor Masters consulted widely, effectively considered issues and made recommendations consistent with the terms of reference of his review. Whilst out of scope of the review, a planned process to outline the logistics of the reform was minimal in his final report. This now is the remit of NESA and it is imperative that NESA transparently engages and works with all associations in this process.

Work has begun already, but teachers have little input into the direction of this work. The argument for differentiated learning is sound and supported extensively in literature. Professor Masters responded appropriately in addressing, at a conceptual level, progression points and differentiated learning. The key principles of untimed syllabuses and deep learning provide a framework to support high achievement and a safety net for students falling behind. The review appropriately places in context the social and emotional wellbeing of students that underpins their capacity to learn. It also notes the community aspirations of supporting the social and emotional development of students. Whilst the need for reform was well articulated by Professor Masters, the Government's urgent, fast-tracked response is misplaced. We believe there is a strong need and urgency for change; however, this urgency does not mean rushing the reform implementation. Rather there is a strong imperative for considered and long-term change in curriculum.

This raises the question of how we are going to know that we have it right. What are the criteria of success for this reform? We want to see student progression mapped against standards. What we need is reform leadership and clear governance consistent with the Education Act. This strategic leadership needs to be robust in thinking and ensure that recommendations are transparent and derived from genuine consultation. In conclusion, we support the ambitious reform recommended by Professor Masters, albeit appropriately budgeted and as part of a long-term plan. The final report responded well to the needs identified by the school communities of New South Wales. The Masters Review recommendations are appropriately ambitious but, unfortunately, the truncated time frame is insufficient to deliver on the intent. Education reform must sit above party politics and be informed by evidence-based policy. To be effective, significantly more planning and transparent economic modelling with a commitment of appropriate budgets are required to ensure successful reform. The Government timeline for these reforms is not sufficient to allow appropriate processes, adequate preparation and development of syllabuses. This could be a missed opportunity.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: Thank you for the invitation to speak today. The membership of the Mathematical Association of NSW Inc. is made up of teachers, pre-service teachers and retired teachers from all over New South Wales who want the best for their students. We recognise that the education of the students in our care is vitally important to the ongoing development of society. As stakeholders in mathematics education, we appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the discussion around curriculum development and resource development. The New South Wales curriculum review is providing us an opportunity to examine what we are currently doing in education and ways in which we can improve student achievement. What we are striving for is a curriculum that is evidence based; provides opportunity for deep learning; is resourced appropriately; provides effective strategies to monitor, inform and report on achievement; and addresses societal expectations of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

A curriculum document should be underpinned by research about how learning and development occurs. It should be written in an unambiguous way, where learning priorities and core content that every student should engage with is clear. A curriculum should also allow classroom teachers to enrich and extend the conceptual

understanding of those learners who require enrichment, and to cater for those students who may require additional support. If this core content is clearly identifiable and sequenced in an appropriate way, and builds on the important non-negotiable concerts and conceptual understandings, then the curriculum begins to become decluttered for educators. Making connections between curriculum areas, and connections in student learning, should remain and continue to be developed as a core feature of curriculum documentation. The underpinning of literacy and numeracy skills should be explicit and integrated in all curriculum documentation at all year levels.

The Masters review recognised the importance of critical thinking, problem-solving, abstract thinking and statistical and analytical reasoning. These require further unpacking as to what they would look like, how they would be embedded in syllabi and the support mechanisms required to equip teachers to incorporate them effectively in their practice. Any curriculum reform should give due diligence to the impact that high-stakes testing has on student, teacher, parent and community expectations of what should and should not be taught in schools. Therefore, alongside a curriculum review in New South Wales there should also be a review of the way testing influences practice and how results are reported, as there can be adverse effects of public reporting of cohort achievement and media speculation.

Mr BYRNE: Thank you to the Committee for the opportunity to provide feedback today. The Institute of Technology Education was originally formed in 1966 as the Institute of Industrial Arts, so we have a long history there. We are a non-profit organisation run by volunteers. We do not have any paid members of the executive or anything there. We have a little over 2,100 members from 400 schools across all sectors—primary, secondary and university levels. The Institute aims to promote the importance of technology education and improve the opportunities available to teachers and students in our subjects. We run a lot of professional development for our teachers, which will be updated very soon. We represent teachers from all the different subject areas in Technologies, being kindergarten to year 6 Science and Technology and Stage 4 Technology Mandatory. After that stage 4 syllabus all of our subjects are electives, as the students choose to study our subjects, usually from years 8 or 9 onwards. They include Design and Technology, Agriculture, Textiles, Food, Engineering, Graphics Technology, and Industrial Technology, which has a number of focus areas within. We are a very broad learning area.

Many vocational educational and training [VET] teachers also come from the Technologies area. That leads into one of the big concerns for the Institute with the curriculum review: the lack of understanding, I guess, of the differences between the technologies area and vocational education. There is some concern that VET subjects may replace Technologies subjects—obviously, being here, we do not think that is the way to go forward. The lack of definition in the curriculum review final report around learning progressions and untimed syllabuses is also of concern. We do like the idea of all students completing a major project. This is something that a number of Technologies subjects already do, being Industrial Technology, Design and Technology, Textiles and Design. They have major projects, similar to other subjects. We also like the idea of developing those skills in applying knowledge, because we feel that this is something that the Technologies subjects do very well. However, at the same time, when the final report describes how those skills are to be developed at no time is "creating" or "making" used as a description. That is a little bit concerning. We certainly welcome the opportunity for change, but we do feel that it does need to be properly investigated, developed and implemented effectively.

The CHAIR: I will start with a few questions across the board, if witnesses can offer a response. One of the things that our inquiry has struggled with out of Masters is the implementation of the progression points. As it is put in the science submission, "Stages, not ages" might be a commendable theory, but one of the issues that the Committee is grappling with is the reality that so many students fall so far behind in our education system at the moment. For instance, New South Wales has 16,000 students starting year 7 every year who have not got strong or decent reading and writing skills off a generous minimum NAPLAN standard. What do we do with the students who would be getting to their senior years—years 11 and 12—who might only be at years 6 and 7 in their progression through the curriculum? How do they make up six years of learning in just two years of calendar time? It seems like an impossible task for them.

Ms McDAID: I can speak for the maths, obviously. At the moment there is a pilot running with the NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA] on the numeracy program that is designed specifically to pick up those particular students. From the maths community's perspective it is probably a little bit late, but at least it is making sure that those students are being picked up before they leave school and go on into the wider workforce. I think we are on the third pilot at the moment—is that correct, Mr Samojlowicz?

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: Just about to start the third pilot.

Ms McDAID: The third pilot is for next year, which means that there will be another two years before implementation. There is a way to go, but I must say that the resources and the support for teachers has been phenomenal. It would be wonderful if we could have that for every single syllabus, whether it is maths from

kindergarten right the way through to year 12, or whether it is science or technology or whatever it happens to be. I think the resourcing of syllabuses currently is lacking.

The CHAIR: Is the pilot getting positive results?

Ms McDAID: Very positive, yes.

The CHAIR: How is it achieving that?

Ms McDAID: There are a lot of resources being provided and a lot of professional development being provided for teachers. They are not just being shown what they have to teach but how to go about it and how to effectively engage the students.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: This particular syllabus is quite different and has been constructed and piloted quite differently to previous syllabuses that have gone in place. Along with the development of the syllabus has been the development of resources that have gone hand in hand with it. Teachers then have been provided a starting point of resources to implement this particular syllabus. Not only are they physical resources but they are the resourcing for teachers in their area of professional development.

So what this syllabus is, is a numeracy course for students in years 11 and 12, which is taught by secondary-trained teachers, however the beginnings of this particular syllabus actually have its foundations down in stage 2 and stage 3 curriculum areas. When you think about that, you have got a secondary teacher implementing a course for year 11 and 12 students that actually have not been trained in the stage 2 syllabus when they have gone through, so the resourcing that has gone hand in hand is teaching these teachers how to teach students at that developmental stage.

Going back to your question and the model that you put in place, if I have got a student six years behind in those upper years, you are not going to catch students up in two years of six years. What you need to be doing is looking at, "How are we supporting those students from those early years? What resources are in place and what strategies are in place to support those students from the early years?", so we try and reduce that gap at the other end in the example that you gave.

The CHAIR: That is professional development for teachers, but what about student motivation to be engaged learners? Because I think it may well just be a reality that is permanent in the system. Some students hate maths. Some students see maths as completely irrelevant to their learning interests and their future aspirations, and no matter what you do or say to them they will not engage in maths. I personally find that incredibly hard to believe and comprehend. I think maths is great for developing the skills of rationality and logic regardless of whether you use it after year 12, but there certainly is a cohort of students where maths is like Darth Vader.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: What this course has done is shown the students the importance of learning the maths skills, and once they have actually understood that importance of "how it applies to my life and how it will apply to the pathway that I am going to choose post-school" then we are starting to see the engagement with those particular students. This course is not mandatory; the students have self-selected to be in this particular course when they would never have chosen a maths course before because it is actually giving them those numeracy skills—there is a difference between mathematics and numeracy as well—for them to be able to engage in society.

The examples as part of the resourcing they are looking at is, "I am going to go buy my first car. I am going to go get a credit card. What do I need to be looking out for? What are the questions that I should be asking about compound interest when I am taking out loans?" These are some of those life skills that these students were not exposed to before or had already switched off, like you said, because, "I am no good at maths". But it is providing them those skills to have an awareness of, "The decisions I am making today, what impact that will have in my future." In short, if you engage students by making the learning directly relevant to their lives and the pathways that they are choosing, they will be engaged and they will be choosing those subjects.

The CHAIR: Right, but how far can they get through in the pathway to year 12 because realistically, under progression points, for the struggling cohort of students, by the time they leave year 12 they did not persist through to their 13th year of schooling. It may be like a school certificate type qualification—that you made progress up to year 8, 9 or 10, but you did not really get any further than that in completing the syllabus. Is that not a realistic problem or situation we are going to have to confront?

Ms McDAID: It is currently there because we have students who are not achieving the benchmark beyond year 10. It is there, but the idea behind the numeracy curriculum is to try and address that so that when they leave school they have achieved those benchmarks.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: It depends on what you are using those learning progressions for, too. If you are using those learning progressions as an assessment tool to mark, "That is the achievement level that the student

got to", you are implementing and using that tool in the wrong way. The learning progressions are about informing teachers how to plan in their practice to help develop those students, not make a final assessment on how far they have actually achieved.

The CHAIR: But that is not what Masters actually says. He describes it as an untimed syllabus where there are various benchmarks and levels of achievement that the student progresses through to.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: When you talk about an untimed syllabus and learning progressions, they can be quite different things. Learning progressions can be used as a tool to inform practice: "I have an understanding of where that student is at, where I need to go to next, and what they have not achieved to this particular point in time." An untimed syllabus is quite different. When you look at our submission, just like you, we would like further clarification on what these learning progressions actually look like in this particular syllabus or what the recommendation will look like in this particular syllabus. On principle, we think it is a good idea but we want further detail in regards to the Masters' recommendation on this.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I just want to clarify, is this numeracy syllabus something separate from the mathematics syllabus? Where is being trialled?

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: The numeracy syllabus is looking at becoming a content-endorsed course. What they have actually done is developed a syllabus from the syllabi there—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Who is they?

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: NESA have created it. They are running three pilots—three cohorts going through, so it is a two-year course that these students are going through. The third pilot will begin at the start of next year, and what they are looking at is the numeracy skills, not a mathematic syllabus but a numeracy syllabus where they are looking at, "How can we help these students transition into society from school with some basic numeracy understandings to allow them to participate in the world?"

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is this a HSC-only syllabus? Is that right?

Ms McDAID: It is year 11.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: It is year 11 and 12.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Is this partly as a motivator of math becoming compulsory in stage 6?

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: I think you would have to ask the Minister that question.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Sure, but it is looking at other options in terms of including math in the syllabus and providing perhaps what was—at least in my day I think—"maths-in-society-like" courses or the like, which sort of had a certain level of numeracy understanding but were not necessarily maths at two-unit level or extensions.

Ms McDAID: It is very similar to "maths in society". It is probably a little bit higher level because it is real life applications of mathematics for students so that they can make the connections between what they need outside of school and what they are doing in the classroom.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So this syllabus has been structured based on progression points.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: No.

Ms McDAID: No.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But it is going back and it is looking at stage 2 and 3 criteria. Is that right?

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: It is looking at, "What is the foundational understandings that students need so they can participate in society?" So if you want to get really technical, it goes all the way back to whole number and place value.

Ms McDAID: Year 1.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: If students do not have a conceptual understanding of whole number and place value—they are like the building bricks of their knowledge—then they cannot do many of the other skills that are required of them.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What will happen to this? How long has this trial been running for?

Ms McDAID: It is in its fourth year.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: They are halfway through their second cohort, so it is about to enter their fourth year.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What will happen to this trial if the new curriculum structure is adopted?

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: That is a conversation for NESA and the Minister. My understanding is that they are running a third trial and then based on their evaluations they will put a recommendation through.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many students have gone through the trial?

Ms McDAID: I would not know the number of students but there is over 100 schools at the moment.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: Yes, I think there is around 150 schools at the moment.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Did they opt into that?

Ms McDAID: Yes.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: Yes, it is an opt-in process.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So just like any other HSC elective, really.

Ms McDAID: Except, it is not HSC tested but it is a year 11 and 12 course.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you very much for your submissions and your time; you have already been very useful to this inquiry, so thank you. NESA has given us a list of the most recent syllabus updates and obviously that is something that they do fairly frequently. I am interested to know whether their most recent updates to the syllabus have done what one interpretation of Masters is doing, which is weeding out unnecessary parts of the content and—I know saying back-to-basics is controversial so I will say—de-cluttering the curriculum. Has that been happening in its most recent syllabus?

Ms McDAID: Not yet. They would be on it.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: I would think that is an unfair—

Ms McDAID: It is a leading question.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: Yes, because you are trying to relate something that NESA have done in the past with something that Masters is currently doing.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Let me clarify that. The reason why I am asking that is because NESA is obviously going to be the ones that are charged with implementing that, so that is why I am trying to get a sense of whether they are doing it now or whether this is going to be a new thing for them to be doing.

Ms McDAID: I think they have started the process.

Ms POWLES: Masters' recommendations actually are a paradigm shift in terms of curriculum in New South Wales, if it is delivered based on the intent of the recommendations, it is significantly different from previous changes to the syllabus.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: This issue of decluttering, it is not a new thing, so I suppose the point of the question Ms Houssos is asking is that if we know that the curriculum is cluttered and there have been periodic revisions of the syllabus, surely that process has already looked at this question of decluttering already?

Mrs SHEPHERD: It has, and over the years we have had the same argument about too much being in the syllabus, too much content in the syllabus. In science we got our new stage 6 syllabuses to be implemented in 2018, year 11, so 2020 is our second HSC group, for example. Now there is too much in these syllabuses, although we were told that they were less cluttered than before. It comes down to the pressure that NESA get put under by external providers. Universities all decide that no, this has to be taught at school, and therefore it comes down to us eventually.

In a recent conversation with a university chemistry teacher he said, "Good, you are teaching all first year chemistry. That's great." Well no, that is not great. We do not want to teach first year chemistry at school, we want to teach chemistry for students at school. Our 7-10 syllabus has not been renewed for many years and there is a huge gap between year 10 and 11 and we need to address that gap quite significantly, but we do not want to put our teachers in stage 6 under a new syllabus change—that is unfair and we just feel it is not appropriate. The current syllabus for stage 6 works. It can be tweaked, definitely, and little bits here and there taken out, but it does not need to be rewritten. It is too much to ask of the teachers and to burden our primary teachers with new

syllabuses again, it is like we have this great big wound, but we are going to put another bandaid on it and hopefully that fixes it.

Let us change the syllabuses—that is what we do—but the syllabuses are only a small part of the curriculum and they are not going to just fix it. The primary teachers have had one change after another after another and science and technology is a massive issue for the primary people because they are trying to blend working scientifically and working technologically together, integrating that with history and English and maths and now we are going to say to them, "Now you've got to have another English and another maths syllabus in two years." We do not want to lose any more teachers to the profession; we cannot afford to lose our teachers to the profession because as soon as they get really good at what they are doing they realise they cannot do what they want to do because of all these constraints and they leave, and we do not want that to happen, we want them to stay and do the best that they can do without limiting them by syllabus changes again and again.

Ms POWLES: I was just going to add onto that, I think one thing that Masters did in his recommendations was look at the progression from 12 to year K, to kindergarten. Whilst the decluttering has happened in previous syllabus changes, what this ensures is that there is a continuum of learning from 12 to K that makes cohesive sense across those years. There are examples of science syllabi being taught where the same exercises are being given across the years. So in year 3 they may use the same example to teach an area—I am going to hand over to a teacher to explain this.

Mrs SHEPHERD: Yes and in some cases they are using the same content level across two or three years. So the students are very bored with this. If we had progression points it would be clearer what it is that the students need to be able to do before they move onto the next point. We have this massive disjunct between what we have got currently as the stage descriptor—students achieve this by the end of the stage, it describes this very extensive degree of expertise—but then we give them an A to E grade. So at the beginning of year 7 versus the end of year 8 there is one outcome for that whole two years of time. How are teachers unpacking that for the students who at the beginning of year 7 versus the end of year 7 versus the beginning of year 8 versus the end of year 8? How are they doing that? There is no progression for them; it is a stage. You imagine these children in the beginning of the stage getting grade D, which is limited, and then they do another one and they are still a D. They may be learning more, but in their minds they are not growing and the impact on that then is they fall further and further behind.

Ms McDAID: They get disengaged.

Mrs SHEPHERD: Then they get disengaged. They cannot make that up; there is no time for them to make that up—the class proceeds. Good teachers will differentiate, but every single time you talk to a teacher they say, "I've got to get so much of this syllabus covered. I've got to do all this so that I tick off the box on my compliance sheet."

Ms POWLES: And as students move into the next year that is where you get large cohorts of students falling behind.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can I ask, Ms Shepherd, this concept that both of the maths representatives have talked about in terms of the numeracy pilot where teachers are given resources as well, would you support something like that?

Mrs SHEPHERD: I love that idea. I love the idea of piloting. Masters said that in his report and it was like, yes, trial something before you give it to us. That is amazing. That is why the report said 10 years, so that considered work can be put into it, so that evidence base can go into it, they can pilot, see if it works before it gets put into schools. I am sorry, we cannot have another rushed change in syllabus just to get it done as quickly as possible.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am sorry, I have just got a couple more questions. I am sorry, I m going to cut you off, Ms Shepherd, and throw to Mr Byrne. Would you support this same idea of resourcing and professional development to go hand in hand?

Mr BYRNE: Yes, definitely, especially in the Technologies area.

The Hon. WES FANG: Can I ask if any of you are going to turn down resources? No, I did not think so. Thank you.

Ms McDAID: They have to be quality resources.

Mrs SHEPHERD: Can I comment on that, because that is an interesting question? We get universities and we get lots of people coming up with resources all the time. We have teachers burnt out with resources galore

on the internet. It is a disaster zone. I teach pre-service teachers and I have to say to them, "Please don't go onto the internet."

The Hon. WES FANG: But that answer you have just given me is completely contrary to one you just gave. That is the thing, when the question was asked, "Would you take more resources?" you all went, "Yes", but then you have clarified it when I asked the opposite question, which is exactly the reason why I ask it because they have got to be the right resources.

Mrs SHEPHERD: That is it.

The Hon. WES FANG: That is the key, is it not?

Mrs SHEPHERD: Yes.

The Hon. WES FANG: We need to make sure that around a syllabus change you have got the right resources not just a heap of resources.

Mrs SHEPHERD: That is it.

The Hon. WES FANG: So again, clarifying the question that you were asked previously, it is not necessarily about the provision of resources, it is making sure that it supports the change that we want to have implemented.

Ms McDAID: It has to be connected with the syllabus.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Maybe I should ask a more specific question. I think I was being quite clear that it was specific resources, like with this numeracy pilot, that are targeted, that are supposed to help individual classroom teachers to work through. Is that correct?

Mrs SHEPHERD: And are evidence based.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: That is right. It is not just the volume of resources, it is the quality of them, correctly linked to the syllabus, what we are trying to achieve in the syllabus. And a resource is not just a physical item either, so you have got to keep that in mind.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What do you mean by that?

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: This is where we talk about professional learning comes into it as well, because you can have the best resource, a great student in there, and if the teacher does not know how to manipulate all of those in that learning environment, you are not going to get the achievement that you actually want.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Just coming back to something that you said, Ms Shepherd, about how there had been an awareness of this overcrowding in the curriculum and that in the past attempts to declutter had failed because of a range of interests applying themselves to the process. NESA is going to be charged with implementing the recommendations of Masters. Is there any suggestion or advice that you might be able to provide us around what steps might be taken to prevent the same things happening again in this process?

Mrs SHEPHERD: That is such a good question. One of the issues is their time line. And the time line, I think, comes from government. So the Government says, "You've got X number of time to implement this." So NESA says, "I've got this amount of time. I've got time for one consultation"; time to write it, one consultation, then it is done. If we are lucky we get a decent amount of time to consult and give feedback but we never get to see the result of that consultation. We do not get, "Here is the final document. What do you think?" again. It is just the once, and do we feel confident that all of our input gets incorporated into what is necessary and what is not necessary? Not totally. I do not know; I would have to ask the other guys, but no. It is having the time to go through the process properly—to ask the practitioners and say, "Is this core curriculum or is it not?"

We do not even have it mapped. So this is 2020. We do not even have a mapped progression of science concepts across K to 12 that is consistent—that should have been done 20 years ago—and just the basics are there and remain there and we just change curriculum around it, because the core content has to be foundational. We do not have that and we need to see that. And that would help with that problem.

Mr BYRNE: Can I add about the decluttering, if that is okay? There is not consistency in the format of all the syllabus documents either. So, for example, in the Technologies syllabuses, we have our dot points and then you have dashes, and the dashes are examples. But in something like the physical education syllabus, I believe the dashes are actually content they have to teach as well, so there are differences there. We have not had our stage 6 syllabuses updated since the Australian Curriculum was introduced. Our stage 4 syllabus—Technology Mandatory—has been met with a little bit of worry by some teachers. There has been some new content introduced in there. But that is okay because they get professional learning. They can overcome those issues. And our stage 5

syllabuses, in some cases there was decluttering. That did not necessarily keep everyone happy because it meant that we lost polymers, ceramics and leather as focus areas from Stage 5 Industrial Tech. We had two focus areas combined in Graphics Technology. And some of that is good, some of it is not so good. So the decluttering is happening with mixed results in the technologies area.

The Hon. WES FANG: Should we be focusing in the school environment on those items that have been taken out of the technology area or are they items that are better moved potentially into a tertiary-style education system where they can be deep-dived a bit deeper and have more concentration placed on them? Is there not some value in that?

Mr BYRNE: In stage 5 we are really looking at introducing the students to a range of technologies and materials and how they can manipulate those with different tools. Leather and ceramics did not have great student numbers, so that was one of the reasons they were cut. But you look at polymers and you look at how many materials we have around us that are made from different polymers—carbon fibre, acrylic, all those standard materials that we have now—why should students not be learning about those sorts of things? We have a massive skills shortage in Australia. We probably want to increase our capacity to manufacture a range of different products. Why would we not expose those students to all of those different materials where they could then become experts in their field and produce high-quality products that are then exported. So, yes, I think they should be done in high school as well.

The Hon. WES FANG: I have to say that I do not disagree with you necessarily. We ask questions around these areas just to get evidence presented to us. Certainly, I agree with you on that point. The exposure allows people to form an interest and a basis, and that might progress somewhere else. I am from Wagga. We were meeting with local manufacturers around how they were going to bring people into 3D printing and the like and computer–controlled lathes. They were saying they are just not getting that exposure in schools and they are not getting it in tertiary areas either. So I was just keen to explore that. With, for example, removing leather, ceramics and polymers out of stage 5, what replaced that? Was there just no exposure at all?

Mr BYRNE: There are different options within Design and Technology and Industrial Technology, so they could still be done but there is no explicit syllabus for those areas anymore. Just to go back to your comment about the exposure to computer numerical control [CNC] and the industry concerns—I know, sorry, that Mr Samojlowicz said physical resources are not the only resources. For the Technologies area, they are a very, very important part of resourcing. There is no standardised equipment for school workshops, for example, that every Technology Mandatory student has to use. So some schools have a number of 3D printers, some have none. Some have a laser cutter, some have none. Some have CNC routers and lathes, some have none. There is no equity there. It is up to what the school prioritises and then buy it if they can afford it within the confines of the contracts that we have to buy from.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Thanks for joining us. I want to ask specifically about whether you or your associations are on the NESA committees—whether you are represented?

Mrs SHEPHERD: What do you mean by "committees"? There are a few committees.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I understand that NESA has a series of stakeholder committees, like about 40. I wondered whether your associations are on any of those committees.

Mr SAMOJLOWICZ: The Mathematical Association of NSW is not.

Mrs SHEPHERD: We have stakeholder meetings with Paul Cahill from NESA. It is an information-sharing sort of meeting. They sort of keep us informed to a degree. It is not always very satisfactory.

Ms POWLES: And it is not consultative.

Mrs SHEPHERD: It is not really consultative, no, if that is what you mean.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Okay, and what about you, Mr Byrne?

Mr BYRNE: The Institute of Technology and Education; the same situation as the science teachers—meeting with Paul Cahill, told some information, and that is pretty much it.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I ask you that question because I want to understand whether you will be plugged into this process in terms of consultation as these syllabuses are finalised. Do you know of any formal process?

Mrs SHEPHERD: That is one of our big concerns. We do not know what is happening. So whatever is going on at NESA—we had a meeting last week and it told us the project teams and the four work streams, but it was just an overview and an outline so we do not know.

Ms POWLES: The issue with a truncated time frame is that NESA actually does not have the time to do this process well.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Yes, so you are not plugged into the process per se. Have you approached NESA formally to be plugged into the process?

Mrs SHEPHERD: Yes, numerous times.

Ms McDAID: Would you mind if I answered that? We have had several conversations in a similar vein with Paul Cahill, and he has provided us with the overview but, unfortunately, we are not aware of—one of the questions I have asked in the past is about the stakeholder meetings: When are they going to happen? Are they going to happen? How consultative are they going to be? Because again, like everybody else here, we are very concerned in the maths association about the current time line and the fact that the current syllabuses will just have the Masters framework laid over the top of what is existing. That is not the most effective way for us to cater for children in the future going forward. So, yes, I have not received any confirmation about what that consultative process will look like, except to say that it will be different to what it has been in the past.

Mrs SHEPHERD: And it has not been satisfactory in the past.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Have you received a timetable as to what the process will be in terms of consultation?

Ms McDAID: No.

Mr BYRNE: We were originally told every six to eight weeks we would be meeting. That has already been pushed back to once a term.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Right, okay. And in relation to the syllabuses, what is your expectation? You have got a syllabus now for all of these different subjects. Are you expecting incremental change to that syllabus, or in some cases a transformational change, or something in between? What is your expectation?

Ms McDAID: Mrs Shepherd mentioned earlier on about the amount of time that there have been changes across the last few years. I can tell you 2009 was the beginning of the changes to syllabuses here in New South Wales for mathematics and, I think, every other subject as well. That has been a constant process right up to today. There are concerns about teachers being burnt out, and about them throwing their hands in the air and saying, "Tell me what I have got to do and let me go and do it." I do not know that that is the most effective way. We need to engage our educators. We need to engage the students.

The only way we are going to get people in year 11 and 12 engaged in mathematics, science or any other subject area is to make sure that we have quality teachers and we have a syllabus that is easy for them to use. Having those progression points are really filled with merit, but they are not necessarily the best way forward because there is a lack of understanding about what they look like. My concern and the concern of our members in the Mathematical Association is that there will be streaming—that the children will just be placed into a D class, a C class or a B class and that is where they will stay for their entire school career.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Can I take, for example, the kindergarten to year two syllabus in English and maths that is due by 2022? Would it be fair to say that you do not expect a transformational change in that syllabus, that you would expect it to be simplified, that you would expect some decluttering, and that you would expect it to be a similar form to what it currently is with some incremental change? Would that be a fair comment?

Ms POWLES: I might just make a statement here. In science what we have recommended is backward mapping—so, for the process to actually start at year 12, to get a sense of where we want the students to be ending up, and then looking at curriculum change from year 12 backwards.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Okay. Could I have a response in relation to what your expectations might be going from the start, in kindergarten and year two, in terms of changes to the syllabus? Are you expecting simple changes or are you expecting significant changes?

Ms McDAID: I would say that certainly in maths we are not expecting large, sweeping changes.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I suppose what I am trying to get to here is that that would be my expectation as well. If that indeed is the case—let us assume it is for a moment—then the time line to actually put these changes in place by 2022 looks a lot more feasible, does it not?

Mrs SHEPHERD: Are we after a reform? If this is about a reform, then why just tweak the K to two syllabus?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: We have two years to work through this as a priority area. I am just asking you whether you think—you have put to us that this is an impossible situation. Well, I am putting back to you that if you look at it in the context in which I have just put it to you, where you have a review, is it feasible that this can be done sensibly by 2022?

Ms POWLES: Without the backward mapping, what ends up happening if you start at the earlier years and just do tinkering is that you end up with knowledge and skill development gaps.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Okay. Well, I have just put it to you, so thank you for that. The other question I wanted to ask you is in relation to the technology area, and that would be you, Mr Byrne. You said on page seven of your submission that there was a misunderstanding of the differences between technology and VET. I just wanted to understand that and the sort of pathways that flow from that, if you could?

Mr BYRNE: Yes, sure. VET subjects are generally competency based, so they will follow a checklist of what the students need to be able to do—measure a piece of material to this length and cut it safely with this piece of equipment. They will all make the same project if they are students in that class. They might do a group project and things like that. I did actually have something prepared, if you do not mind if I table that at the moment. Is that okay?

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr BYRNE: It is just some examples of the different types of student work that is done by VET students compared to students in Industrial Technology HSC. With the standard Technologies subjects, there is a lot of creativity. The students are able to identify a problem themselves or it can be provided for them. They develop a criteria for success. They work through all of the research that they have to do to address their problem and develop a solution. So, it is a process of iteration. That does not necessarily come through with the VET subjects, which is really, "Here is your project. Here are the skills. That is what you are going to make and we are going to teach you how to make that."

Those skills in evaluation—in the booklet you can see a few different samples there. I think some of them have actually labelled what courses those students are studying, what ATARs they received and what mark they got for Industrial Technology. The reason there are not many photos of VET projects is because it is hard to get photos of VET projects if you are not teaching VET. I am not teaching VET at the moment, but that is because of the nature of the paperwork and everything behind it. It is not a dynamic subject area. The curriculum frameworks and the industry frameworks that are set are obviously very relevant to industry, but they are not fostering that interest in students in going out and being creative using a range of different pieces of equipment.

I would probably argue that students who study subjects like Design and Technology, Textiles and Design and Industrial Technology—when they complete a HSC major project of the standard that you can see in that booklet, those students can pick up VET skills fairly easily. I do not necessarily think it is transferable the other way around. I do not think that the VET students can undertake a lot of the independent research and processes they would need to be able to create something essentially from scratch. I might steal a bit of the Science Teachers Association's thunder here and raise your awareness of Oliver Nicholls, who used his Design and Technology HSC project to win the Gordon E. Moore Award at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair.

That was a HSC Design and Technology project tweaked for the award, but that was still what he did with his HSC. I think this is why the Technologies subjects are extremely underrated. It is so important to understand what they can offer and what they do offer. A lot of our students will go on to engineering. There is a global shortage of engineers. The students come back and the anecdotal feedback or evidence that I get from them is that Industrial Technology and Engineering Studies were the most useful subjects because we teach them how to be independent. We are not teaching them just how to follow a checklist and things like that. They find that very useful when they go to university and the lecturers do not necessarily make themselves as available as high school teachers do. It is a very different environment. I hope that answers your question a little bit there.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It does. Thank you very much.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Byrne, I am going to stick with you. I was going to ask the same question as the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox on that, but I think your explanation is very illuminating for the Committee. I just wanted to follow on from that. Part of the suggestion in terms of VET is the pathway for people who may not want to go on to higher education to be able to have a skill and a trade that they can effectively go out into the workforce straightaway on. When it comes to things like design and technology and industrial design, do you think there is potentially some way in which you could have an accreditation that goes with some of those courses, to create the sort of quality that you are showing us here, but also provide some sort of trade qualification?

Mr BYRNE: Yes. The Masters review talks a bit about micro-credentials, which I think is a really interesting idea to look at. The Australian Qualifications Framework Review has also said that it is going to investigate micro-credentials and that could be something that is linked to VET. Our biggest concern is that VET then takes over the Industrial Technology or Design and Technology or Textiles type subjects, because they are very different in what they offer students. We would hate to see that. At the moment, a student can study Industrial Technology in metalwork and still study VET Metals and Engineering. They are recognised as being two very different subjects. Students can study Industrial Technology, Timber Products and Furniture Technologies, which is covered in a lot of those photos that you can see there, and still study VET Construction or VET Furnishings. They are very different subjects. Yes, you could have some micro-credentials, but then there would need to be some investigation into how the industry frameworks overlap there.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to one of your other concerns when it came to a major project, for my understanding—as it is written at the moment in the Masters review, I think your concern emanates that somebody, for instance, could have a structural analysis of bridges in the world as a sort of desktop analysis and submit that as a major project rather than actually constructing something. Is that effectively what it boils down to?

Mr BYRNE: Yes, especially when one of the big focuses in that final review is "skills in applying knowledge". As I said in my opening statement, "create" or "make" is not used anywhere to describe skills in applying knowledge. Create is the highest level of Bloom's taxonomy. That is what students should be doing when they are developing their skills and applying knowledge. Those students who have made those projects in that little booklet there have researched everything. They do not just make a project. They do an 80 page document. Some students produce up to 40,000 words. That is thoroughly researching all of the materials, processes and how those materials and processes interact, what they need to do to make a successful project and how they can—they evaluate all the way through. They are adapting and making changes all the way through. They are developing a lot of those entrepreneurial skills or general capabilities that are important but not necessarily a mandated part of syllabuses either.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In terms of that inclusion in the review, do you believe that it is just an omission or is there some logic behind it?

Mr BYRNE: My biggest concern was that in the interim report it was a "major project" and in the final report it became a "major investigative project". To me, that suggests that they are not valuing the practical application of knowledge. I think it is obviously easier to mark something that is on a screen or printed rather than a physical object. If you do HSC marking for those practical subjects, which is itinerant marking, you do travel around the State to mark other students' work. You undergo three to five days of training leading up to that so that every marker is applying the marking criteria consistently.

Mrs SHEPHERD: An investigative project in science equates to what they do now in science stage 4 to 6. They have to do their own research project where they gather their own information. They have to set up their own design, conduct and collect records and results, do analysis and write conclusions. In science extension, which is the new one unit course for year 12, they spent 12 months writing a mini-thesis in a way from scratch to the end. To me, investigative projects still mean gathering and doing it firsthand, but it can include second hand as well.

Mr BYRNE: I think I said there in my original submission that other key learning areas can learn a lot from the Technologies area, so I am really happy that science is catching up to what we have been doing for a long time.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We will not get into that war.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I have a question for Ms McDaid. Your submission discusses the problems around progression and differentiation. Earlier you talked about the issues around streaming. I want to give you an opportunity to elaborate on the arguments against streaming if we move to this new framework. In terms of a practical way to structure the work to accommodate the aspirations of the Masters review, streaming seems to be an option that ticks some of the boxes. I know there is a lot of resistance in the community of educators around streaming. I might give you the opportunity to elaborate why we should not go down that path.

Ms McDAID: Why we should or shouldn't?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Why we shouldn't. Or should, whichever—

Ms McDAID: Look, I think the progression points themselves or having progression points is an ideal way of finding out where children should be at a particular point in time as opposed to where they currently are at. The issue with trying to implement progression points is that it will require a lot of not just data gathering but

also management of finding out where children are at and how to move them forward. The differentiation side of things is difficult enough for most people. In schools, when you have got six subjects a day or you are working in a primary school where you are teaching face-to-face every hour apart from two hours a week, you have to do your best to try and start the children where they are at and move them forward. The problem is that it often relies on teachers either keeping it in their head or keeping data based on those particular progression points for the students, which means that for them it is a lot easier, if they have got potentially 180 children in high school, to find out and know where every single child is at.

If that is the case, then there is an awful lot of administrative work and planning and differentiation required for that. That means that the likelihood of placing 30 kids—I know how they did it when I was teaching high school. You had year 7and there are your top kids. Those top 30 kids are going to go into the A class. The next 30 kids are going to go into the B class and so on. It is not always the most effective way. We know from research that mathematics is best learned in multi-ability classrooms or groups. To be honest, my concern is not the progression points. I think they are a great idea and that is what our members have already said. The concern is that it will lead students down to an A, B, C or D. We know that the intention or the conversations around the A to E is to remove it, which means that children will be working at the wrong level. But currently that is not the case.

Mrs SHEPHERD: I would like to comment on streaming. There is research to say quite clearly that students work better when they are in multilevel classes. When they see their peers modelling good thinking, that is better learning for the students than the teacher being the person to model it. If they see their peers doing it, they respect what they are doing and can practice it themselves. If they are in a classroom with all the kids doing exactly the same level, they are never seeing any examples of any better thinking by their peers and what they are capable of. Yes, streaming would not be my—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How does a teacher then differentiate? I accept the arguments around the benefits but, in terms of the practicality for implementation of this in schools in a realistic way, how do you actually staff it? How does a teacher manage a situation where you might have 30 kids at all different levels? How do you deliver a lesson on a particular topic if some kids are just not even there?

Ms POWLES: I think this comes back to Masters' recommendation that the reform happen over a 10 year period. He obviously did not suggest how it should be delivered in his final report and recommended that there be 10 years for that reform process to happen so that the evidence base could be developed around delivering along the progression points and also in an untimed syllabus. It is really difficult to answer the question if we are thinking about what currently is, because I think that, given that this is a reform of significant paradigm shift, we need to be thinking about what could be in a completely different scenario.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: There has to be a pathway for us to get from A to B.

Ms POWLES: Hence the importance of 10 years.

The CHAIR: At that point, we are out of time. Thank you to the five witnesses for all that outline on STEM, which has been very useful to the Committee. Thank you for your time and submission. We will very much take account of all that information.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

ANNE-MARIE MORGAN, Executive Officer, Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

GILLIAN CORDY, Executive Officer, Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

JOHN MURN, Vice President, HSC Japanese Committee, affirmed and examined

KYOKO HODGKINSON, Member, HSC Japanese Committee, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome our next witnesses discussing the question of languages in the New South Wales curriculum. Would any of the witnesses like to make an opening statement, or would you prefer to go straight to the question and answer session?

Professor MORGAN: We have a statement prepared. Thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee. I am currently professor and dean of the College of Arts [audio malfunction] James Cook University [JCU] and recently moved from the University of New England. I am an executive member and former president of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association [AFMLTA], and it is in that capacity that I—

The CHAIR: Professor Morgan, I ask whether you could turn your video off. The audio is coming through a little bit garbled. If you turn the video off, we normally find that gives a clearer audio. Thank you.

Professor MORGAN: Okay. I am not sure what you heard. I am a professor [inaudible] at JCU in the College of Arts, Society and Education. I am a member of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations—an executive—and was formerly the president. The AFMLTA is the peak body representing teachers of languages from preschool to [inaudible] schooling years. My own research is in the area of—the [audio malfunction] project I am working on at the moment—

The CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt, Professor Morgan, but that is still not working for us. We very much want to hear your evidence, but the audio line is not functioning as it should. We are going to try for teleconference, to just do it by telephone line. Sorry about that.

Professor MORGAN: That is alright. Will you call me?

The CHAIR: Yes, that is happening now. I ask that you disconnect the Webex and just go to the telephone line.

Professor MORGAN: How is that?

The CHAIR: Much better, thank you.

Professor MORGAN: Third time lucky. I represent the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, which is the peak body for teachers of languages from preschool through to tertiary level. My own research is in the area of—I have an Australian Research Council [ARC] discovery project working on successful early years languages programs in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. I am also the lead researcher for the Australian Government project to develop a national plan and strategy for languages education. I have been an advisor for the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], the NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA] and education boards of studies and departments around Australia. I have also developed a primary languages specialisation at the University of New England for its teacher education programs. I have recently completed a review of international policies and practices in languages education around the world in like contexts to our own, such as Canada, the US, Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales and Germany, but also in more remote areas including Singapore, China, Indonesia, Bhutan, Nauru, Finland and the Philippines. I will hand over to Mrs Cordy.

Mrs CORDY: I am Gillian Cordy. I also thank the Committee for giving this opportunity to appear. I am also a member of the executive of the AFMLTA. I have worked as a teacher of Indonesian and French in secondary schools in New South Wales for over 40 years and have been a head of language departments in several large systemic Catholic secondary schools. I have also been a language teacher educator and, more recently, was an adviser to teachers of languages across all levels of schooling in the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney and a consultant to other dioceses in New South Wales. I have been active working with the NSW Education Standards Authority and with ACARA in language syllabus development, and with NESA in HSC exam development and various marking operations. I am also a long-time member and former president of the Modern Language Teachers Association of NSW [MLTA NSW].

When my fellow colleagues in languages education learnt that there was to be a review of the New South Wales curriculum, ensuring that it is equipping our students to contribute to Australian society, we had reason to hope and believe that the lead, Professor Geoff Masters, would come up with some findings that would reflect the national standard that has been set out way back at the time of the Hobart Declaration on Schooling, the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century, and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, confirmed at the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration in 2019. In each iteration of these goals for schooling in Australia, languages has been positioned as one of eight key learning areas. There has been a recognition that it is the right or entitlement of every student to have opportunity to learn their community or home language, or their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language, or an additional language, including Auslan.

Professor MORGAN: We were a little disappointed that the report's recommendation No. 5.2 that every child should begin the study of a second language in the middle or primary years of schooling has been noted in the Government's response, and that the Government has failed to indicate if or when this may be revisited in the future. MLTA NSW provided a submission to the NSW Curriculum Review outlining the benefits of languages learning and why Australian and, more particularly, New South Wales young people are disadvantaged by limited access to languages learning. We are really happy to share that report again and speak to the issues, from the benefits of languages learning all the way through to mechanisms to implement and maintain sustainable programs and ongoing professional learning for teachers of New South Wales. That is our statement.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Mr Murn and Ms Hodgkinson, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr MURN: We would like to make a brief opening statement if that is okay. Firstly we are in furious agreement with the Federation of Modern Language Teachers. But our fundamental issue is this: If you are a high school kid and you are good at art or music or maths or writing, that is quite appropriately celebrated, but if it is an Asian language that you are good at, it is not celebrated; in fact, you are not permitted to study that language at school. Perhaps even more bizarrely to us, if you are bad at an Asian language and you do it outside school, you are still not permitted to study it at school. Our position for many years has been that we just do not get it and we remain not getting why that is the case in New South Wales.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. I have a few questions for any witnesses who wish to answer them. At a practical level, while Masters did recommend this, Masters' theme is engagement with learning. I suppose one of the things that makes language a bit different to the other subjects is that if mandatory language courses started up in, say, year 3 or year 5, you have got what I would call the standing start problem. While some students will evolve over time and really respond well and enjoy the language and be very engaged, pretty well all students in years 3 or 5 when they start will think, "There is a starting barrier here to knowing any of this stuff, enjoying it or getting into it to the point where it is of equal engagement to other subjects." Does that standing start make languages a bit different? Students may commence and find that it is very difficult at the start and they do not engage, which is the main theme of the Masters review.

Professor MORGAN: It is not our experience across Australia that students starting in year 3 do not engage with languages. In fact, we think anywhere in the primary school years for starting—there is a very high level of engagement. There is not a fear or reticence, and of course the way the languages are taught, they are not intended to make students feel disengaged and not be able to achieve. There are curricula available in New South Wales developed by NESA that are designed especially to engage students and relate to their own lives and their own experiences to avoid that problem.

Mr MURN: Our group is a parent- and community-based group and many of our members are teachers, including Ms Hodgkinson. Our experience with our own kids learning Japanese at an early age—where that has happened with members who are teachers—is that kids engage very well with languages at a young age, and the sooner and the more consistently they can learn, the better.

The CHAIR: I am playing the role of devil's advocate. The second bit of feedback from students that I have heard is, "What is the relevance of this? I am not going to go live in Indonesia. Why do I need to learn to speak Indonesian?", and on the list goes for other languages around the world. How do you respond to the issue of relevance? Obviously students who see a direct relevance for their future tend to be more engaged and active in that learning space.

Professor MORGAN: For a start, our young people are very much global citizens, even though they have been very limited this year and possibly next year as to where they can travel. We are definitely an outlier in the world in not having bilingual—at least—opportunities for our children to engage in other parts of the world and with the languages and the cultures and the peoples of those places. But, more than that, we know that language is learning and there is a very long history of research in this area that has really accelerated now that

we have been able to do MRI imaging. It shows that the benefits of language as learning—cognitively, socially, personally—are really high and beneficial, and the relevance issue becomes less important when the students are engaging in a language in a way that relates to them and their lives, as well. I actually do not hear that very often anymore. I have heard that in around year 10 in secondary schools but generally not in primary schools. I think you will find that the parents bodies also very much support the idea of additional language learning and the growth of bilingual preschools around the world is absolutely phenomenal. I think people are speaking with their feet and their purses as to what they want from learning for their children.

The CHAIR: Which languages? I have visited a whole range of schools where it is the traditional French that is taught. I have visited a school where German is thought to be beneficial because it is a fairly popular language around the world and has an obvious economic linkage. Then you have the whole Asian engagement agenda. I can remember 25 years ago Indonesia was going to be the big thing; my children have learnt Indonesian. I am not too sure they will ever get jobs out of that or if anyone will. How much central direction should there be from the Department of Education on the languages that schools select for teaching? What are the main criteria to get that right? There are some success stories out there but also some dismal failures, so what is the agenda for which languages are taught?

Mrs CORDY: The Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association and the other modern language teachers associations obviously support all languages. I do not think we really believe in limiting it or creating a list of priorities. I think it really is related to the context of the particular school and perhaps the needs or the wants of the school community. Obviously in some of the remoter areas, where there is an interest in accessing the languages of the local First Nations community, and in various other communities, there are desires for a particular language. I understand that in the Snowy Mountains, once upon a time, the schools were wanting to have German programs because they had a lot of engagement with the German ski fields in the off-season. I understand that has changed now and they are interested in engaging with Japanese. I think it depends on the context; in some circumstances it will depend on the availability of suitable teachers. We do not envisage direction about which languages could be studied.

Professor MORGAN: The learning of any language, we know, is beneficial, and even the moving from one language to another language during the course of a student's education is valuable for all of those areas that I was talking about—cognitive, social, people with two languages do better on NAPLAN tests and so on and so on. It is about the particular local community and this is why NESA and the Australian Curriculum have developed 14-plus languages curricula, plus Auslan and there is a First Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages framework—a classical framework—so that there is opportunity for choice within schools about which ones relate to their communities. Campsie Public School, for example, runs 11 different languages; some of those relate to the local communities around them. They have a big Pacifika community, so they run Tongan and Samoan, but they also have Korean and other languages for which there are big communities located nearby. So I do not think it is a narrowing to one or two languages; it is always about the school and its context and the opportunity to engage with a relevant curriculum, of which there are many for Australia.

The CHAIR: But it is also tough, is it not, students tend to change schools more than ever before and for a student who may, say, be going really well with Japanese in years 3, 4, 5 and 6, they go to a high school that has not got Japanese, they have got to start again, have they not, and it can be then a disadvantage to students who have had a background in that new language at the high school, it can be a little bit dispiriting, that perhaps they are feeling "I've wasted four years on Japanese, why can't I continue to do that in high school?" How do we overcome that problem?

Professor MORGAN: That is a perennial problem but, as I was saying before, every language learned assists with the next one as well. It is quite common for students to move and change languages. Some schools offer tasters in a range of different languages so that then students can make a choice if they go to a high school that offers three or four different ones. It is not enough to prohibit the need for all students to engage in a language, and there is so much to be gained from the cultural and intercultural experience of working with any other language or culture that is done, the benefit is not lost as you move from one school and one language to another.

Mr MURN: Perhaps I could add a couple of points. There are two avenues also that occur to me to assist with the continuity, which is a major issue—you are absolutely right, of course. One is in New South Wales we have the NSW School of Languages—it used to be called the Open High School—and it offers a range of programs in a wide variety of languages via distance. Both my kids did that in year 9 and 10. Once a term you go along physically; at least you meet a cohort of kids doing the same thing. The other is the network of community language schools including the department's own Saturday School of Community Languages, which does require some sort of community background in most cases, but that is another avenue to try to achieve that continuity; it works fairly well.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I do not think you are going to get any argument from me about the value of language education. I assume that what underlies the Government's non-committal response to the recommendation around language learning is just the practicalities.

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order: I think "non-committal"—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Wes, let it go.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: The practicality is that there are just not enough qualified language teachers to be able to deliver it and the staffing formula in schools is a major impediment. Often, language education in high schools and in primary schools is contingent on the specific language skills or qualifications of a particular teacher and then if that teacher moves on, suddenly the language offering in that school dramatically changes or disappears. I suppose I wanted to ask you what you think the solution is to that staffing question. Is it a question of changing the qualifications? Perhaps you might clarify this, but my understanding is that in order to teach a language in a primary school or a high school you need to be not only qualified as a teacher but also have university-level qualifications in the language that you are proposing to teach. Obviously that then limits the number of people in the teaching service who actually are in a category that is capable of teaching a language. I might just open it up to the panel to perhaps offer some thoughts on that.

Professor MORGAN: That is the case, that you do need both teacher education and languages education in the particular language. It has not been an impediment in other States and Territories and there have been a number of approaches; some of them have been to provide scholarships, to upskill in-service teachers, for example, in languages. Western Australia has implemented over the last four years, and they are into their fourth year of this, mandatory languages from years 3 to 6, and I was involved in writing a curriculum for Indonesian that could be taught by non-Indonesian teachers because it was such a highly scaffolded program, and then there were a few networks of Indonesian teachers who worked with those class teachers working with the materials.

A few years ago with the National Strategy for Asian Languages [NSAL] project there was a very big push to qualify teachers of languages across the four Asian target languages at the time, and they were incredibly successful in getting teachers who were already in schools to do languages at university and become skilled in these languages. There is really a three-year period—that is about the limit of the language learning that you need—on getting a fully skilled workforce.

Mrs CORDY: And I would like to add that recently Sydney catholic schools have developed an online Japanese course for primary, for stages 2 and 3, which again is highly scaffolded and has materials that can be used by teachers who do not have a knowledge of Japanese. The idea is to engage them as co-learners, and a lot of teachers using these programs have adopted that and have become active in their Japanese learning alongside their students. So that is another way that this could be addressed. I think I also need to mention that in recent research it was shown that in schools surveyed in Sydney and Wollongong by Professor Ken Cruickshank from Sydney university that over 50 per cent of in-service teachers declared that they have acquired language skills and would be happy to be informed themselves in language methodology learning.

Mr MURN: Just a couple of additional points. Sorry, this one is personal to me, but my wife is a Japanese teacher and did an undergraduate degree in Japan and then a graduate diploma in Japanese teaching and a Master of Applied Linguistics at the University of Technology Sydney, none of which was adequate to gain her admission to be a teacher in schools, which is a bit curious—she teaches at the Japan Foundation at the University of New South Wales, but not enough to teach in schools. We have raised and lobbied with NESA, which also of course does the teacher registration, particularly in relation to the shortage of teachers for the high-level Japanese courses where kids have a language background in Japanese and you really need a native speaker. It has been a real problem to get teachers and we have suggested that they look at loosening the criteria just for those courses so that you could get some more native speakers to come through, and that has not gone anywhere, to our disappointment.

Professor MORGAN: There is a lot of work being done out of the University of Sydney out of a community languages program that is looking at other ways of credentialing people with languages skills or how to go the other way, not giving them the language skills but giving them the teaching pedagogies. I would also say that it is not essential that years 11 and 12 need a native speaker; even for Japanese and Chinese there are some very good Australian teachers of those and all languages. But where there are native speakers, changes to how we credential teaching are certainly being mooted around various programs. I would get in touch with Ken Cruickshank if you wanted to talk more about that. He is at the University of Sydney.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Just further on that, do you have any comments in relation to that issue that I touched on around the language that is taught is contingent on the particular language profile of the individual teacher and when that teacher moves on? I see the difficulty, in terms of the staffing continuity, in

schools being able to continually offer, say, Japanese or Mandarin and not being able to recruit teachers with that specific language profile because of the nature of the staffing system and staffing structure. Do you have any comments about how that might be remedied?

Mrs CORDY: I guess it is a case of, perhaps, reimagining how the subject is delivered. Certainly something we have learned during the pandemic is the resourcefulness of teachers in being able to deliver in new and interesting ways. Take, for an example, the development of a program, which is being run again by Sydney Catholic Schools, which is the delivery of a blended program where a teacher is available online for several hours a week for students. During this year there were 17 students from eight different schools tuning into these programs and following the learning modules that had been set out for them. That is a way, perhaps, that continuity could be addressed—the idea of having something that is available online for people to tap into in those circumstances where their language learning might be interrupted because of those other factors.

The CHAIR: Okay. I am advised that we have to finish definitely at 3.30 p.m. to restart our computer to then be able to hear our afternoon witnesses who are coming in on video link. So we will go to Courtney Houssos for a question and then to Matthew Mason-Cox.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It came up in our previous day's hearing that there are many benefits of learning languages. We just touched on this. Everybody has kind of touched on it, and I think it is also in the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association's submission. Obviously there are the cultural benefits and the future economic benefits. Professor Morgan, I think you touched on it earlier when you talked about actual cognitive benefits.

Professor MORGAN: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So there is research that shows that certain parts of the brain only get turned on, as I understand it, if you learn a second language or if you learn a musical instrument. So there are lots of different parts of the benefits of learning a language but learning a second language might actually assist our students in their English and maths and in other parts of learning as well. So I would be keen to hear from all the panellists about that.

Ms HODGKINSON: I totally agree with what you are saying, thank you, and what Professor Morgan said and Mrs Corby said. Every student should have the opportunity to learn languages. I totally agree. I would like to table this document that I brought for all the panel if I could.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Ms HODGKINSON: Nice to meet you all, by the way. Learning languages, that is not a problem. I think from my point of view, as a parent, HSC Japanese committees, we want to focus on the fairness of when students are allowed to take that course as an HSC subject. At the moment the fairness is not in place. I think you can see from my document that the Higher Secondary Certificate has the eligibility criteria for all languages. Only four Asian languages have more difficult courses—in context course and in literature course—but you see from 2020 HSC enrolment that 1,517 students chose Japanese. The second language most students chose was French, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, German. Only those Asian courses have more difficult courses—in context and in literature courses—and when you see the eligibility criteria, beginners criteria apply to all those languages. However, continuers criteria only applies to Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Indonesian. And in that it states:

> Students do not use the language for sustained communication outside the classroom with someone with a background in using the language.

I have been a member of the HSC Japanese committee for 10 years, and this has been an issue always because the teacher is citing, "Your mum is Japanese, your dad is Japanese. I see you talking to her on the school grounds. Therefore, you can't take the course." We are having this talk many, many times. All I ask is: I want all language learners to be treated fairly. I do not want a system that excludes the students and restricts students from learning. And the student needs to take the course that matches the proficiency of their knowledge.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Can I ask one question on this, Ms Hodgkinson? Following on from that, I see two approaches: firstly, you have a native speakers course potentially or, secondly, and I am not sure if you are aware of this in terms of Victoria—

Ms HODGKINSON: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Victoria recently introduced a system of differential marking. I seek your opinions on either of those options.

Ms HODGKINSON: I can only speak on behalf of Japanese courses but in Victoria they only have two courses. The only eligibility criteria is the student is eligible for Japanese second language if they have had no

more than seven years of education in school where Japanese is the medium of instruction, which is very clear. What I am saying is that eligibility criteria should be black and white. It should not be grey. When you say that students do not use the language for sustained communication, what is "sustained communication"? Outside the classroom with someone with an education background? Someone who is a teacher? Who is "someone"? A parent? I think that—

Professor MORGAN: These are all ways of levelling the field of what experience the students have had. These are moving, so they are subject to review. I think Victoria has it more closely aligned to learning levels than the other States and Territories. They have a bigger cohort to work with as well. If I could return to that question about the benefits, there is excellent literature and I am happy to forward you some on this. We do know that it improves literacy. It improves literacy in both the language that you are learning—the target language—and your first language, which is usually English in Australia. We do know that NAPLAN results for bilingual children, even if they came to school without English in kindergarten, by the time they do the year 3 NAPLAN tests they are at the top of those levels. So just in literacy there are wonderful benefits. As I was saying before, things like MRI imaging—there is now some amazing work going on in Canada around that where they have run bilingual programs for a long time, and they show lifelong benefits, including for conditions like dementia. The earlier the learning, the better. It is across the field.

The CHAIR: If we can access that research, it would be very helpful for the Committee indeed because the cognitive development benefits of learning a second or third language were mentioned also by Dr Fiona Mueller at the beginning of our deliberations on our first day of hearings. Mr Mason-Cox had a question but we have run out of time, so he might put that as a supplementary question, as other members of the Committee might do. We look forward to that extra research information. I am strongly advised that we need to close down at 3.30 p.m. I do not know—maybe there is a lack of cathode ray power here in our computer system to power up for our final witnesses. They include Professor Geoff Masters, so we cannot miss that. I thank our four witnesses for their contribution. I can assure you that around the table you have very, very strong supporters of the additional language recommendations in the report—not so adopted by the New South Wales Cabinet but I think you will find the recommendations here will be much stronger than what we saw at Cabinet level. We thank you for your participation today.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

GEOFF MASTERS, The Lead of the NSW Curriculum Review, before the Committee via videoconference, on former oath

The CHAIR: Thank you, Professor Masters, for your time this afternoon. We got a lot out of the informal briefing some time ago now. This is now towards the end of our second day of hearings, where we have heard from a range of interest groups, teacher organisations, parents and NESA itself. Did you want to make a statement? You have pretty well said everything that can be said in the report and the Government consideration of it. It is available to you to make a short statement. Otherwise, we can go to questions.

Professor MASTERS: Thank you very much. Thanks for the opportunity to meet with you. I am looking forward to the conversation. I might just say a few things very quickly, some of which I have said in the informal discussion we had. There are about four points that I want to make. Firstly, the review that I led over two years achieved very significant public engagement. As you know, I saw my role as facilitating a community-wide discussion of the current curriculum and of people's aspirations and what changes they would like to see. I think that is exactly what we achieved. We had more than 5,000 individuals and organisations input into the review, conducted more than 50 stakeholder meetings across the State and had more than 2,200 written online submissions to the review. We produced an interim report, conducted dozens of meetings again, had 700 submissions commenting on that interim report, and that led to the final report.

The first point I want to reiterate is that this was a far-reaching, detailed public discussion of the school curriculum and probably the most comprehensive discussion of the school curriculum in New South Wales in several decades. The other point again that I made in our informal meeting is that there was a very strong call for reform. A common comment that people made to the review was that we need deep reform and simply tweaking syllabuses is not sufficient in the view of [audio malfunction]. There was a great deal of consistency, as well, in what people said. [audio malfunction] teachers to be able to teach less, in greater depth, to develop students' deeper understanding of the content of the curriculum. They wanted higher priority given to skills and attributes along with knowledge in subjects.

They wanted those skills and attributes developed as an integral part of the school subjects and they wanted more flexibility for teachers to address students' different starting points, different interests and different learning needs. They often describe the curriculum is too rigid and too lock step. The point I am making is that there was a strong call for reform and, not surprisingly, strong support for what I proposed. The 700 submissions to the interim report supported strongly the [audio malfunction] that I have identified; 86 to 96 per cent of respondents were supportive. The only other couple of points I would make is that I believe there is an urgent need for reform. Many students currently are poorly served by the curriculum. One in five reach 15 years of age not having achieved even minimally acceptable levels of reading and mathematics. Another one in five do not reach proficient levels in those areas.

We know that over the past 20 years the decline in student performance in New South Wales has been greater than pretty much anywhere else in the world. I am not saying the curriculum is entirely the reason for that, but I believe that curriculum has made a contribution to that. The fact is that the curriculum is very often crowded, timed, lock step, often encourages superficial learning, and often forces students to move on before they are ready and before they have mastered the content of the curriculum. As you know, that holds other students back. The consequence of that is that many students complete their years of school not having achieved the kinds and the levels of skills and knowledge that they will require for life, for work beyond school and for further learning. That will have long-term consequences for the economy and for society more generally.

The final point I would like to make is that there is a big opportunity here. There is a big opportunity for leadership. Through other work that I am involved in internationally I know that many countries are now focused on reforming their curriculum and thinking about what they can do to lift standards and levels of student achievement. They are drawing effectively on findings from learning research and there are clear signposts coming out of that research—clear indicators of what should be done. They are looking at what they can learn from other countries, particularly high-performing countries, and looking at what they can learn from recent mistakes that countries have made. So, the final point I am making is that New South Wales has an opportunity to provide international leadership in this area of curriculum, but it does require vision and it will require hard work.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. If I could just kick off with a couple of points of clarification that came out of the informal briefing—for me, there were three mysteries as to where the review heads. There were suggestions but an absence of explicit, clear recommendations. The first is the future of the cross-curriculum priorities. We have addressed those. My understanding from the informal briefing, particularly with the development of the standalone Indigenous unit or subject material, is that your argument is that we would not

proceed in New South Wales with the national curriculum approach of the cross-curriculum priorities. Is that right?

Professor MASTERS: Yes. What I did propose in my review was that an explicit curriculum be developed that makes clear what every student in New South Wales should know and understand about Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal histories, and that that be incorporated into one particular subject: the study of human society and its environment. That is different to an approach that says, "Let us find ways of addressing Aboriginal content across all the subjects." That may still be something that teachers choose to do, but I was proposing a more explicit curriculum that would be part of a particular subject.

The CHAIR: So, it would be wise for the New South Wales Cabinet, in adopting your approach, to say that New South Wales breaks from the national approach on cross-curriculum priorities? We are going down the direction that you have just outlined.

Professor MASTERS: Well, that is one possibility if there is agreement with what I was recommending, particularly in that area of Aboriginal education. It does not mean that Aboriginal perspectives might not be brought to different subjects and different aspects of the curriculum. But I was proposing, as I have said a couple of times, an explicit curriculum to make sure that every student learns what we judge to be a minimally acceptable level of knowledge of Aboriginal cultures and histories.

The CHAIR: What about the second priority with Asian engagement? That is certainly not what it used to be. The whole relationship with China has changed so quickly for the worse that it is hard to see now how that would have the status that it might have had 20 years ago or 15 years ago when this was developed as a cross-curriculum priority.

Professor MASTERS: With all three of these cross-curriculum priorities, what I would consider important is that we work at identifying what we think every student should know and understand. If it is engagement with Asia, we should think about that. Is there some minimum level of knowledge and understanding that every student should have? Let us make sure that somewhere in the curriculum we ensure that that is developed. So, I guess I would not be leaving it to chance. I would not be saying, "Work out how to address these somewhere in the curriculum." Sometimes, as we know, that can be forced and a bit artificial. If we are clear about what we want every student to know and understand, let us build that directly into the curriculum.

The CHAIR: I suppose what I am driving at—I do not fully understand why in your review there was not a recommendation to say, "This should be the future approach on cross-curriculum priorities." It was sort of left hanging.

Professor MASTERS: Well, it's true. That was explicit in relation to Aboriginal education. I could have made the general points that I have just made, but it was not in the report.

The CHAIR: So too with the notion of general capability—you have recommended that we stick with what might be thought of as the more traditional subject structure approach rather than embracing general capabilities or so-called twenty-first century skills.

Professor MASTERS: I think I was more explicit on this. There were people who argued that we should restructure the curriculum not around disciplines but around general capabilities. I rejected that in my report. I have stuck with a discipline-based structure for the curriculum. What I have argued in the report is that general capabilities like critical thinking, communicating, collaborating and so on need to be developed in the context of the disciplines and be thought of as an integral part of development in the disciplines. As students become more confident in science, they become more confident in thinking critically about science and working in teams to solve problems in science and so on.

The CHAIR: The third area I would raise is the attitude to phonics. Today we have had the education Minister here in New South Wales—I do not know if you have caught up with that news, Professor Masters—declare an end to the reading wars and say that phonics must be the foundation stone for the teaching of reading beyond that. The year 1 phonics check is to be compulsory in all New South Wales government schools next year. In your report I do not think there was any mention of phonics other than a passing one and at page 99 there is the footnote to the evidence base, the Macquarie University report. Would you in hindsight elevate that to a more substantial part of the report? I agree with what they have concluded there. I suppose we need to. It is the evidence from Macquarie University where they say phonics is the base and then some things are on top of that. Had you your time over again, would you make that a clearer recommendation about the importance of phonics in literacy?

Professor MASTERS: It is a question of how much detail one goes into. My general point there was that, in looking at how we best develop reading and early numeracy skills and so on, we need to draw heavily on the research evidence. We need to be clear about the nature of what increasing confidence in reading and

mathematics looks like. That needs to be evidence-based. There is a huge body of research around evidence-based teaching of reading and numeracy and that includes research evidence around the teaching of phonics. It could have been made more explicit, but my report was always going to be a fairly high-level analysis and not get into the details of syllabuses or specific subject areas.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: A number of us posed this question to you in our private briefing and also it is something that we have talked a lot about in our public hearings. I want to go to this question of untimed student progression. I think the Committee is particularly concerned about students who are left who may not progress at the usual year level rate. What happens to these students once the time comes to finish their school years? How do they progress through? Are they left at school indefinitely? Or do they actually complete not having progressed through? How do you anticipate these untimed student progressions to work? Let me just give you some context. The Anglican Education Commission this morning said that, if it was to introduce untimed learnings into schools, it would require a significant amount of increased resources, even on top of what we have seen come in through Gonski.

Professor MASTERS: I guess the starting point is what we currently have. What we currently have is students being required to move to next year's curriculum, many of whom have not mastered the previous year's curriculum. So they receive a low-grade and then, because time has lapsed, they are required to move to the next year's curriculum. For many students, that happens year after year and they fall further behind as the curriculum becomes increasingly far ahead of them. That is the real issue that I am trying to address in that recommendation—the fact that many students are being written off as poor learners eventually because they fall further and further behind over time. My recommendation is to move to what might be thought of as a proficiency-based or a mastery-based approach, where students progress to the next level after they have demonstrated that they have mastered the prior level.

You do not have this problem of students being forced to move on because of the lapse of time and undertaking work for which they lack the prerequisites, which is happening in our schools right now. It is happening everywhere. If we have a clear set of attainment or proficiency levels or whatever you want to call them—this is not a new idea. The idea of students moving through a series of levels of increasing proficiency or competence is a very widely used idea outside of the school sector. It underpins qualifications frameworks, for example, but in schools everything is very tightly tied to time. Students are told when they have to start learning something, how long they have to learn it, when they have to stop and then they move on. My proposal is that every student moves through the same sequence. It is an inclusive curriculum in that every student is moving through the same sequence of levels, but we do not require them to move in lock step because of the consequences of that.

Students who require more time have it. Students who are ready to move on—that is the other side of the equation. Many students in our schools are capable of moving on and doing more advanced work, but they are not able to because they have to sit there and mark time until it has elapsed. Then they are allowed to move on. I hope I am answering your question. It is challenging. That is why I suggest it be done cautiously and that the concept be demonstrated in one or two areas of learning before it is generalised. But, if we do not do something like this, I think we are going to continue to have a situation where many students are not being well served by the curriculum because they are being forced to move on not having established what they need to deal with the next stage of the curriculum.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appreciate the theoretical discussion about how it would work. But what happens to that child who does not reach the performance or learning standard? Are they left permanently in year 12? On our first hearing date, we received evidence from Greg Ashman that a better approach is direct, explicit teaching at the entire classroom and teacher-led instruction. Then students who are not keeping up should be removed to have small interventions to try and get them back up to that level.

Professor MASTERS: Yes, that itself is very resource intensive. That is what we do currently in a sense. We assume that all students are equally ready for the same year level curriculum and we teach them the curriculum using explicit, direct instruction, if you like, and hold them accountable for learning it. The problem with that is that students are so varied in their levels of attainment that the most advanced students are six or seven years of learning ahead of the least advanced students. To pretend that they are all equally ready for the same experience and learning opportunities is actually naive. The way that I see this working is that there be a sequence of levels through which all students would progress.

If you think of a level 4—whatever that means—there could be some students who were in year 6 in level 4. There could be some students in year 8 in level 4 and teachers would be teaching them and targeting their teaching appropriately to the level that they have reached to maximise the likelihood of them learning successfully. They would not be held back. All students would be hopefully making excellent progress every year through this

sequence of levels. That sequence of levels would be shared by all teachers. They would all know what it means to be at level 4, because many of them will have students who are at level 4 and will need to be challenged at that level.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are actually saying that we totally redo our schooling structure? The example that you just gave us is that we teach year 8 kids in with year 6 kids—and in with whoever is at that level—across all the different subjects. Is that what you are proposing?

Professor MASTERS: That is what I am saying. We know it is a fact now that students in different years of school are often at the same level. Students in the same year of school are often at very different levels of attainments. If we are going to maximise their learning, we need to meet them where they are. That is what we are often not doing well at all, despite teachers' best efforts. They are working within the constraints of a curriculum that is based on a wrong assumption. The wrong assumption is that all students are more or less equally ready to be taught the same thing. Yes, they are all moving through that sequence of levels. The levels are not defined in terms of or tied to particular years of school. They are not time based; they are levels of proficiency.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How does that work practically? There is clearly a hard barrier between year 6 and year 7. That model is not going to work across year 6 and year 7, is it? You are going to have students in different institutions.

Professor MASTERS: If you have a sequence of levels that is equally relevant in primary schools and secondary schools in, say, mathematics, there is no reason that I can see why teachers in secondary schools could not be teaching students who were at a particular level, and teachers in primary schools might not be teaching more advanced students who are at that same level. What I am envisaging is a sequence of levels that is independent of time; a sequence of levels that is defined as varying levels of competence or proficiency or attainment within a subject area.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: At a practical level, how does that work in a classroom? Take history, for example: How do you teach a history lesson when you are suggesting that there might be five or six levels that you are dealing with across a single class?

Professor MASTERS: Firstly, I do not think any teacher would be able to handle more than two or three levels within a class. If you have students who are spread across many levels that would require a school-level response to think about how you deal with that much variability. In history it is an interesting question, because history is often conceptualised as a set of topics that students study. What I would be encouraging is that progress in history is thought about in terms of what is at the core of history. What are the core understandings, the core concepts, the core principles and core methods of that discipline that develop across the years of school? It could be that students are at different levels in relation to the development of those core understandings, and there may be a need for teachers to respond to those differences. But often I think it will be possible to teach the same topics or to have students engaged in the same broad activities, even if they are at different points in their long-term progress.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Implicit in what you are saying is some form of streaming, is it not?

Professor MASTERS: No, streaming is something different. Streaming is when you lock students into some lower-level course. The problem with that is—there are multiple problems. You set a ceiling on how far they can progress. You lock them in, often, to that lower-level stream. What I am talking about is not streaming; it is an inclusive approach that says every student progresses through the same sequence of levels. It is an inclusive curriculum, progressing through the same levels. There is no ceiling on how far any student can go in their learning. We expect every student to make excellent progress every year. Yes, it is quite different from streaming.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: But that is incompatible with what you said earlier, which was about no teacher being expected to teach students across more than two levels. If they are not going to teach across more than two levels then those kids who are in the lower levels are going to have to be taught by another teacher. Is that not a form of streaming?

Professor MASTERS: No, not in the way I am thinking of it. There is no reason why that needs to be defined as a separate stream. I can see where you are going with that, but I think we have to work to make sure that this does not lead to streaming. The idea is that every student is on the same progression. They are all working through the same sequence of levels. It may be necessary for schools to think of ways of catering for students' needs if they have very different needs.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How do you do that within a staffing formula that sort of limits the number of teachers per so many students? Obviously if you have got some students who are at lower levels of progression and those numbers are not sufficient to make up a full class, how do you staff that?

Professor MASTERS: Remember that we are not talking about taking students out of their year groups. Students would be largely working within their year groups. They may be grouped for instruction in particular subjects—they may form subgroups for that purpose—but I am not convinced that there need to be staffing implications; there may be. Some high-performing countries do allocate additional teachers to work with students who are slipping behind in their learning who need additional support. That may be something that is desirable, but I am not sure whether it is necessary. It is not necessary to the model that I have proposed here.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I want to ask you about a couple of things in relation to the comments you made about values and attitudes. We have had some feedback this morning from the Anglican Education Commission. It talked about who writes the curriculum and how they embed, if you like, their own values in the writing of curricula and in syllabuses. I wanted to get your views about how you would view that and how that might be managed via review by stakeholders, and pilots and things of that nature, to ensure a balanced curriculum and syllabuses that flow from that.

Professor MASTERS: To the extent that the curriculum is designed to promote particular values, it is important that there is a mechanism for ensuring that those values are supported and shared across the community. Promoting values in schools is not a new idea at all. Schools have always done that, in some ways—shared values that we commonly hold. I think if we are going to think about how you promote values and attitudes in schools then there needs to be a process for reaching agreement, to the extent that we can, on what it is that we value as a society and what values and attitudes we want to develop and promote.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In relation to the current NESA values—excellence, respect and responsibility, equity and justice, inclusivity, environmental sustainability—are you happy with that set of values, if you like, and is that way in which you see the curriculum moving forward—with those values embedded in it?

Professor MASTERS: I did not address that directly in my report. I did not have a view about the list of individual values that you have listed. I do not have a view on that, Mr Mason-Cox.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Okay. There was some feedback from a range of stakeholders in relation to the resource implications of moving pursuant to the Government response to implementation of the syllabuses over four years, rather than the 10 years I think suggested in your report. I just wanted to get your feedback on that. Do you have any concerns about the speed of the implementation of the new syllabuses?

Professor MASTERS: I guess I come back to what people said to me in New South Wales, and that is that they do want deep reform. They do not just want the tweaking of syllabuses. If that is what people want, and it is what the Government wants, then we know that requires time. As you know, what I said in my report was that deep reform could take a decade, and my international experience would reinforce that point. Most countries that set out to significantly reform their curricula give themselves a period of eight to 10 years, often, to achieve significant reform. I think if you compress the time line, there is a risk that you do not end up with the kind of reforms that people told me they wanted to see and you do end up with what I have been calling the tweaking of what we currently have.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: On the history syllabus, we have had a bit of feedback today, again, in relation to the teaching of history in years 9 and 10, in particular and the compulsory history stream. There is concern raised by some stakeholders about whether we should have the "Making a nation" elective compulsory in the history stream so that students have an understanding about how the whole Parliament of Australia, the Constitution and the parliamentary system of democracy work. Indeed, an extension of that by one stakeholder was looking at how that integrates to the foundational work of western civilization and the whole enlightenment right through to Magna Carta in the context of the whole linear stream of history over time in a much more direct way in the syllabus rather than by elective. Do you have a view on that at all?

Professor MASTERS: No. As I said earlier, the way that I approached this and the way that I always saw my role was to think about the curriculum at a macro level. It was never going to be possible for me to get into the details of individual syllabuses, into the details of how reading should be taught or what should be in the history curriculum in detail. That was not something that I considered and was never going to be able to consider.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Do you have a personal view?

Professor MASTERS: My field of expertise is not history, so I do not think that I have a well-enough-formed view for it to mean anything. There is regular consideration of the syllabuses and the details of the syllabuses, so there are NESA processes in place for consulting around that and making decisions, and I think that is the appropriate place for those decisions to be made.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Do you have confidence in NESA to be able to implement what you have put to the Government in that four-year time frame?

Professor MASTERS: If NESA is adequately resourced, I think the time frame is extremely difficult for the reason that I outlined. These are really quite significant reforms that I have proposed and they will take time, so it is a question of how well resourced NESA is and how much time they are given to do this, as well.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Thank you for your work, Professor. To what extent did you engage with the teaching profession when you came up with the recommendations about, effectively, moving away from prescriptive learning cycles to learning by attainment? It sounds great in theory. I have heard your theory again and we have heard others talk about the theory, but every time we try and get practical details about it, it all becomes very amorphous.

Professor MASTERS: As I said in the introductory comments I made, I spoke with many teachers—mainly in groups, but some individually—and what they called for was more flexibility. They felt that there was too much rigidity, that the curriculum is to lock-step, and the sort of thing they asked for was more flexibility to respond to the different needs that students have in their classes. They said their job is to deliver a curriculum that in many cases is very crowded. They have to rush to get through all of the content that they are expected to cover or they believe they are expected to cover, and that limits their ability to design learning opportunities that are well tailored to the needs of the students in their care.

As I said, the idea of attainment levels was contained in my interim report. There was feedback in the interim report; people had an opportunity respond to that. There was a very high level of support for that idea, with people saying of course that it is a great idea in theory but there are questions around how you do it in practice—and they are right about that. There are practical questions that will need to be addressed and that [inaudible] for moving cautiously.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: When you run this past parents, you get questions back to you. I had it myself, such as, "If my child is having trouble working out some basic algebra and spending a significantly longer period taking years to grasp and work their way through that with the best of assistance rather than months, does that mean my child at 14 will be sitting in a classroom with 11 and 12 year olds? Will that mean a kind of humiliation?" These are very real questions that parents are asking and we do not really have any answers.

Professor MASTERS: That is a natural concern. What I have said is that uncoupling the structure of the curriculum from the structure of schooling in the way that I am proposing does not mean that you have to change the structure of schooling. I think there are very good social reasons for keeping students of the same age together and having them progress through school together. I am not proposing that we do away with year levels. What I am reaching for is a better way to support teachers to address the variability that they face every day within their classes where they have students who are at very different points in their learning. To tell teachers, "Your job is to deliver this single curriculum—this common curriculum—to all students of the same age and the same year level" is not helping them and also telling them, "Work out how to differentiate while you are at it." That is not helpful to them and it is not helpful to students who finish the year, get a low grade for the year and then repeat that whole experience again in the next year.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: These questions are not statements in support of the status quo. They are questions about what the end goal is. We know that teachers have basically got the same lesson preparation time now that they had 25 or 30 years ago. Surely at a minimum, if we are going to talk about differentiated learning, we need to be talking about additional staffing and additional time set aside for lesson preparation. Surely we accept that as a basic minimum if we are going down this path.

Professor MASTERS: If it is possible, it is always desirable to free teachers up to spend more time preparing lessons and more time talking with each other. It is desirable if it is possible to have more teachers who can provide support to students who are struggling. There is no question about that, I think; it is a question of what can be resourced.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: One of your recommendations was rather than have cross-curriculum engagement with First Nations history and culture that there be a discrete unit on that. Was that because you thought there was too much First Nations engagement with the curriculum. Was it because you did not think First Nations history and culture responded to English or other aspects of the curriculum? What was it that was motivating you in that regard?

Professor MASTERS: What was motivating me, I think, was my belief—based on a whole lot of conversations I had—that it is desirable to be clear about what I mentioned before. That is, what is it that every student should be exposed to? What is it that every student should know and understand about Aboriginal cultures and histories? I do not think we are clear about that right now in the New South Wales curriculum. So that is the

first thing: let us be clear about what we want every student to know and understand, then let us think about how we make sure that happens.

Another thing that was motivating me, I think, was my concern that too often it is left to chance, teachers are encouraged to think about how they build Aboriginal perspectives into mathematics or how they build Aboriginal perspectives into science. That might be a good thing to try and do and probably is, but my worry is that if that is the limit of our approach, if that is all we are doing, then we are not ensuring that every student meets some minimum standard, if you like, some minimum expectation of what they should know and understand about Aboriginal cultures and mysteries.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But those two things are not in necessary conflict, are they?

Professor MASTERS: No, they are not. The way you introduced it, it is not that I am saying they should not be taught across the curriculum, that could have continued to happen, but if that is all we do I think I would have a concern.

The CHAIR: Is it not just self-evident logic that Indigenous history and culture is better taught as Indigenous history and culture than as some form of science and maths?

Professor MASTERS: Yes, that is really what I am proposing, but what I am saying is I am not ruling out the possibility that a mathematics teacher might be able to bring some Indigenous content and context into mathematics if it is useful.

The CHAIR: Okay. Scott Farlow?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you very much, Mr Chair, and thank you, Professor Masters, for joining us again. Just a few things. When we have been going through this inquiry we have grappled with the characterisation of the report and where we are heading with the curriculum. I guess a lot of the commentary has been back to basics in terms of the curriculum review and the Government's response to your review. We have heard from some stakeholders throughout the process that they do not necessarily believe it is basics but looking more at the depth of learning rather than the breadth. I am interested in your perspectives on that point and whether this is back to basics or whether this is something else or it is, in fact, too simplistic perhaps to characterise it in such a way.

Professor MASTERS: I do not think in my report I used the term "back to basics" or even "basics" very often, if at all, but what I did say is that it is very important in the early years that there is a very strong focus on ensuring that every student masters the basics of reading and numeracy and writing, and extra time and priority needs to be given to that in the early years because, stating the obvious, if students do not master that in the early years of school then they are going to be behind not only in learning those but usually across the curriculum. You could interpret that as back to basics in the sense that I am emphasising the importance of reading and writing and basic mathematics.

You could, if you wanted to, just say that my proposal that subjects focus more sharply on what is really at the heart of a subject, the core knowledge, the core concepts and principles of the subject, that could be thought of as a kind of basics too, I suppose. It is certainly saying that rather than going for superficial coverage of large amounts of material, let us make sure that students develop deep understandings of what is really important, what is really at the heart of the discipline.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: When it comes to the untimed syllabus I think it is fair to say, and you have seen that from the questions both in this session and from our previous private session, that the Committee has found it very difficult to grapple with the implementation of the untimed syllabus. Interestingly enough, as we have had this inquiry a lot of practitioners, I have found, have not found it as earth shattering as maybe we on the Committee have. I am interested in what feedback you have received particularly from practitioners with respect to the untimed syllabus and if you have seen any suggestions as to how it can be implemented most appropriately.

Professor MASTERS: To the extent that I have had feedback since my final report was released, which is limited, I have found a fair level of support for the idea. As I said, I think many people say yes, in theory they are very supportive of this, but there are all sorts of questions around how we would do it in practice. So they understand the rationale, they understand the potential benefits of it, but they are working within a paradigm, if you like, that they have grown up in, which basically says every student in the same year of school has to be taught exactly the same things, and they are not used to thinking about the curriculum in a time-free way, they are not thinking about progression through schooling on the basis of demonstrated confidence and proficiency; they are still thinking about progression through the curriculum on the basis of time.

So it is challenging for people and that is why I would say that this needs to be done cautiously. I would recommend, as I think I probably did, beginning with one or maybe two subject areas, perhaps starting in the early years of school. Take a subject like mathematics, think about what the nature of increasing mathematics proficiency looks like during the early years, what are the core concepts, the core ideas that need to be developed, the core skills that need to be developed, and what is the nature of the development over those early years of school and then let us recognise that in year 2 there will be children who are wildly different currently in the points that they are at in their mathematics learning and let us use that frame of reference that we have constructed to help teachers target what they are doing upon the points that individuals have reached rather than telling them "Your job is to deliver the same curriculum to everybody and do what you can to address different needs."

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to an answer you gave to the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox earlier I think you outlined that part of your remit was not going into that sort of root and branch of every syllabus that exists in New South Wales. I am interested in your perspectives from your curriculum review what you think is the best process to go about now undertaking that sort of root and branch review of every syllabus throughout New South Wales to align it to your curriculum review.

Professor MASTERS: There are different ways of going about this, and NESA will make its own judgement about the best way to proceed, I guess. I think what I would be doing is something like what I have just said; I would be beginning with some learning areas, I would be perhaps thinking about what long-term development in those learning areas looks like or should look like, beginning from the early years of school. So I would be redeveloping the syllabuses around core; I would be having conversations around what are the core concepts, what are the core principles, methods, skills and knowledge that students should be developing; just a handful of things perhaps that are really at the heart of this subject, let us think about what their development looks like, the progress that we expect students should be making in developing deeper understandings of these concepts and let us build the syllabuses out from that understanding.

I guess what I am trying to say here is focus on what is really core, think about progress through the years of school across the years; do not think only or so much in terms of what we should be teaching in year 5, but think about what long-term progress looks like, recognising that in year 5 there will be students who are at very different points in their learning of the subject.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: For instance, the Science Teachers Association earlier said that it would be a good idea to reverse engineer that process and start with sort of where you wanted people to finish up at year 12 when they finish schooling and then go back from there and work out the building blocks. Do you think that would be an appropriate sort of way in which to approach some of the syllabus where it may correspond to a year 12 or stage 6 outcome?

Professor MASTERS: Yes, possibly. As I said, I think there are different ways of doing this, but if you are thinking about the core concept in an area of science you might start by saying what does a really deep understanding of that concept look like, what would we hope somebody by the end of year 12 understands about this particular aspect of science and how can we develop a route to get them to that deep understanding? So I can see that is perhaps one useful strategy—to be clear about the end point in the sense of what might be a reasonable level of understanding by the time someone completes school.

The Hon. WES FANG: Professor Masters, thank you very much for agreeing to appear today. I have a question following on from the Hon. Scott Farlow about the untimed curriculum. In my experience, that has certainly been the biggest conversation starter with the review. We have heard throughout this inquiry that there will be problems around how schools, how NESA, look to implement this. My question is: If that was put in the too-hard basket at the end of the day, what effect would that have on the rest of your report? What would you say would be other take-homes that would be of benefit without that untimed curriculum?

Professor MASTERS: There are many recommendations in my report, of course. Some of the key recommendations are to reduce the amount of content in the syllabuses to focus on what is really core, to think about how those core knowledge, skills and understandings develop over time, and to reduce the amount of peripheral content that may be in some syllabuses. That is still something that is worth doing, along with many of the other recommendations I made. But I will just say in response to your question that it leaves hanging the question of what we do to address the problem that I have identified in the report, and that is the problem that we are missing the target. The current curriculum is missing the target for many students, either because they are being taught what they are not yet ready to learn or because they are being taught what they already know and they are not being given the challenges of which they are capable.

So if we do not do something like what I have suggested, the problem still exists. There are still very, very large numbers of children in our schools who are falling behind the curriculum and falling further behind year by year, eventually giving the message that they are not good at this game of school and disengaging in

various ways. We give them low grades year after year, not recognising the progress they are actually making in an absolute sense because we are judging them over and over again against age-based expectations. There is much in the report that should be implemented, could be implemented. If we do not think about how we better support teachers to target their teaching to the needs of individual students in the way that I have suggested, we have to find another way to do that.

The Hon. WES FANG: In your position, would you say that that is the most important of the recommendations to be implemented? Will decluttering the curriculum and implementing those other recommendations—I will call them low-hanging fruit recommendations—that are easier to implement than, say, an untimed syllabus, have equal benefit or do you think that there is more benefit in working to students' capabilities?

Professor MASTERS: As you probably know, I ended up with three major priorities. I cannot remember what I called them now but one was the decluttering and the focusing on what is really core. The other was elevating the status of skills and integrating them more deeply into subject learning. The third was this topic that we are discussing of how you better design the curriculum so that it supports teachers to meet students where they are. I think all three of those things have the potential to improve learning in schools and to improve levels of performance across the system.

I think if we could find a way to solve the problem that we are talking about of students who are being taught material for which they are not yet ready or being taught material that is well within their comfort zones because they are ready for greater challenges—if we could find ways to address that, then I think there is potential to significantly lift levels of performance. In my view, the best way to reverse the decline that is occurring in New South Wales currently and has been for at least 20 years, is to do a better job of supporting teachers to identify where students are up to in their learning and to meet them at their points of need.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Professor Masters, in terms of going forward, what is your current engagement with the New South Wales Government in terms of implementing your report?

Professor MASTERS: I have no involvement at present. There is no engagement. I have been asked if I would be willing to be called on if need be but I have not been at this point.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Professor Masters, in your response to, I think, Matthew Mason-Cox's question, you said that it was not your brief to get down in the weeds of specific curriculum recommendations. But you do make a quite specific recommendation about reading in recommendation No. 4.2. Did the department, representatives of the department or the Minister's office have any hand in the crafting of the wording of that recommendation?

Professor MASTERS: Sorry, I missed the key part of your question. I made specific recommendations in relation to—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: To reading in recommendation No. 4.2.

Professor MASTERS: The answer is no. Nobody had any input into that—no-one from the department had any input into that. Reading is one of the basic skills that we have to get right early in the piece. We have to draw on what we know from research about the most effective ways to teach reading. There needs to be a clear frame of reference that teachers can use to establish where individual students are up to in their reading development so they can target their teaching appropriately and address skill deficits that individuals have. So that was my decision based on broad input. Nobody from the department had a hand in that.

The CHAIR: Are there any other questions from Committee members? If not, we will wrap up right on time. Thanks, Professor Masters. I am sure that on behalf of the Committee I can thank you for the generosity of your time as we have engaged in this session and in the informal briefing. If there are any supplementary questions, the Committee will forward those to you in due course. Thank you much. We all hope that it works out in a positive way.

Professor MASTERS: Thank you, and good luck with it.

(The witness withdrew.)

BEN JENSEN, Chief Executive Officer, Learning First, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: We thank you for your participation. We are saving the very best until last. You are actually our last witness as part of a two-day process of hearings. One of the Committee members was just asking if there was a submission or document that had been circulated in advance. There had not been, but I know you have done a lot of work through Learning First and also in association with Johns Hopkins University School of Education. You are able to make a short statement, if you want to, or we can go straight to questions.

Dr JENSEN: Do you mind if I make a very short statement? I will keep it short. I just wanted to really thank you for inviting me to speak today. I have a few points to describe where I am coming from because I think it will provide some context for my answers. This will, I think, hopefully help explain some of my answers. In my opinion the biggest challenge facing the Australian system where there are education policymakers is how to have a positive impact in schools and classrooms. We have done a lot of different things over the years but we have actually been pretty poor at moving that needle.

Very little policy in Australia is developed based on a comprehensive analysis of what is happening in schools and classrooms, so policy recommendations in general are immediately disconnected from the challenges that schoolteachers face. I welcome your focus on curriculum, as it takes us closer to the classroom. Learning First's work has really focused—when we have done curriculum work, it has really been focused on the curriculum that is actually taught in schools. This is not only because of the evidence of the impact of quality instructional materials, but also because it centres policy development on what happens in schools and classrooms. We do not want this a secondary issue or a matter of implementation that comes after policy is developed.

With reduced teacher workload we will also improve teacher learning in classrooms. It is a huge amount of work for teachers to convert the syllabus documents into [inaudible] learning programs. I cannot tell you how many teachers in every system in the country have asked me why each teacher has to do all this work. Why are there not quality instructional resources made available that they can adopt and adapt as they see fit? I have spent considerable time working in various systems around the world and I can tell you that high-performing systems provide much more support to teachers than we currently do. I just want to provide that as some background as I think it will help with some of the context regarding the questions I am guessing you might ask, but also the answers I will give. Thank you.

The CHAIR: I appreciate that. You probably summarised one of the lingering doubts over the Masters review because it seems to me that there are three levels of theory and practice here. One is the high-level helicopter view of a curriculum, which essentially is the Masters review, and then you bring it down to the next level, which is the written, circulated syllabus. The Masters review does not actually delve into—there is no deep dive there into the actual content of the New South Wales syllabus as it is written today. And then, you come down another level to real classroom practice.

My own view is that your focus on real classroom practice would have been a lot more useful to curriculum reform in New South Wales than just staying at the helicopter level. I have spoken to some education experts who say that you should have been the curriculum reviewer or, at a minimum, part of a small, hands-on committee that did the work. Just in terms of your focus, what is the conclusion that you have reached about the potential at a real classroom level to achieve improved school academic results by changing the curriculum? In particular, what have you found about the use of what you have described here as content-rich standards aligned with curriculum material, especially textbooks?

Dr JENSEN: I think there is huge potential to make those changes. Linked to what I said earlier, I do think that it is actually very hard to give a broad, sweeping statement about, "This is the one reform that will make all the difference." I just came from a group with secondary school mathematics teachers at schools in New South Wales and country New South Wales. Their curricular issues are very different than what primary school mathematics teachers face. So, there are general changes that can be made but, to be honest, we need to actually have a detailed understanding of what is taught and learned in classrooms. We need to actually understand: What does a grade four kid do in mathematics across all schools? It is really hard to see what the big curriculum reform is that is going to make all the difference when we are actually, in a way, flying a bit blind.

The CHAIR: Right. Internationally, where would you point us for a reform process that has worked? I saw Louisiana mentioned in your work; we do not often look to Louisiana for inspiration in many things. But in that united state and elsewhere, what would you point us towards? One of the difficulties we have found with Masters, particularly in the progression points, is why New South Wales should be the canary in the coalmine when we have lots of issues about classroom practice, measurement, excellence standards, and generally our

results are falling. You would think that you would look to the other end of the spectrum to be experimental in terms of the untimed syllabus.

The CHAIR: Before I answer that, I will tell a story. A senior Singapore policymaker once said to me, with regard more to the technology side, "I do not really understand what the first mover advantage is for innovation and reform in education." If you look all over the world there are people trying things everywhere and people with different approaches. There are potential risks and costs of being the first mover or, as you say, the canary in the coalmine. You can wait until the rest of the world makes some moves and learn from them. Getting to your exact question, I think there are aspects that we can learn from various systems. Louisiana is one of the poorest states in the US and we know that is saying something. They were able to actually get some improvement from some really standards-aligned, high quality curriculum resources.

British Columbia did a lot of work 20 years ago on significant curriculum reform that actually got teachers together, identifying high quality curriculum resources and assessment resources and providing really practical resources that can be used in schools. It is the same in Singapore and the same in Hong Kong. The functions are slightly different but all of them have in common a lot greater clarity on what are high quality instructional resources. All provide much greater teacher-friendly and user-friendly resources. None of them mandate, particularly, but they do provide options that teachers can adapt or adopt as they see fit. What that also does is reduces the amount of work the teachers have to do to, in a nutshell, reinvent the wheel of writing these teaching programs. It therefore allows teachers to spend more time on dealing with some of the issues that Professor Masters has rightly highlighted in his review.

The CHAIR: If the high quality texts are not mandated, how do you get teachers to use them? In New South Wales formally we had Local Schools, Local Decisions. It has been in limbo now with no clear replacement for what might happen thereafter. How do you engineer a system whereby there are a defined group of high quality, proven, high impact learning materials, including textbooks, and teachers use those in the system, knowing that it frees up time in other areas and, most importantly, gets results for the students?

Dr JENSEN: Yes. I think you have highlighted a really important point. It also highlights a few things. One is, A, how do we get the change and implement the change? B is some of the mistakes we have made with [inaudible] in this area. Generally the approach that has proven to be successful—because very, very few systems actually mandate textbooks or materials, but they provide a recommended list to choose from. Louisiana had a fantastic motto of, "Make the best thing to use the easiest thing to use."

Really what all of these systems have done is provide information to teachers on the quality of various instructional resources. They have always, almost without exception, included teachers in the evaluation process and in helping develop resources and then providing them to the system. Whenever we have done any sort of this work in Australia, or whenever we talk to people overseas in these other systems that have been highlighted, the immediate problems of teachers using reputed resources seems to disappear once they realise that these are developed by their peers, evaluated by their peers, and they are easy to use and, more to the point, successful.

The CHAIR: Do you think this recommended list and systems around that is more important than ever in the age of the Internet? I have got to say, my office gets a pretty steady flow of material from parents absolutely gobsmacked that a teacher has reached into the Internet for some obscure, useless, bizarre, wacko learning material from the 1970s or 1980s or elsewhere and is using that in the class. In theory teachers really have a freedom to use any old item that they see fit, but it might not have any evidence base for a positive impact and, in fact, if it befuddles and sometimes distresses the students and their parents, it can be very counter-productive. Don't we need some boundaries here?

Dr JENSEN: I think there are two things. Point number one would be to get back to a notion that we really need to better understand what is actually being used in classrooms, because what you are saying is no doubt true. There is a lot of variation there. Two, it highlights the incredible lack of time and support that teachers have to do this. When you are looking at less than an hour or two to prepare multiple lessons across multiple subjects and multiple year levels, then you are going to make mistakes. All of us are. As has been pointed out many times, having the expertise to do this across all these subject areas in a very limited amount of time is almost impossible. In terms of the boundaries you have highlighted, I think there needs to be something of discussion, decision-making and assessment of the resources used. That can be internal within the school. It can be broader than that. There are various ways of doing it, but I think this is what happens when we leave this as a blank box.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I like that term, "make the best thing to use the easiest thing to use". As we have gone through this process and indeed our previous inquiry into what works in schools—let us put it that way—the experience is that there seems to be a lot of freedom in the system and a real reluctance, perhaps cultural, to embrace what I would call best practice, be it a teaching method or in relation to curriculum

content or syllabus and all that flows from that. From your perspective about how things work in the New South Wales department, is this a real cultural issue?

Dr JENSEN: There are obviously cultural and institutional barriers to any reform, not just in this area but most. I will say that teachers are dying to do this work. Teachers would love to have the time to actually work through these issues of instructional materials and the content that they can provide in their classroom. They are dying to do it. Teachers love discussing this and pulling this apart and trying to do the best for their kids. It is almost impossible to underestimate the expertise and time required to do this well relative to how much time is actually provided to teachers to do this as well as everything else they have to do. There are always going to be people who are opposed to reform. You are going to get people who are going to oppose any change, but I do not think that more time to develop high quality program content is something where teachers need an awful lot of convincing. And it is not just the more time. They are guided—there is expertise, evaluation and information around it. I think whenever we have discussed it with teachers and really described what the process it, they are basically saying that they wish they could do that. That is the main thing I get back.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Are we setting ourselves up to fail by having this top-down approach and not engaging and producing an instructional manual, a how-to or content-rich material that teachers can choose from?

Dr JENSEN: I think curriculum reform—I would say any policy in general—needs that element of, "Where do we want to go? What do we want our kids to learn and achieve?" But you also need, "Well, where are we now and what is actually happening now?" Basically in Australia it is all the former. To be honest that feels to me like we sometimes go in this cycle that removes us further and further away from the classroom. I find it very frustrating that—I will put it this way: I think we set ourselves up to fail the more we have recommendations and discussions that teachers go, "Well, what I do?"

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: How do we fix that?

Dr JENSEN: Again, I would go back to the starting point. For curriculum reform, I would really want to know what is being taught in classrooms. To be totally blunt—and this is not a criticism of Professor Masters because this is the way we do curriculum reviews in New South Wales and across the country—we have never had a review, for example, of the Australian curriculum that is based on what is being taught in Australian classrooms. That is just a bit nuts to me. Honestly, if I said to you, "We are going to do a strategy for this organisation, but we are not going to look at what the organisation does", what would your response be?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Exactly. I would just assume that this is what we are teaching in classrooms. I would assume that is where you would start.

Dr JENSEN: Exactly. Look, we are starting to see more and more people starting to address this issue. I think systems are starting to move and collect more and more data on what is being taught in classrooms, but it is coming from the point of view where we have a lot of education policy discussion that is—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Esoteric.

Dr JENSEN: Yes.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Okay. So there is a major disconnect in your view between what is happening in the classroom and what we are talking about in terms of curriculum vision.

Dr JENSEN: I do not think it is just curriculum vision. I think this is the way we do education policy, to be blunt. As a general rule of thumb, we often talk about policy or reform and then implementation. The bigger the gap between the two, the less likely you are going to get change in the classrooms. We conduct a lot of policy reform discussions and we develop a lot of policy, as I said earlier, without a comprehensive analysis of what is actually happening in classrooms. If I wanted to do a STEM policy or strategy for New South Wales and Australia, my starting point would be what we teach in mathematics or science classrooms at the moment. We actually do not know that. We do not know what a grade 4 student does in mathematics around the country. We do not know what tasks they complete. That is not a minor issue. That is the biggest hole in education policy by far.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You bring a very interesting and valuable perspective. Simplifying it—sorry, that is what MPs do all the time—is it that we produce curriculum and we produce all these learning goals and these milestones, but we do not actually produce the lesson plans or the sort of fine-grain way of getting it into students' heads? Is that a kind of brutal summary of it?

Dr JENSEN: First of all, never apologise for simplicity. That is actually what we should be doing. I think there are numerous aspects to this. If we actually pull apart the syllabus documentation, we have got a whole lot of content there. There has been a lot of discussion about decluttering the curriculum, which I agree is

the right call to make and probably can result in huge gains if we do that well. What we need to understand is for a teacher to actually then go and develop their teaching program—they are looking at the outcome and what we want our kids to learn and trying to unpack that and how to build assessments around it. Then they are looking at the content as well. Then they have got various resources and so on. Then they go off, as was highlighted earlier, and try and find resources to help them with those units, lessons, assignments, learning tasks—the essay you would write and so on—and which texts or textbook, whichever it may be.

I do not think there is an answer of going—and I think it is a natural progression to then go, "Well, what do we provide? Do we provide unit or lesson plans?" I think there is actually a large range of options there. I think there is great value, which Professor Masters rightly points out, in providing greater assessment examples to teachers. Assessment is a huge and complex issue. It is very difficult to assess students accurately. Teachers spend a lot of time on it. They would like more support and more examples of not just assessing at the standard but what an A or an E looks like and so on and being provided with actual tangible examples of what they look like. If we talk about these assignments that provide—we want critical-thinking skills, we want modern technology, we want someone—but what the great learning task and assignment that teachers can [inaudible] on that we have said, "Actually, this is really high quality. If we assess it this way, this will show outcomes in these areas" and so on. I think there are various resources that can be provided that teachers can then adopt or adapt as they see fit.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I can see huge value in having a core of those resources that teachers can use as models—like a skeleton, if you like. But one of the obvious concerns that pops out in my mind when you think about having a kind of centralised distribution of lesson plans and essay topics and study and test guides is that, increasingly, we see all these online services hunting for that kind of material and then producing paid content to effectively cheat the system. It does run the risk of leaving it more vulnerable to that, does it not?

Dr JENSEN: Yes, totally. It is one of those things where—it may not be lesson plans, but whatever it is, the two things I would say there are there is a huge amount of resources and teachers are inundated with people trying to sell them stuff. A couple of things with the centralised—one is that they need to be evaluated. Basically, teachers will be inundated by people trying to sell them things, so any information that actually says, "Here are criteria. This program to help you teach primary school mathematics. Here is where it marks against these criteria from an external source". The other thing is, I think we should not—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is that not what APs do?

Dr JENSEN: We should not hop into the notion that this should actually be done necessarily by Government. This does not have to be necessarily NESA or some government department providing all these resources. It may be that they are privately provided, or by private companies, but there is some evaluation or filtering tool that actually helps teachers pick and choose.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I just jump in there?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That opens up a whole line of questions, but we have not got time to run down that. One of the other concerns about a more centralised production of materials is that it kind of glosses over the fact that teachers are professionals. They are highly trained, and you want them to be responding as professionals to what they see in front of them. You actually want them to be adapting materials. You want them to be giving currency to their lesson plan. You want them to be adopting current affairs into their lesson plans to make it interesting for kids. If we are not careful, do we start ignoring the fact that we are dealing with a profession here?

Dr JENSEN: I think there are a few things going on there. You have raised a really important point, so thank you for highlighting that issue. One thing goes back to what I said back earlier: In terms of centralisation, in my mind this is ideally created by networks of teachers who do this development and sharing of resources and materials. It is not just done separately. That is what happened in British Columbia; that is what happens in Singapore; that is what happens in Hong Kong and Ontario and so on. You have networks of science teachers working through science material and science resources with evaluation criteria, working through, sharing resources and so on. I think this is actually, in my mind, a key way to elevate the professional status of teaching. Another thing is that by getting teachers to do the lesson planning and every aspect of it without those [inaudible] you are actually getting them to working so much on, for lack of a better word, the nuts and bolts of making sure they get things done as quickly as possible in a tighter time line. I think actually by just saying to teachers, "You have to do it all", we are actually disempowering teachers. We are actually saying that.

Just finally on that, there is I think sometimes—this is not what you have highlighted, but sometimes there is this notion that to be a fully professional teacher you have to do all this yourself. There are people who do argue that. I would just say simply that if that is the case, therefore we are saying that teachers in Singapore, Finland, British Columbia, Ontario and Hong Kong where they have this sort of centralised support—I do not see

them as not professionals. Are we really saying that Finnish teachers are not professionals because the Government provides advice on quality of instructional materials? Do we think that doctors are not professionals because there is centralised support and advice on what is the quality way to do their job?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am not entirely sure that is there in the medical profession, but I get your point that it is not all or one. You want to have professionals. You want them to have the ability to deliver that finely grained teaching material, but to the extent that they can be assisted in that to get their hands on quality rated material then we are helping that outcome.

Dr JENSEN: Yes. It is also not the notion of, "It is going to be provided all centrally by NESA; you are just going to deliver the content. You are just basically going to be a talking front-person for all the centralised materials". I think often people fear that, for lack of a better word. They fear what a centralised approach can bring. "Does it mean that I can't adapt? Does it mean that I can't be flexible?" I think we want to avoid all of those things. But I just feel we have gone so far down the road of autonomy and flexibility without providing the support, resources and expertise that is actually required for what is incredibly complex work.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My last question on this is: We talk about a 10-year implementation framework for this curriculum review. Would you say that within that delivery of the curriculum review that there is this missing element that needs to be grafted onto it? In which case, where do we look to develop that? Is it a mixture of NESA and, say, the Department of Education building those kinds of teacher networks? Where do we look to for leadership in this?

Dr JENSEN: First of all, in terms of that time line for the implementation of this work, I do not mean this to be a cop-out answer but I think there is something also in terms of moving away from this notion that we do a review of the curriculum and then we implement it to this being an ongoing process. In Singapore, they have a system whereby basically—I think it is every seven or so years; I am going to get that number wrong—the curriculum in each subject area is reviewed or updated, whatever you want to call it. But there is an ongoing process between that of collecting information of what is happening in the classroom and hearing from teachers about their struggles—what is working, what is not working. If we have made changes here, we have got three or four years of data and then we have made a little change here and it feeds into there. I like to think of this as an ongoing, continual process.

More generally, where do we look to for leadership of this? NESA clearly has a large role in the curriculum—there is probably no doubt there. There is an advantage for New South Wales that NESA has responsibility for teacher professional development as well, so we can bring those two together. More broadly, compared to 20 or 30 years ago the subject associations used to have a much bigger say in a lot of general educational debate in Australia. If you speak to a lot of teachers—not in all cases—but a lot of teachers say the best professional development they do get is from their subject associations. There are networks already there. They are just not part of this group, or they are not connected—it is not done in a systematic way. There is no perfect one-system response. It is going to be messy; it is going to be a bit all over the place. But if you get a network of teachers together who are passionate about a subject and all work in that subject, in my experience it is pretty incredible what they can create.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Resourcing those kind of collegiate structures, and allowing best practice to be disseminated at least partly through that, is part of the answer?

Dr JENSEN: I would think so—obviously just with the understanding that this can be done terribly or brilliantly.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you, Dr Jensen. I know this is a bit weird because you cannot quite see us, but thank you very much for your time this afternoon. I have had a chance to just have a quick look at your *What we teach matters* document from November 2018. I think that was a useful point of reference, because some of the testimony that we have heard has been that curriculum is not necessarily the best way to improve our standards in New South Wales. I think it is an interesting counterpoint that you have posed for us. In this paper, you say that high-quality curriculum can affect standards. Do you think the Masters review or the New South Wales response so far conforms to that definition?

Dr JENSEN: I think the aspect of the Masters review which touches on that the most is de-cluttering the curriculum, and I forget his exact terminology but it is focusing on the key areas. I am sure he used different terminology but it is basically de-cluttering the curriculum to focus on the key areas of the subject. To me, that process is what is going to touch most closely on how we get to high-quality instructional materials in classrooms and how we support teachers to do this work.

For example, we wrote a series of papers [inaudible] with Johns Hopkins University and they introduced the common core curriculum. One of the differences with the common core curriculum in the United States and

curriculum discussions in Australia is that the common core is very specific about this and highlights those prioritised areas; it actually makes prioritisation decisions for school systems and so on. Obviously it is a different system, but those high-quality instructional materials do get back to what is actually most important that we teach in this subject in this year level or in this subject over primary and then secondary school and so on. I think that is what touches closest to this.

Obviously the Masters review does not get into the detail of what that will look like in syllabus documentation or in each specific subject, but it is that process of moving away from basically, "Let's get through this long list of dot points" and "Can we fit this in to whatever minutes are allocated to this subject?" to "What is the key ideas or the big ideas that we want kids to learn in this subject? Or in this year or whatever it may be. How are we going to assess it? How are we going to teach it?" and so on.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Science Teachers Association of NSW gave us a really interesting idea today. They actually said, "We are doing this back to front. What you actually need is backwards mapping. You need to start at year 12 and work backwards and ask, 'What do we want our kids to be able to do?' and then we just work backwards to kindergarten." That is something that certainly got a number of us around the table thinking about a different way of doing things.

Dr JENSEN: That is actually a really interesting point. That highlights to me a couple of things. One is, this is what a lot of schools will basically do with the curriculum, particularly secondary schools—not so much primary but definitely secondary schools. They will start with, "Here is what they are going to do in year 12; let's basically backwards map the curriculum from there, right? And we will make sure that what we teach in 8, 9, 10 and 11 prepares them for the HSC." What that also highlights is therefore how influential the HSC is, and so if you make changes in an HSC examination, that just has flow-on effects throughout, and so it really highlights that examination process.

The OECD has done work on this as well, highlighting the importance of the end-of-school exit exams—as they call them. What it also says is that then you get this process where they are backwards mapping from year 12 and they are using the syllabus. So if you were doing year 9, you are doing the backwards mapping from year 12 and the syllabus document for, say, year 9, and you are trying to work out what to do when you cannot get those things matching up well. But the backwards mapping can be the prioritisation process and the year 9 can be the content or the list of content descriptors around that. This is what schools often do; it makes a lot of intuitive sense. You have just got to make sure you realise what the implications of that are for students, particularly at different year levels.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Your suggestion of a more centralised set of quality resources and evaluated resources that have been developed by teachers is an interesting way of alleviating that pressure on classroom teachers and allows them to actually focus on the teaching. It has certainly been a really interesting session for us. Thank you. Your paper talks about the key challenge—and this is certainly the case in New South Wales—which is the issue of socioeconomics and how that is actually the biggest defining factor in our school system. How can we use our curriculum to address that?

Dr JENSEN: I know there are those people who will say, "Teaching practice is the main determinant to the way that we can lift that" and so on, but we have had this discussion in Australia which has emphasised teaching practice for a couple of decades now. What has happened is that that discussion on teacher quality has become divorced from the curriculum, when really you have got to have the two operating together. Basically I think we have got to the point where we have actually de-emphasised the teaching of specific subjects or we have de-emphasised pedagogical content knowledge and we have overemphasised general pedagogy. If you look at all of the top performing systems in the world, they emphasise pedagogical content knowledge—so, how you teach a specific subject. Once you get into how you teach a specific subject, you are obviously getting into curriculum decisions.

We separate curriculum and teaching practice artificially; you cannot separate them in practice. To pretend that certain curriculum resources do not influence how you teach things is to actually just kid yourself. What we teach, how we teach it and how we assess it are the three core questions and they have remained so for ages, but if you look at one in isolation, you are really not going to get the reforms. If you try and improve teaching practice for, say, a grade 5 teacher but that grade 5 teacher is using grade 2 curriculum, then those kids will still be behind. That does not mean that if you give them grade 4 curriculum that suddenly that teacher will be fantastic; you have got to do the teaching practice as well. I think it is just one of those things where curriculum is not the answer but obviously if it is not part of the answer then I think we are kidding ourselves.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is really helpful. Thank you so much for your time.

Dr JENSEN: Just one thing. To get to your question, a teacher said to me yesterday, "We had a look at the HSC exam this year and from having a look at that and the changes to key stage 6 in mathematics, I am going to go and have to re-write the teaching programs for stage 4 and 5." And he just said to me, "So, I am allocated four days to do that—to write the entire teaching program for stage 4 and 5 for my school." And he said, "Why am I doing this when every other teacher has to do it? Surely there is expertise that I should be able to draw on or some sort of guidance that can help me in this process." That is not a first-year teacher; first-year teachers are asked to do that as well. This is an experienced teacher just saying, "This is really complex work." We are talking about a 10-year time line to reform the curriculum at a system level but we are asking a single teacher at the end of—let's face it—an incredible year to get through to write entire maths programs in four days for each level of mathematics for the high school—one person to do it all in four days. It just does not make sense to me.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: The phenomena of teachers purchasing materials online to use in their classrooms has always astounded me. Effectively, they are subsidising education through their own wages and input. We know that teachers work long hours outside of the school day to do a lot of program development. It strikes me that we did not arrive at this situation by accident, and the decisions that led to this situation were actually not made on the basis of, what is the best way to structure the system and what is the best way to achieve educational outcomes? The decisions were made on where the cost is met and how this is actually paid for. We know in the background that over the past decade and a bit there has been a gutting of the central agency in New South Wales that used to deliver and develop these kinds of resources. That cost has either been shifted to schools where it can be hidden or that load can be shifted onto teachers either in their work day or out of work time or through their own pockets. It is a conscious thing. I want to get your reflection on that.

The second thing that I would like to ask you is given we are at this point where there is effectively a marketplace for these kinds of resources, there are sort of three strategies: one is you have an intermediate market that produces these, or you produce them centrally through the department, or you stick with the current situation where those resources are produced locally. Is this not an argument for the Australian curriculum to be adopted rather than New South Wales not actually have a separate curriculum at all and that way you have got a national market producing these kinds of materials that systems can then draw on? If I could get your thoughts on those two propositions.

Dr JENSEN: They are easy questions, thank you.

The Hon. WES FANG: They are more like dixers, and, Chair, I would like you to note that I did not raise one objection to the emotive language used by the Hon. Anthony D'Adam.

Dr JENSEN: I think there are a few things there. One is there is no doubt that teachers hop into their own pockets to pay for instruction materials. There is no doubt that it is a government process as well to have so much of this work done by individual teachers locally; even at an Australian level let alone a State level, compared to places like the United States the market size is just not anywhere the same, so you do not get the same sort of interest from publishers and so on. You would probably therefore get those sort of scale advantages, but I do not know that that would outweigh the potential costs of moving to that sort of national curriculum as well. I think there are so many other issues there that it is hard to pull that apart.

The only thing I would add to what you said is that it is not just a cost issue. I think what we have done is undervalue or misunderstand the expertise required to do this well. I think there has been either not an acknowledgement of it or not a real understanding of what is required to really develop, choose, adapt quality instructional resources in various subjects, and when we do not do that we just push it down and, as I highlighted earlier, we do not even monitor it anymore.

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you very much for appearing today. Leading on from the Hon. Anthony D'Adam's questioning, when we are talking about resources how do you determine the value of the different resources when you are looking at what is provided and then what is purchased by teachers? Resources that are purchased outside of the school purview, have you found any determining issues with the quality of that resource that has found its way into the classrooms?

Dr JENSEN: So in—

The Hon. WES FANG: Where teachers are bringing in their own resources, which the Hon. Anthony D'Adam was discussing before, have you found that there are sometimes quality or content issues with external resources?

Dr JENSEN: There has been huge variation, and that has been found in country after country, in system after system, that the less focus on this issue the greater the variation in the quality of the resources used. Some of it is fantastic, some of it is not.

The Hon. WES FANG: What issues has that caused with the teaching of syllabuses around the world?

Dr JENSEN: Basically what we do is—I think there are a few things today: one, the research shows that there is an effect size associated with quality instructional materials. So the greater the instructional material that is used the greater the learning. When you have low-quality materials used you are obviously going to have reduced learning outcomes.

The Hon. WES FANG: In effect, introducing unapproved resources into the teaching environment is potentially damaging to students?

Dr JENSEN: I do not know that it is unapproved because I do not know that we want to get to the point where you can only use what the Government has approved you to use, but I think it is just one of those recognitions that, like most things in life, the lower the quality of a given input we are going to have less of a positive impact.

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you very much for that. I appreciate your input.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for your participation today. I think everyone on the Committee has found it really useful that you have given us that perspective. Thanks for your work and thanks for coming onto the panel to give the evidence at relatively late notice, and thank you for the research you have undertaken more generally.

Dr JENSEN: Thank you, Chair, thank you for kind words and good luck everyone with your work. This is a really important aspect of education and if we get some improvement here I think you can get some real gains in New South Wales, so thank you very much.

The CHAIR: We are all hoping. Thank you.

(The witness withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 17:30.