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Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO RURAL AND REMOTE EDUCATION

MR C. SIDOTI, Commissioner
SISTER PAT RHATIGAN, Co-Commissioner

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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5 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Good morning, everybody, and thank you very much for coming along today. I am Chris Sidoti, the Human Rights Commissioner. With me is Sister Pat Rhatigan, who is now at the Notre Dame University in Broome, having spent many years as a teacher and principal and education worker in schools in the Kimberley, in particular, in Western Australia. Pat is the Co-Commissioner assisting the inquiry in Western Australia. Our inquiry has a Co-Commissioner in each state and territory, somebody who has got expert local knowledge, as well as
10 the capacity to bring a specialist contribution to the preparation of our national report, and we are very much reliant upon the assistance that our Co-Commissioners are providing.

15 Today we are spending the full day here in Perth, receiving submissions in a somewhat more formal context from people about rural and remote education in this state. We have during the course of the last two weeks travelled across, first, the Top End of the Northern Territory and then, secondly, through the Kimberley and a little into the Pilbara, having both formal sessions like this, as well as much more informal meetings with teachers, parents, community people and, most
20 importantly, students themselves, having the opportunity to listen to what they have to say about rural and remote education.

25 Today, in Perth, we will hear principally from people who have a statewide perspective, particularly in relation to educational administration or policy of one kind or another or - in the case of the Isolated Children and Parents Association who, I think, are on this afternoon - are representative of the views of parents, one part of the education sector.

30 Firstly, gentlemen, thanks very much for coming along this morning. I must say that we have been looking forward to receiving your submission, given the work that your Advisory Council has done, particularly the report that you prepared. I think you are real experts who can help us a lot in understanding the rural and remote education scene in Western Australia. Could I invite you to start by introducing yourselves and then straight into your submission?
35

MR TOMLINSON: Perhaps if I introduce myself. I am Derrick Tomlinson, member of the Legislative Council in Western Australia, and chairman of the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council.

40 **MR BROWNE:** I am Peter Browne, the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Education Services and also a member of the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council.

45 **MR PRICE:** David Price, Principal Policy Officer with the Department of Education Services and I also act in the capacity as Executive Officer to this Council, and also the Aboriginal Education and Training Council.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Tomlinson, would you like to lead off?

50 **MR TOMLINSON:** Thanks very much. Our presentation will be in three parts: I will give you an overview of the state of education in rural and remote areas as we know it in Western Australia from work that we've done over four or five years

now. Then David will talk about the challenges that the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council faces, and then Peter will give you some examples of the good things that are happening in rural Western Australia. I think it is important to stress that while the focus is continually upon educational disadvantage in rural areas, there are some exciting things going on in rural and remote WA in our schools and our education system.

I did come along prepared with lots of overhead transparencies because I am an iconic rather than abstract thinker, but I have got to translate those transparencies into words, so I will do the best that I can. I note that your first term of reference relates to the provision and access of schooling in rural areas. I think EDWA and the education systems - Catholic education and the independent schools - are better equipped to give you those sorts of data, but I think in terms of government schools it is fair to say that where primary education is concerned we can be proud - and I am talking about a hundred years' history rather than my own government - of the provision of primary education for most children who have reasonably daily access to a school. Those who don't have reasonable daily access - and that's defined as "having to travel up to three hours a day in a bus to school" for those children who don't have that, then of course we have an outstanding distance education and School of the Air network. And so our retention rates to Year 12 at our government schools is around about 59.6%; our graduation rate 51%; that's statewide. Still a long way to go because we would like to get closer to a 70 or 80% retention rate, but we are making great progress.

[Rural student performance]

I really wanted to focus upon what we know about student outcomes, student performance, and then look at the attitudes of the rural community to educational services. The first I wanted to refer to was the report we did in 1993, quite independently of the Advisory Council because it was as a result of this that I think the Advisory Council was - or one of the results of this - being established. But what we found - the question that we were asked to investigate in 1993 was, is there significant difference in student performance between rural and remote schools and children in their metropolitan counterparts? What we found in terms of Years 3, 7 and 10, using the monitoring standards in education data, was there were differences and they were statistically significant differences but they were not differences which caused a great deal of alarm. In some respects students in the rural schools out-performed the metropolitan students but the differences were so small as to be not alarming, although statistically significant.

[Aboriginal student performance]

The group which stood out in those 1993 results on a statewide basis as being low achievers, of course, were the Aboriginal population; quite significant. I would suggest something in the order of a standard deviation below the norm on a statewide performance of reading, writing and mathematics at Years 3, 7 and 10. I want to stress however that disregarding the Aboriginal population which, I believe, has some quite distinctive challenges to overcome - and that will be addressed later by the Advisory Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education - for the non-Aboriginal population.

[Explaining performance difference]

I want to caution against finding the explanation of differences in performance of rural and remote students solely on the basis of geographic location. My reason for

5 this is the information we derived from an analysis of the 1993 results in the monitoring standards in education. We tried to disentangle the best guess causes for any apparent difference. We looked at geographic location and we found that when the statistics were controlled for geographic location it was not a powerful explanatory variable.

10 We looked at the question of class size on the assumption that the smaller the class the greater the disadvantage in such things as preparation for TEE; we found it wasn't a powerful explanatory variable. We looked at teacher experience; we found it wasn't a powerful explanatory variable. In fact, if anything, our work demonstrated that the younger, inexperienced teachers brought a vitality and a freshness to the rural schools which was missing in the metropolitan schools and, while teachers argued for a balance, they did not want to place the blame on the youth and inexperience of the teachers; in fact, they applauded those teachers.

15 The most powerful explanatory variable we found was that which came under the general explanation, "socio-economic status". When the statistics were controlled for socio-economic status the differences disappeared. When we compared metropolitan schools of the same standing on a scale of socio-economic status generated by the Schools Commission some 20 years ago and used consistently since then for the allocation of funds for priority schools' programs, for example - when we compared like schools, metropolitan and rural, we found like performance. So I would strongly urge you to be very cautious about blaming or seeing rurality or remoteness as a significant cause or variable in student performance.

20 Those statistics or that data which we found in 1993, analysing the statewide data, was repeated in the 1997 results. So far the 1997 data have not been analysed for the causal relationships. The raw data on Years 3, 7 and 10 indicates comparability with significantly below-average performance in areas such as the Kimberley, the Pilbara and the Eastern Goldfields, where there is a large Aboriginal population. In an analysis of the results by Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal and non-English-speaking background, the non-English-speaking background students perform less well than the Australian-born and English as their first language students, and that's probably highly predictable. The Aboriginal population - a significantly poorer performance in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 3, 7 and 10; borne out again in the national literacy tests of 1998, where the same phenomenon is repeated.

35 When however - and even though the 1997 and the 1998 data have not been analysed for any causal relationships - you look at those schools where more than half of the students performed badly or more than half of the students did not meet the required standard, you find that in those districts of the metropolitan area where the schools are serving what I will call, euphemistically, "the working class" population, or "the low SES groups", their performance is significantly inferior to the norm and their performance is comparable with the performance in rural schools. If anything, the rural schools out-perform those schools. So I stress that that is the challenge ahead of education, and it is not a new challenge, it has been around for a long time.

40 When it comes to tertiary entrance, the 1993 report found that across the full range from the best to the weakest performance in the highest to the lowest

5 tertiary entrance scores the rural students were significantly disadvantaged. They were, on average, 10 points below on their tertiary entrance scores, consistently, from the highest to the lowest, and when we're talking about a competitive entry system in which one point or a half a point means entry to a school or faculty or university of your choice, 10 points becomes quite a significant difference.

10 We ask, why is there no difference at Years 3, 7 and 10 in the MSE results - monitoring standard in education performance - and a significance difference in the tertiary entrance scores, I would venture that you have a difference in the nature of the test. The monitoring standards in education data are norm-based tests and, if you take a large part of a population which is normally distributed on a standardised test, it should be normally distributed and that's exactly what we found. Take the rural and remote population out of a standardised test and it produces the same distribution of performance as the others. The Aboriginal population is quite significantly different, and it's quite significantly different in other cultural aspects.

[9.26 am]

20 When you come to the tertiary entrance examination, you're not talking about a standardised test, you're talking about a test where it's according to - or it's a criteria reference test, and with a criteria reference test, where certain things have to be demonstrated - knowledge and skills have to be demonstrated - then the rural students perform less well. So if there is a disadvantage, it occurs at that level. The work that we did in 1993 was replicated by a student at Curtin University. He took the results from 1994 and 1995 - I will submit that to you - and he found exactly the same results as we found in 1993, so ours has been replicated and the results are the same.

30 I'm painting what looks like a very depressing picture of a rural education. I want to stress this, however: that the University of Western Australia has analysed the performance of their rural students, basing rural on their address from which they enrol at the university, and compared them with their metropolitan students. Their entry scores are lower than the metropolitan students. Their performance at university is superior in two respects. They are at least equal to or better than their metropolitan peers in examination results, and hence they start with a lower score but in their university courses maintain parity or slightly above parity with their metropolitan peers.

40 The second thing that is significant in the University of Western Australia results - and I'd like to see it from other universities as well - is that they complete their degrees - or their rate of completing their degrees in the minimum time is greater than the rate of completing degrees in the minimum time for metropolitan students. So from that particular group of the population, those who enter university, getting there is more difficult. Once they get there, they have competencies which stand them in good stead.

50 That's a depressing picture in some respects, but I want to then move on to the analysis of survey results that the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council undertook last year. We asked three fairly simple questions, and it was an unstructured sample and no statistical reliability in the results. We asked these three questions: what do you think is really good about rural and remote education in

Western Australia - really good? We then asked: what do you think needs to be improved about rural and remote education in Western Australia? And the third question: how can these things be improved?

5 Consistently, a sample of teachers, a sample of parents and a sample of students said the really good things about, or the positive aspects of education, are the personalised education, the close school community ties, the well-rounded education that they get in rural areas. So they're very very satisfied with what you might describe as the qualitative aspects of schooling - personalised, close school
10 community relationship; a well-rounded education; minimal behaviour problems; a supportive family environment. All of the positive things that we aspire to in our metropolitan schools or in schools generally are seen to be the virtues in rural schools, or the positive values of rural schools.

15 What do they see as the areas in need of improvement? They wanted an expanded choice of subjects. They wanted more specialist teachers. They want more experienced staff. They want increased resources. And so the shift is away from the qualitative aspects of schooling, which they see as positive, to the academic aspects, and they are now starting to be concerned with their children's learning. So it's
20 about curriculum, it's about teachers, it's about resources.

The depressing question when it came to - or not "depressing". When it came to the question of, "How can this be improved?", the answer was increasingly, "Increasing the funds for schooling, improved incentives for teachers to stay in rural areas, better teacher training and selection." It was consistently,
25 "There's a problem. Throw a dollar at it." When it came to the question of, "Well, what's the future for children in rural areas?" - a very pessimistic view of the future of rural communities, largely because of the lack of educational opportunity in rural areas. I think that those results are being tabled.

30 **MR PRICE:** They are, yes.

MR TOMLINSON: They're being tabled and I commend them to you, because while on the one hand there is a perception of rural disadvantage in student
35 outcomes, the perception is not borne out when you compare like schools with like schools, and in rural areas there's a disproportionately high number of low SES schools. When you compare those schools with metropolitan schools, the results are similar.

40 The parent perception and the teacher perception is that in terms of the qualitative aspects of education, there are positive aspects of our schools. When it comes to education as an opportunity for life choices, they see rural kids as significantly disadvantaged and their future is to leave the bush and come to the city because that's where the economic opportunities are.

45 **[Provision of schools]**

In summary, Mr Chairman, I think the data that you will receive on the provision of education - government and Catholic schools in particular have done a great deal to meet the needs of schooling in Western Australia. The provision is
50 there. Where there is a sufficient number of kids, there's either a government school or there is a Catholic school and, in some of the larger rural communities, another non-government school. I would stress caution about seeing geographic location as

the cause of poor student performance, because when like schools, metropolitan and country, are compared, the similarities in student outcomes are instructive.

[Post-school options]

5 The pessimistic view about the future prospects for youth in rural Western
Australia - and I always see this as being the community's aspirations for itself, the
community's aspirations for itself as expressed in its aspirations for its youth. Rural
Western Australia has a very pessimistic outlook at the moment, and I guess that's
10 the decades of continuing decline that we've seen in the rural economy and the drift
from urban to metropolitan areas. But when asked what to do about this in terms of
schooling, the result is that the government should do something about it by
providing more resources, by providing better teachers, by giving incentives to the
teachers to go to these schools and, that way, lift the quality of education.

15 My observation - and Peter will bring this out in his presentation - is that
when schools and communities take control of their own destinies in these rural
towns they achieve a great deal without government response. It's not a question of
throwing a dollar at the problem, although a dollar does help. It's a challenge of
20 taking responsibility for their own destinies and doing something about it. Where
that has happened, there are positive benefits for both the schools and their
communities.

 Finally I would state that changing education in rural and remote Western
Australia won't address the decline in the rural economy, neither will it address the
25 urban drift, but it is a significant factor which will contribute to that and therefore
the challenge is to change those positive aspects of the qualitative aspects of
schooling that they admire and respect, to turn it into also an admiration and respect
for the quality of the outcomes. The quality of the outcomes is not to be derided.
They are at least as good as if not better than their metropolitan counterparts.
30 Perhaps, David, I'll turn it over to you.

[Rural and Remote Education and Advisory Group]

MR PRICE: Sure. Mr Chairperson, I'm just going to briefly deal with the
membership and the role of the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council, but
35 I'll spend the majority of the time talking about strategic planning issues in a
cross-sectoral sense. The council itself was established in 1997 by the Minister for
Education and it was done so largely, as Derrick indicated, as a result of the
Tomlinson report in 93, but also a rural and remote education conference that was
held in 1996 which advocated the formation of such a council.

40 It has a number of terms of reference, which largely relate to policy advice
to government, but I want to focus pretty well today on two of those areas of terms
of reference, and that is the preparation of the first ever rolling strategic plan for
improving provision and outcomes for students in rural and remote Western
45 Australia. That's the first ever cross-sectoral one, though I think many agencies
don't have strategic plans specifically for rural and remote students either, and I
don't think Australia has ever had one. Also, the second part of that particular terms
of reference is to monitor the extent to which in fact change comes about based on
that plan - so two very significant terms of reference.

50 The council meets six times a year and has a budget of around \$20,000.
The membership is obviously made up of representatives from higher education,

5 school providers and VET, but it also has a substantial membership made up of such groups as the Country Women's Association, the Isolated Children and Parents Association, the regional development councils, school Teachers Unions, etcetera, and that was very purposeful. The Minister didn't want the council to be in fact an education providers' forum. It wanted to make sure there were other representative groups in that particular council.

10 The membership was hotly contested, which is good, because it showed there was a lot of interest in being part of it, though it did raise its own difficulties. The membership is around 19 at the moment and we had to ask parent groups such as WACSSO and PFA and the different unions to actually nominate one representative rather than a representative from each of those sectors. Since it was formed in June 97, it has provided ministerial advice in areas such as agricultural education provision, changes to regulations relating to school buses, etcetera, but by 15 far the focus of its attention has been surveying and consulting with rural and remote Western Australia. Statewide consultation took place last year, and also surveying. The results of that data were reported back to a conference of rural and remote people involved in provision and also as clients, at Narrogin at the end of last year, and that particular conference gave us the imprimatur to go forward and 20 develop a strategic plan based on the information we had received. Minister Barnett was very very intent that, whatever strategic plan was developed, it would be developed on the basis of what country people said they wanted, not what providers said they needed.

25 **[Strategic plan for rural and remote students]**

I'll go now to the strategic plan itself, and the reason that it seems such a focus of the council's deliberation. First of all, it's seen as an ongoing document that will stimulate dialogue about what is needed in rural and remote Western Australia. It will guide decision-making obviously from a government point of view 30 but, we also hope, from a provider point of view. It creates efficiencies in the provision and, as importantly, provides an accountability framework. From a council point of view, it minimises ad hoc reactionary policy advice by the council and, as you can appreciate, there are so many issues out there happening on a micro level, that it's very easy for the council's debate to get sideroaded, derailed, by 35 comparatively small issues which don't look at the larger picture. The strategic plan would help us overcome that.

[9.40 am]

40 The Minister has given us till June this year to present the first draft of the strategic plan, and the working party, a cross-sectoral working party, has been in place since January trying to make that happen, and I can tell you now what the priorities of that strategic plan will be. They have been endorsed by the council, though the strategies and the outcomes are yet to be endorsed.

45 That particular document is in its draft form and the priorities, which are probably not going to be dissimilar across Australia I would imagine, but for Western Australia they will be: (1) to ensure equitable access to and participation and achievement in quality education; (2) to ensure an inclusive cross-sectoral 50 partnership approach to provision, and we're seeing a lot of duplication in rural Western Australia in the use of resources and personnel, and that priority is aimed at minimising that; (3) is to ensure that rural and remote communities have access to

and are able to retain quality education and training professionals. Without doubt the single biggest issue that came out of consultation was the issue of staffing, maintaining staff, attracting staff, and it wasn't just teachers, it also went across school psychology services, welfare officers, Aboriginal liaison officers, the whole range of education staff.

(4) is to ensure that the educational needs of students at risk in rural and remote areas are met - another area that was repeatedly highlighted - and in the context of youth suicide of course becomes particularly poignant in rural and remote Western Australia. (5) recognises the need to particularly address those needs of Aboriginal students in rural and remote Western Australia; (6) is to ensure continual enhancement of the value placed on rural and remote education and training by the Western Australian community, and this is a theme that will be picked up over and over again, I hope, and that is that unless the wider community of Western Australia, including the rural and remote sector, actually value what they already have then we'll continue to see a decline and we'll also continue to see an atmosphere where communities look to providers for all the solutions rather than looking within to where many of the solutions do lie. The last one, number (7), is to ensure that all rural and remote education and training services are appropriately resourced, and that's quite an obvious one but one that sometimes does get through the net.

The draft plan contains some 30 separate outcomes and around about 50 different strategies. The strategies themselves in fact are seen secondary to the outcomes because it is the outcomes that will be measured at the end of the day, not the strategies.

In coming to terms with strategy planning and a cross-sectoral atmosphere there are many issues, and if the Human Rights Commission in any form advocates a national body similar to the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council you will need to be aware, if you're not already, of some of those issues, the first of which is trying to balance agency imperatives with the need for real change. There's a tendency when we get into cross-sectoral forums to immediately - for the providers in particular - to aim for the lowest common denominator. That thing which they're already doing and which will require them to do less in the future has to be balanced with the need for rural people to in fact have real change occur.

To create realisable outcomes is a challenge. When you're trying to be generic across all sectors there's sometimes a tendency to focus on schools when there are real needs in the rural and remote community in the area of training and also higher education, and sometimes we imagine because there's a school in location that the needs of that community are met when in fact they're only partly met.

Breaking down territorial cultures within agencies is incredibly difficult and it just comes with the territory, I'm afraid, of cross-sectoral anything, trying to break down the sense that we can't share - we can't share budgets, we can't share ideas. The best way to get around these issues - and there's a number of them - there has to be a high level of government support for change. If you don't have the imprimatur of government then very little after that, despite immense goodwill, will occur.

5 There needs to be an independent body, such as a council, a high level council, to which such a plan might be submitted. That body must include other than education professionals. There is always a tendency amongst all professionals to use the same sort of language which often disguises more than it reveals, and by having non-education professionals there it does often force us to use language which is more explicit and more understandable to the general community.

10 Last of all, and I think the most significantly of all, if you want to resolve cross-sectoral strategic planning issues you must have an understanding that at the end of the day whatever we come up with will be monitored and reported on, and that just seems to be human nature as well as agency nature, that if you know that something is going to be measured you're more likely to do something about it.

15 That brings me to the final point in relation to this strategic plan and this particular council and that's the area of reporting and monitoring. One of the pieces of feedback we had from rural and remote people in the consultation was that they saw great danger in strategic plans becoming ends in themselves. In other words, a plan for action sometimes became a substitute for action. For that not to occur and for the strategic plan to have more than a moral force it must be monitored.

20 We have already found in the initial stages of this particular council that getting information from providers about what the situation is in rural Western Australia in comparison to metropolitan Perth is very, very difficult. They simply aren't set up to provide the data, even where they have the will to do so - simple data such as identifying the average length of tenure of teachers in the country versus the city, the number of temporary versus permanent teachers. Using comparable measures of student outcomes is not easy across the different providers; aspiration and destination data, longitudinal studies about what students actually aspire for and their parents as well compared to where they actually end up within our society, and the extent to which customer satisfaction data can be comparable across sectors is very difficult.

35 Getting agencies to maintain and share the data will be a huge challenge for any kind of monitoring in Western Australia but also nationally. We have to appreciate that obviously many of the providers are in competition with each other and they have public relations agendas which are quite important because they will actually determine the level of their customer share if it's not handled sensitively.

40 We have to move away from what's being done to what's being achieved. There is always a tendency amongst providers to talk about what they have done rather than to present data about what has actually changed. We have to make sure that the voice of rural people is included in whatever monitoring we put in place. Finally, there should be some form of independent analysis of the data that's collated.

45 In summary and looking at Western Australia's situation and perhaps what this Commission is seeking to do nationally when it looks at solutions to some of these issues, change will only occur if you plan for it strategically. Strategic planning will only be effective if you monitor it. Monitoring will only be effective if it includes some independent analysis, and none of these things will happen if the community is not involved at every stage, and that's my submission.

50

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Mr Browne.

5 **MR BROWNE:** Thank you, Mr Chairman, and to Derrick and to David. David has very clearly pointed out the prerequisites for successful initiatives in rural and remote Western Australia, and what I seek to do is to give a case study in particular where success has been found. Then I want to speak briefly about a review that was conducted in the Central Wheatbelt of Western Australia, and then thirdly, time permitting, speak of some endeavours being made to address the teacher shortage and the impending increase in teacher shortage in rural Western Australia for all
10 sectors.

[Esperance Community College]

15 In recognition of the fact that things must be done differently in rural and remote Western Australia so as to afford rural students the education opportunities of their city counterparts the first example I want to give is the establishment of the Esperance Community College, which is approaching completion in a physical sense. The processes will flow on for decades to come. It's an example where in recognising that we must do things differently in the bush, we avoid falling into the trap of templating, to think that you can template all schools in Western Australia,
20 and confuse the words "equity" and "equality".

The Esperance Community College is best described as a federation of educational providers that maximises the education opportunities through the most efficient and effective use of the very limited resources to be found for education.
25 Now, I say a "federation" because in this model and in the context of the comments that David Price has made each of the members of this federation has statutory status and therefore they are accountable under their own acts and mechanisms.

30 The establishment of the Esperance Community College has complexities. The complexities are to be found in the dealing in a cross-sectoral nature, but we find difficulties in matters such as dealing with different industrial circumstances that the staff are required to work under, the putting together of a different student-adult mix and the behaviours acceptable to one that might not be acceptable to another.
35

40 But notwithstanding those difficulties, which are being overcome, it is a giant step forward in the establishment of a seamless educational precinct in Esperance. The partners of the Esperance Community College, the Esperance Senior High School, the Country High Schools Hostels Authority Residential College, the Curtin University, the TAFE sector of that university, which is a unique circumstance flowing out of an amalgamation that we established in Kalgoorlie, and the Curtin University's higher education sector in the local community. There are two parts to it: the first part is the local community as found in the Rotary Club, and the second is that of the Shire Council. The local
45 community I want to come back to, but again it's precisely the thing that Mr Price was talking about.

50 In essence, the establishment of the Esperance Community College will mean that a student can go from kindergarten to PhD staying in their own town. It needs to be recognised that the retention rates of Year 12s in rural Western Australia or to Year 12 in rural Western Australia - and it varies from region to region - but a difference of 20% is not uncommon. The participation rates in

tertiary and further education and in higher education can be found in some places to be half that of the metropolitan counterparts.

5 In towns like Esperance it's more common for a student to leave after
Year 10 because their friends do than it is to go on to Year 12, and for those who
go on to Year 12 it is far more common to go into employment than it is to go into
higher education. But the sheer physical presence of a university campus in their
own town, in a prominent position in the town, is having a profound effect and will
10 continue to have a profound effect upon the culture of the region, both amongst the
students and amongst the adult members. They can now see a building that they
thought was just something that existed in Perth and was something that other
people went to. It will be interesting to monitor the retention rates at the Esperance
Senior High School following the establishment of the Esperance Community
College.

15 We have to remember that rural education is in a large part supply driven.
To have a supply-driven model compared to a demand-driven model is a risky
business and it requires vision and it requires fortitude.

20 **[9.55 am]**

The great problem about rural education is that people living in rural
Western Australia - at the risk of being trite - is that they don't know what they
don't know, and they don't know what they're missing out on. A supply-driven
25 model takes an opportunity for rural education to rural Western Australia. What you
can be assured of, with fine judgment, is that the demand will rise to meet that
supply. The process of the establishment of the Esperance Community College in
itself has had a profound effect upon the attitude of the Esperance community and
their sense of involvement in something that was once someone else's business and
30 they just took what they were given, and their sense of ownership and responsibility
- and by that, I do not mean any financial provision.

The community involvement, as Mr Price said, is essential in rural
Western Australia for the maintenance and improvement of the standards. It can be
35 argued, to make a more general comment, that rural education in Western Australia
needs to take a leaf from the book of rural medicine. In Western Australia - it may
well be known to the Commission - that there has been established the Western
Australian Centre for Rural Medicine, which is the advocate and promoter of rural
medicine. People in rural Western Australia some years ago got together and
40 established the rural medicine foundation which fosters rural practicums for doctors.

To go back to rural education, however - and I reiterate the promotion of
the community involvement in rural education is not to say that they should start
paying for it, but they have a great role to play in monitoring rural education,
45 promoting rural education, the creation of a social environment, and where possible
in a cost-neutral manner the provision of infrastructure. The Isolated Children's
Parents Association of Western Australia over many, many years has played a
significant role.

50 I want to turn, if I may, to the Central Wheatbelt review that was
conducted, but before doing that can I conclude the first section by saying
everybody involved in the Esperance Community College would offer it as a very

fine model to be replicated where possible in Western Australia because it contains all of the essentials as described by David Price.

[Central Wheatbelt review]

5 The review that was conducted in the Central Wheatbelt for education and training was borne out of the fact that it became very apparent to the people of the Central Wheatbelt and, separately, the educational providers, that there existed: three senior high schools, two agricultural colleges - Muresk, which is an annexe of Curtin University, and specialises in agriculture and agribusiness, and C.Y. O'Connor, which is a major TAFE college - all existed and operated in the Central Wheatbelt in splendid isolation.

15 I had the privilege of chairing the review and I was struck by the total lack of understanding of anyone of the sector's realisation of the opportunities available at the other institutions. Probably the starkest thing was to find that each one was establishing technology and yet the technologies being established in each of the sectors was totally incompatible. Had one meeting alone been held to establish what could be done, they would have been able to share through technology.

20 It has now been agreed, by getting all of those parties together, that a strategic plan will be established, and not an esoteric and meaningless strategic plan, but one that commits all agencies to involve themselves in a sharing of facilities. By that, I mean such things as the Muresk-Curtin University using the agricultural colleges for research, by the senior high schools using the agricultural colleges, by 25 the senior high schools using lecturers from the university, by the TAFE and Muresk sharing both facilities and lecturers such that students can establish wider pathways, and one in which the community and each of the committees established throughout the Central Wheatbelt is required to have on it a community member such that the community have a greater understanding.

30 The review revealed the total ignorance of the rural adult population in the Central Wheatbelt of any understanding of the opportunities for their children at the schools and the agricultural colleges but, more particularly, their understanding of their own educational opportunities at the TAFE, which has annexes right 35 throughout the Central Wheatbelt, and of the opportunities available through and at Muresk University. By accessing Muresk it is then possible to directly, through technology, access the Bentley campus of Curtin University.

[Rural teacher shortage]

40 I want to thirdly now turn to some of the strategies that are being addressed by the Department of Education Services and promoted and sponsored by the Rural and Remote Educational Advisory Council so as to address the teacher shortage. What has been found over a number of years in Western Australia is that the understanding of metropolitan people graduating from universities with teaching 45 qualifications - their understanding of rural Western Australia is very, very limited. As will be described to you more fully this afternoon by the Education Department, in the last five years approximately the number of people graduating from universities with teaching qualifications prepared to go to rural Western Australia has dropped from something like 60% to 16%. This is partly attributable to stories 50 that you read in the paper of gloom and doom and the hardships in rural Western Australia, which belies - as many of us know - the quality of life that can be had in rural Western Australia.

5 One of the ways of overcoming that is by the establishment of rural
practicums along the lines of the medical rural practicums that I have mentioned.
We are endeavouring now to establish these practicums through the universities,
keeping in mind that the Department of Education Services contains within it the
10 directorate of the office of higher education where we can get universities to send
students to the country areas. It was done some years ago very, very successfully,
but it's a very costly business when you have to find billets, transport, and then the
assessment, because you need to send the lecturers to the various parts of rural
15 Western Australia. But by doing that we find that the rate of return is very
considerable.

15 More will be made later by the Minister for Education on a range of
scholarships that were made available to people coming from remote parts of
Western Australia to take up teaching. At the moment the Department of Education
Services offers 30 scholarships and 10 scholarships to students of Aboriginal
descent, Indigenous students, and - the second part of that - the hope is that those
20 Indigenous students will return hopefully to rural areas. But what we're finding at
the moment is that the ones that we're taking in are in fact not coming from rural
Western Australia. In the intake for 1999, of the 10 Indigenous education
scholarships, only two came from rural areas. We want to expand that by the
establishment of some specifically rural scholarships. Mr Chairman, I think that will
conclude my submission.

25 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thank you, Mr Browne, and thank you to all three of
you. It was a very informative contribution, I must say. Thanks for the report, too.
We would also like, if you wouldn't mind, for you to leave behind any script that
you were working from just to help us to have that information readily on hand,
even though - as you can see - we've got the transcriber who will type it up. Before
30 I ask Pat to ask a couple of questions, I'm the outsider, so I'm ignorant of many
things, but just a couple of very short, technical things. What is the population of
Esperance?

35 **MR BROWNE:** Approaching 15,000.

THE COMMISSIONER: So it's in that range where there are quite a significant
number of towns and communities in Western Australia, obviously.

40 **MR BROWNE:** It has a significant hinterland. Being 700km to the south-east, it's
beyond that critical distance where a town stops relating to Perth and turns back into
itself.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes.

45 **MR BROWNE:** It has to do these sorts of things for it to survive.

THE COMMISSIONER: For itself - or it goes under.

50 **MR BROWNE:** That's right.

THE COMMISSIONER: Okay. The Central Wheatbelt would comprise what
communities, the largest communities?

5 **MR BROWNE:** Let's define it by drawing a line - and I have forgotten the exact area, but that probably wouldn't be meaningful anyway. If we take a line 100 kilometres north, head 300 kilometres east, go 300 kilometres south, and then back into the coast again, that would be the rough definition of it.

THE COMMISSIONER: So it's outside the Perth metropolitan area throughout that area?

10 **MR BROWNE:** Exclusive of - Northam and beyond.

THE COMMISSIONER: Good. Thanks. The last question is just the demarcation between the Department of Education and the Department of Educational Services. Can you tell me a little bit about what falls into what category?

15

[WA administration]

20 **MR BROWNE:** Yes. In brief, the Department of Education, or the Education Department, is responsible for the running of government schools in Western Australia. The Department of Educational Services is an amalgamation of directorates, and they are the Directorate of the Country High Schools Hostels Authority, the Directorate of Higher Education, the Directorate of Non-government and International Education, and the Directorate of Policy and Coordination, and that in itself is a useful although complex mix, in that the directorate of policy and coordination takes on projects such as establishing the Kalgoorlie Curtin University where we put the TAFE and the Western Australian School of Mines together in another seamlessness project, and we have taken on Esperance and David in fact manages that project as well. But then when we want to involve higher education we can just tap on the shoulder of the Higher Education Directorate, or if we want to involve non-government education we simply can do that.

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30 **THE COMMISSIONER:** So things like the actual terms and conditions of teachers falls within Ed WA?

35 **MR BROWNE:** Yes, indeed, the Education Department - yes.

35

[Travel subsidies]

40 **THE COMMISSIONER:** I know the Department of Transport here has a free transport program for boarding school students. Would Ed WA or Education Services be the body that relates to the Transport Department about that program?

40

MR BROWNE: I'm not sure that they actually get free travel. I think that the travel, unless I'm mistaken, comes about by virtue of the Assistance to Isolated Children. I don't think the state government - - -

45 **MR TOMLINSON:** Yes, it does. The assistance for isolated children is a Commonwealth scheme established in 1973. The state had before then, and has continued its own living away from home scheme. At the time that the AIC - the assistance for isolated children - scheme was introduced, it was agreed that the states would continue to have responsibility for the transportation of students to schools, and so the subsidised travel - and I think it's four trips a year to and from school - is a state government responsibility. I assume since transport has been

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taken over by the Department of Transport rather than Education that it sits with the Department of Transport.

5 **MR BROWNE:** My department certainly administers the state living away from home allowance. I have no knowledge, however, of us - forgive me - administering the transport.

10 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Right. I think that the Department of Transport has got a role in it, but I just wasn't sure where it fitted in. I mean, the issue here, if I can just tell you what the issue is, rather than seek a response - it came up a number of times when we were in the Kimberley last week. Apparently the Department of Education does provide free travel each term to and from school for those who are in boarding schools, but for the kids who actually stay in their own communities to study there is little, if any, assistance whatsoever for travel for excursions or
15 sporting or interschool activities, and in particular there's a program of travel for students who are involved in the School of Isolated and Distance Education in Years 11 and 12 but that only applies to students who are doing 75% of their courses at SIDE.

20 **[10.10 am]**

And what that has meant for the Kununurra High School, where the issue first arose, is that because they have now, as part of their expansion of services to the community, started offering four core subjects in Years 11 and 12, their students
25 are now being told that they can no longer receive the Years 11 and 12 SIDE subsidy to come down to Perth for contact with SIDE teachers on a face-to-face basis, let alone for any excursions, and they're worrying that the effect of these programs, while not in any way challenging the importance of free transport to boarding school, is now creating a very serious disincentive for students to stay in
30 their own communities and study high school, particularly Years 11 and 12 in their own communities. We might need to discuss with the Transport Department, obviously than yourselves, but it's an issue that I can at least refer to you in your RREAC capacity.

35 **MR TOMLINSON:** I think one thing that needs to be recognised is that when the Commonwealth became vigorously involved in education in the early 70s during the period of the Whitlam government and after, it had what they called the disadvantaged schools program and the disadvantaged country areas program. We
40 call it PCAP in Western Australia, Prioritise Country Areas Program. Those funds for specific purposes in rural communities were used to provide those sorts of transport to the - educationally and culturally significant opportunities but never has there been an attempt to compensate those who are at rural and remote, particularly remote schools, in the way that there is assistance for children travelling to
45 government and non-government schools regardless of their living away from home. When the PCAP program was replaced by a different priority, then even that opportunity was lost to children in remote schools.

50 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Peter, in relation to these three examples of good practice, I'm interested in the area of Aboriginal education in total. What would be the involvement in the Esperance Community College of the Aboriginal community at Esperance? Have they been specifically catered for or addressed or is there any issue there that you could comment on?

MR BROWNE: The Aboriginal population in Esperance is not large, but the - no, I would have to say that they have not been specifically catered for.

5 **MR PRICE:** I can comment on that. May O'Brien came down to Esperance specifically to talk to the Aboriginal community groups in Esperance about the college and become familiar herself with the college. I was talking to the coordinator down there the other day who said he's been unlucky in the past in attracting people to come to the meetings - that is, an open invitation, and
10 Aboriginal people are on the different standing committees. There hasn't been a great participation at this point, but he was telling me just last week that in fact that seems to have changed now the buildings are almost finished and there is definite feeling amongst the Aboriginal communities that they want to be involved now. So that hasn't been good but it is improving.

15 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Thank you.

MR BROWNE: Sister Rhatigan, one of the scholarships that will be established is the ones I've mentioned for rural and remote and for it to go to the residential
20 college down there. It's our hope that some of those scholarships will be taken up by Indigenous students so as to attend the residential college and go therefore to the senior high school, and go therefore to the Esperance Community College. What we try and do is get this flow, that they go there in Years 11 and 12 and to a residential college but they will then go on to teacher training and then go back to the rural
25 area. It's long-term but the time lag - we have to start doing it now.

SISTER RHATIGAN: All the issues then that relate to the employment of Aboriginal people within their own communities and towns, which is certainly going to be an issue in the Kimberley coming up very shortly, and the selection
30 criteria that presently exists within the Education Department, they don't lie within your services. They rely directly within the Education Department. Is that right?

MR BROWNE: Yes.

35 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** That's fine.

THE COMMISSIONER: I'd be grateful too if you could give us some more written information about the Esperance Community College and also about the wheat belt project, looking at models that are being established and that can work. I
40 agree with you that there's no such thing as a national template, but I certainly see part of our responsibility as providing some encouragement to local communities to develop their own solution on the basis of what other communities have done. I would be grateful for any documentation you've got about those.

45 **MR BROWNE:** You're talking about templating, and I would not want the media to write this down at all, but a study was done between a metropolitan senior high school and a country senior high school, and they were picked as parallel because each had 76 FTEs. The salary bill for the metropolitan senior high school was \$300,000 more than the rural one because of the seniority, and where's the fairness
50 in that?

[Aboriginal teacher training]

MR TOMLINSON: Could I just raise the point with you, Sister, on the Aboriginal Teacher Education, and surely if you're going to look at a lighthouse, you'd look at what was being done at the Broome campus of Notre Dame University. I don't know what's been the fate of that program, whether it is continuing, but there you
5 recognise the need for Aboriginal teachers in your remote communities rather than have the non-Aboriginal stay there for a short time and come into it culturally alienated and leave culturally alienated. It was better to have the Aboriginal teachers teaching Aboriginal children, and it was being addressed at Broome. It was also
10 overcoming the problem of the cultural alienation that Aboriginal teachers or teacher aides feel when they are forced to come to the city, because that's where teacher education is at, and in a totally alien environment for them, and hence homesickness, nostalgia, whatever it is, they very quickly returned before completing their core courses.

15 At Broome they continue to feel comfortable in that environment, and had an educational program, or a teacher education program, which I thought was admirable. It was a model I think needs to be replicated. Is it still going?

SISTER RHATIGAN: Yes, it's certainly going. It is facing some challenges in the
20 placement of the number, which is getting quite large, for practicums, and perhaps faces the reverse model of what you were talking about of taking city people to the country. There's a need to be able to move people outside of Broome and around the Pilbara and that kind of thing to smaller numbers of schools.

25 **MR TOMLINSON:** And there's an enormous cost involved.

SISTER RHATIGAN: There's an enormous cost involved in doing that, and there was insufficient teaching practice within Broome; there's not sufficient schools. There's really a major problem that's occurred, because it's been successful. That's
30 one of the reasons. But as a follow-on from that we can then see immediately coming up will be the challenges to the present structure in Western Australia of approving people who belong to the Halls Creek community to teach within that school as their community rather than facing a choice when they put their application in here down to Perth of four schools, and perhaps being appointed to
35 Port Hedland, in which case Aboriginal people of course will not take up the appointments. So that is going to be a challenge and needing a new way of direction.

MR TOMLINSON: In some respects it's a mirror image of the problem that Peter
40 referred to when he talked about the need for metropolitan teacher trainees or those in teacher education to go to rural practicum so that they can be enculturated, if you like, into rural living. Your problem is pretty much the same, where it is advantageous to have Aboriginal people from their own communities become
45 teachers, but you have that problem of getting them out to the relevant teaching practice.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much for your time. We'll get those reports
50 back to you, and if you leave us, if you don't mind, the texts. Kim, do you want to join us and, David, come back? Kim, would you like to introduce yourself, and David, your capacity on this occasion and then go straight into your submission?

5 **MR COLLARD:** Good morning, chairman. My name's Kim Collard. I'm the representative for Aboriginal Education Training Council on behalf of May O'Brien. This morning's presentation will be in three parts. I'll be talking to the role and the responsibilities, the rationale of the Aboriginal Education Training Council. Secondly, I'll be asking David to speak to the monitoring of the Aboriginal Education Training Council and then I'll finish off this morning's presentation with looking at some recommendations for the future. Just before I start this morning's presentation, we'll be attaching documents and also a precis of this morning's presentation. So I hope that will assist you.

10

[Aboriginal Education and Training Council]

15 The Aboriginal Education Training Council was established to advise the Minister for Education on Aboriginal perspectives on education and training services. Although there have been positive changes in Aboriginal education with improved access to schooling and educational programs, increased participation of Aboriginal children and parents in all facets of education and improved student outcomes, the educational outcomes achieved by many Aboriginal students still remain below the average, or when I say "average" that means any other single group in Western Australia.

20

25 The Aboriginal Education and Training Council is committed to effecting further improvements in all education and training areas. The AETC is the body that facilitates those changes to education and training and provides advice directly to the Minister for Education. I just want to go through the membership of the Aboriginal Education Training Council. May O'Brien is the chairperson. May is a Wongatha lady from the Goldfields region - Jean Agale, Rowena Cooyou, myself, Eddie Dimer, Dale Forsyth, Karon Anderson and Jane Wilkinson. That's eight Aboriginal members of the AETC. It's also represented by Mr Ian Hill. He's the Chief Executive Officer of the WA Department of Training; Hayden Lowe, who's the Chief Executive Officer of Aboriginal Affairs Department; Sister Pat Rhatigan who is representing the higher education sector; Mr Graham Rixon, who is representing independent schools; Mrs Therese Temby, director Catholic Education Office; Cheryle Vardon, director-general of Education Department of Western Australia; David Price, who is the executive officer and also Jolene Culbong, who is the coordinator.

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40 I just want to say that there are eight Aboriginal members of that committee and eight non-Aboriginal members, of which there is 50% representation, represented from the diversity of Aboriginal people in Western Australia. And I say that they have the Pilbara represented, the Kimberley represented, Eastern Goldfields, Murchison, the metropolitan area and not only a broad cross-section of the diversity of representation of Aboriginal people, but also all sectors of the educational providers are represented, that's primary, secondary, VET and also higher education.

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[10.25 am]

50 Some of the terms of reference of the Aboriginal Education Training Council are that the Council provide policy advice on all issues relating to Aboriginal education and training to coordinate the development of a strategic plan for Aboriginal education and training in Western Australia - and we'll be going back to that - to provide a forum for Aboriginal members to contribute to determining

5 issues and policy directions; to ensure that effective consultation occurs with
Aboriginal communities on matters relating to Aboriginal education and training; to
ensure that appropriate monitoring occurs of the operational plans of the state
education and training providers; and lastly, to consult with state and
Commonwealth agencies regarding programs, plans and financial arrangements
relating to Aboriginal education and training.

10 The funding of the Aboriginal Education and Training Council - it has a
budget of \$325,000, which is assessed from the Commonwealth Indigenous
Education Strategic Program. The budget funds the operations of the AETC, the
monitoring of the strategic plan and the fund also funds projects, some of which
we've done in the period over the last 12 months. Some of those projects include
15 the development of a systemic college of education here in the metropolitan area;
the development of a student tracking system which is able to target transient
Aboriginal students; the development of Our Story, an Aboriginal cross-cultural
training program for the school sectors; also conducted research into the role and
the status of Aboriginal and islander education workers; and has also conducted
research into Aboriginal employment levels across all education sectors. I want to
20 also say that the Western Australian government also contributes a sum of some
\$200,000 to that.

25 I want to focus in on the strategic plan now, which will be one of the
documents that will be tabled to the chair. The key areas of focus of the strategic
plan have looked at improved outcomes, so despite the continuing low educational
status of Aboriginal people, and the repeated commitment to pursue improvement,
progress has been slow. This plan aims to promote and ensure outcomes for
Aboriginal people through the adoption of agreed outcomes and strategies, whereas
in previous strategic plans, we've had the priorities, we've had the outcomes and
then the strategies of how to achieve those.

30 Our focus, predominantly, is on the outcomes and how those things are
achieved. It's also consistency of effort, the foundation of the plan as seven key
areas. If I can refer to those, Priority 1 is to ensure Aboriginal people are involved
in and Aboriginal perspectives and attitudes impact on education and training in
35 decision-making. Priority 2, to increase the number of Aboriginal people employed
in education and training and Priority 3, to ensure Aboriginal people have access to
quality education and training.

40 Priority 4, to ensure Aboriginal participation in education and training.
Priority 5, to ensure equitable and appropriate achievement by Aboriginal students.
Priority 6, to promote, maintain and support the teaching of Aboriginal studies,
cultures and languages to all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Finally,
Priority 7, to strengthen community development training services, including
45 proficiency in English literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students. I just want to
say that the strategic plan, also the seven priorities, mirror the national priorities.
And a critical feature of the plan is its consistency with what Aboriginal people
themselves say are their greatest needs.

50 In summary, the issues with Aboriginal people, what Aboriginal people
said must be addressed, our continued consultation with Aboriginal people, the
attendance of Aboriginal students in education and training institutions, the design
and implementation of career paths for Aboriginal Education Workers and

5 Aboriginal training assistance, the support for remote area teaching education programs, cross-cultural induction for all education and training staff, the design of strategies to ensure smooth transition and consistent attendance of Aboriginal students from K to 12, an action policy to increase Aboriginal involvement in governance of relevant institutions, consideration of programs like the Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program for secondary students, an increased emphasis on early childhood education and, lastly, Aboriginal studies content within the curriculum.

10 As mentioned before, the plan is consistent with the main concerns of the ministers of all states in the 1996 meeting of the MCEETYA. I just want to make mention, too, that the strategic plan identifies this issue of Aboriginal diversity, acknowledging the diversity of Aboriginal society in Western Australia with diverse social structures, demography, economic situations, education needs and aspirations, 15 cultures and customs. An important characteristic of this strategic plan is that no single person or group can speak for the interests of all Aboriginal people. I just want to finally say that the AETC strategic plan is endorsed by all Ministers representing the interests of Aboriginal people in Western Australia, the Minister for Education, the Hon Colin Barnett, the Minister for Education and Training, the 20 Hon Cheryl Edwardes and the Minister for Aboriginal affairs, the Hon Kim Hames.

[Aboriginal Studies]

25 If I can just refer to one of the priorities of the strategic plan, and particularly Priority 6, and that is “To promote, maintain and support the teaching of Aboriginal studies, cultures and languages at all levels.” So that’s the priority. The main focus of the strategic plan is not so much the strategy on how to achieve that, but it’s the main focus of outcomes and the outcomes identified in priority 6 are in achieving, “To promote, maintain and support the teaching of Aboriginal studies” - is the outcome. Priority 6.1, “Students and teachers understand and 30 appreciate Aboriginal cultures, that Aboriginal studies be integrated into the curriculum.” Priority 6.1.2, “In partnership with the Aboriginal community and elders” - we’re talking specifically about language here - “develop and implement curriculum resources and frameworks for teaching and learning and delivery of Aboriginal languages”, so just focusing on an example of the strategic plan 35 Priority 6. I now want to introduce David to talk about the monitoring and the reporting of the Aboriginal education and training strategic plan.

[Strategic Plan for Aboriginal education]

40 **MR PRICE:** Thanks, Kim. Many of my previous comments in relation to monitoring and reporting are equally true in this case, though of course the difference is this time there is such a thing as a cycle of monitoring and reporting and it’s very much to the credit of the providers involved that they have been able to participate and willing to participate to this point. In terms of lessons for the future, you can’t go beyond the strategic plan’s endorsement by the Hon Colin Barnett, 45 who wrote in the introduction:

50 The implementation of this plan will be scrupulously monitored and evaluated, not only by the responsible government agencies, but also by the intended beneficiaries, Aboriginal people themselves. The Aboriginal Education and Training Council will now take on the critically important role of ensuring that this is

done in a highly objective manner and that we are kept informed of the achievement of the plan's outcomes.

5 That's significantly important because within the body of the strategic plan itself is ministerial endorsement of the need to actually monitor the outcomes of that plan and, as I said in the previous submission, without that high-level government imprimatur, it's very difficult to move forward, despite the best will in the world. In terms of the Aboriginal education and training strategic plan monitoring process, a working party, a cross-sectoral party, met for some time prior to my coming to
10 this particular role, made suggestions about how in fact that role might be carried out. I took that model to the AETC in early 1997 and was asked to negotiate it further with individuals, Chief Executive Officers and directors-general to the point where a manageable cohesive system could be produced.

15 The key principles upon which agencies and Aboriginal people were agreed in terms of developing the system, the framework for monitoring and reporting, were that it should include not only agency reports, but also the voice of Aboriginal people. That must be a part of the reporting. The second one was that we should minimise duplication of reporting by focusing fairly well exclusively on
20 the national strategy of the national Aboriginal education planning that came out of MCEETYA and so that agencies wouldn't be reporting twice every year in a different format, that we would maintain the same reporting format and we would use, finally, the IESIP framework - that's the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program reporting framework, as another way of minimising duplication.
25 So we're actually piggybacking with existing reporting requirements of the Commonwealth.

The framework itself, when it was finally approved, I think, in around about June of that year, 1997, commits itself to the AETC undertaking the role of
30 recording the voice of Aboriginal people in respect to their expectations and their perceptions of the achievement of the priorities of the strategic plan. And the AETC does that in a number of ways, through direct consultation, through a number of research projects and through a number of identified surveying tools. It began as an exercise of annual consultations statewide and we received advice after that first
35 round that this perhaps was not the only way to go and perhaps not the most efficient way to go, that it wasn't necessary to consult every year across the whole state and that, in fact, more benefit might be gained by identifying case studies and particular areas of research and surveying from which we might gather the same level of data, so the client consultation became very much the role of the AETC.

40 The agency reports, of course, were also part - and remain part - of the structure. Our time line is the time line of the Commonwealth, so the Commonwealth asks for reports on its funding by 31 March. So the AETC has been consistent with that as well, to make sure that agencies aren't trying to meet too
45 many different deadlines in any given year. The data from the consultation surveying research and agencies is then collated by an independent body or consultant. In this case, it's Dr Stephen Kemmis, who in fact is an internationally-renowned proponent of action research and has worked a lot with Aboriginal people. It's very important, in terms of this framework, that that person
50 is independent of in fact the state, let alone the agencies themselves.

[10.40 am]

5 The AETC ask for that synthesis report to be tabled to it in June of each year. After the tabling of the report, which is exactly what it sounds like, a synthesis of all the data from all the agencies and the consultation undertaken in the previous year, a working party of the AETC then looks at the data to identify a project and advice that might flow from it. That information is presented to the full council in around about November and from that point on, following endorsement, it's presented to government and also to the Aboriginal Justice Council, which is housed in the Aboriginal Affairs Department.

10 In 1997 that framework was established. The first report was released in 1998 and the second report will be released in 1999. In itself it was quite an achievement. I don't think it had ever occurred before at the same level where we had government and non-government education providers and Aboriginal people all contributing to a single report on an annual basis in relation to the same strategic plan. It certainly didn't come without a lot of refinement being necessary.

20 Some of the issues that come out of it are the complexity of the data itself. To take that much data in any given year and synthesise it into one document was an immense task which was eventually 200 pages long. I think the executive summary was longer than most reports. So the complexity of the data is an issue. The independent sectors - that is the independent school sectors' involvement is not satisfactory at this point because they don't have a systemic framework on which to report but we are in fact working with the Commonwealth and with the Association of Independent Schools to try to remedy that situation.

30 Another issue is the extent to which a council made up of largely the Chief Executive Officers of the provider agencies and Aboriginal people can then sit in judgment over its own department's performances, and I guess it's immediately obvious as to some of the subtleties that might arise out of that. I must say, however, that the people, the non-Aboriginal provider representatives, have entered into that exercise very openly. The fact that we've been able to use an independent analysis of the data that's been provided has circumvented some of the perception that might be there that in fact the data, when it reaches government, has been doctored to the point where in fact it's meaningless or disguises more than it reveals.

40 I think we still have some way to go. I think the biggest single achievement that's been made out of this framework is the fact that it exists, that there is a willingness by government and non-government providers to be part of such a process. I think the issue of how that information gets back to Aboriginal people is yet to be resolved but I am happy to report that as late as two weeks ago a working party was formed to look at the Stephen Kemmis report and work with Stephen Kemmis to discuss how in fact that information, that 200 pages of very complex data, can be fed back to the Aboriginal community in a meaningful form.

50 The decision-making of the Council itself in relation to the reporting and monitoring is the last issue I'd like to refer to, and that is many people from within those agencies that report - the middle management and at the teacher-lecturer level - would be intimidated to be in a forum where their Chief Executive Officer was also a member and also the Chief Executive Officer's peers all of a similar status. When you put Aboriginal community people into that forum, into that same

situation, and you're asking them to come to terms with much that is complex and specific to education and contains much education and training jargon, those issues are magnified. We have identified that there is a need for a fuller induction process to take place with the Aboriginal members of the Council and the providers in fact have agreed to fund that, which is another indicator of the willingness to enter into this kind of process.

I think there's also a need for cross-cultural awareness and there does need to be more awareness on the part of the providers about the way Aboriginal people make decisions and the time that involves and the subtleties of culture that enter into it. So we are going to work down the path of more cultural awareness training for our particular members. The single biggest issue that has arisen recently is the ability of the Aboriginal members to comment on operational matters when the providers see their role specifically in the area of policy. The difficulty is of course that some of the subtleties of that would be lost on most of us in any given situation and are quite often lost on the members of the Council as well.

Once again, to the credit of the providers, we have entered into a set of principles which enable in fact Aboriginal people on the Aboriginal Education and Training Council to raise any issue which they feel they need to raise and not to be continually hampered by wondering whether or not it is in fact a policy or operational matter. Where it does turn out to be an operational matter, obviously it then leaves the arena in terms of decision-making but, at the very least, there has been an opportunity to raise those things.

So in finishing my presentation, I'll just reiterate that the achievement of a framework has been an immense achievement but there are a lot of refinements to take place underneath the skin of it. Thanks.

MR COLLARD: Just the final part of this report is looking at maybe some of the recommendations for the future and, although the WA Aboriginal Education and Training Council is only one of many ACGs across the nation and is funded by the Commonwealth, each state has their own independent consultative group and each has their own structures, their own issues and owner genders specific to their own needs and wants.

The AT makes the following recommendations: that we do not expect that each state follow the WA AETC model but for everyone to adopt a monitoring and reporting role mechanism within their own states; that state and federal national priorities are succinct but specific to their individual states and to report back to the federal government. I just want to say that the Commonwealth government is already down the road to collecting this data but it should also include more data other than which comes out of the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiative Funding.

[IESIP]

We cannot express how important it is to have a monitoring and reporting process in place to achieve equitable outcomes for all Aboriginal people, not only at a state but also a national level so as the state models are succinct with the national priorities, and that a national independent report be conducted and published each year so that the national goals are achieved. That's the end of our report. Thank you very much.

5 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thanks very much, Kim and David. Thanks to both of you. Kim, you mentioned the budget of the Council was \$325,000. You mentioned IESIP funding and said the WA government puts in \$200,000. That's \$200 out of the \$320, is it or \$200 in addition?

MR PRICE: In addition.

10 **THE COMMISSIONER:** In addition - so it's \$320 thousand IESIP funding plus 200,000 state funding.

MR PRICE: The government funding tends to be more in kind rather than cash so it pays for salaries, facilities, etcetera, and also the chairperson's salary and expenses.

15 **THE COMMISSIONER:** So in terms of full-time people working for the Council, obviously, David, you're executive officer but you share that with a couple of other responsibilities.

20 **MR PRICE:** That's right. Part of my salary - I think around about 40 or 50% is paid for by the Commonwealth - and the full salary of an Aboriginal coordinator who works as admin assistant in effect.

THE COMMISSIONER: And the chair is paid a part-time salary as well, is she?

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MR PRICE: That's right - and an expense account. She has \$10,000 salary, a \$2,000 expense account and we provide telephone, fax and answering machine.

30 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thanks, that helps to clarify that. Thanks very much. If you could leave, please, Kim and David, that material behind.

MR PRICE: We've tabled an envelope with all our attachments.

35 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Have you? All right, thanks very much for your help. Thanks for coming. Daryl Carmody - yes, come on up, please. Thanks for coming. Since I think people have arrived since we started, I should reintroduce us. I'm Chris Sidoti, Human Rights Commissioner. Sister Pat Rhatigan from Notre Dame University is Co-Commissioner on this inquiry in Western Australia. We have a Co-Commissioner in each state and territory who is assisting us with the local expertise, in particular specialist knowledge at a national level. Pat's assisting us here. So would you like to introduce yourself and you can go straight into your comments then.

40

[Education in detention centres]

45 **MR CARMODY:** Certainly. I'm the coordinator of educational services with the Ministry of Justice here in Western Australia in the juvenile justice area. A little bit of background on the juvenile justice area: in 1993 the juvenile justice area was part of the Family and Children's Services area. It was combined then with Corrective Services and the formation of the Ministry of Justice as it is today. Since then, the role of education provision for juveniles in detention has remained with the Ministry of Justice rather than with the Education Department or the TAFE system as it is in other states. So we are unique in the fact that the Ministry of Justice actually

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provides education for juveniles who are held in remand and juveniles who are held in detention in Western Australia.

5 We also provide a support service for juveniles who are in the community who have offended and juveniles who are released back into the community on supervisory release orders. That support service is in the form of education officers in the metropolitan area who will have the task of linking those juvenile offenders back into the most appropriate program - education and training, employment program - for that particular individual.

10 Being a fairly small organisation - we have approximately 100 juveniles in detention and fluctuating numbers in remand, but averaging around 35 to 40 young people in remand at any one time we are able to provide individual education plans and individual monitoring for these young people. A little bit of process: as a young person comes through remand, they are assessed educationally to see what their educational needs are. We have a look at their educational background, we have a look at where they've come from and an education plan is put together for that young person while they're in remand. Quite often the young people are in remand only for a short period of time. They go back into the community if they get bail or if they're released by the courts. If they're of compulsory school age, they're back under the auspices of the Education Department to provide their education. If they're post-compulsory, then there are support systems if they're not being case-managed by a juvenile justice officer, are the same as for any other young person who's post-compulsory.

25 For a young person who is sentenced to detention in Western Australia, they now all reside at Banksia Hill Juvenile Detention Centre, and we have a comprehensive education program which runs 52 weeks of the year for all juveniles who are in detention at Banksia Hill. That comprises a school day running from 30 9.00 till 3.00 where every juvenile attends an academic and a vocational education program which is, as much as we can, individually tailored to their interests and their needs.

35 On coming into the detention centre, a formal assessment is done of the young person's literacy and numeracy levels - that's for all young people - and also any education that they've had in the past is taken into account and an individual education plan is put together for that young person, focusing on the length of time that we've got the young person in detention plus where the young person is going to go once they are released. So that is linked in with their case management plan, 40 linked in with their juvenile justice officer, who could be in the metropolitan area or maybe in the rural or remote areas. So we need to contact those people, have a look at what the options are for that young person once they return to their local community and target the program in Banksia Hill to match what they're going to be going back into, also addressing their basic literacy and numeracy needs and 45 areas of interest.

[10.55 am]

50 Having that student-centred approach is beneficial to the young person in that they are able to see the connection with the education that they are getting with where they're going to be going once they are released. We find that that approach works well with our young people. The options for these juveniles once they return

5 to the community, whether they're being managed by their juvenile justice officer if they're in a regional area or by their education officer in the metropolitan area - the options may include returning to a mainstream school. If they're a compulsory school-aged student then that is our first priority and we work very closely with the Education Department to arrange those placements.

10 We leave the decision of where that young person is to go and the exact school, the alternative program or whatever up to the Education Department and we involve them in the young person's plan early in the process when they come into detention. So that may be one option if they're a compulsory school-aged young person.

15 Post-compulsory, then they're looking at a range of options which could include vocational training through their local TAFE college, direct placement into employment, linking in through the Commonwealth jobs network, and we do all of those connections with Centrelink while the young person is still in detention, to facilitate receipt of the Youth Allowance. We do the literacy and numeracy assessments on them that they would have to do in the community. They can be linked into literacy and numeracy program providers if they're available in their local area. We do the flex field assessments. This is all with Centrelink officers coming in and actually working with the young people.

25 It takes the role of the young person having to actually link in to their local Centrelink office once they're released - takes that responsibility and gets all of that happening while they're actually in a structured environment. If we need to follow up means testing with parents and getting all of that information then we can do that while we've got them in that environment as well. And that all comes together as part of the young person's case plan for their supervised release period, which is 50% of their sentence.

30 Once all of that's put together they appear before the Supervised Release Review Board who, like the Parole Board, determine whether that young person is released at that date. The strength of that plan, looking at their educational outcomes, their employment outcomes, their accommodation outcomes, their addressing of their offending behaviour or any other treatment programs and those sorts of things are all taken into account and the Board makes a decision based on that plan. So our role within the education area is obviously quite crucial in linking all those young people in to an ongoing program as the majority of our young people rely on the Youth Allowance as a means of support once they're back in the community.

45 We have very close working relationships between the Ministry of Justice and the Education Department, daily contact between our officers and officers certainly in the metropolitan areas, working closely with welfare officers who have the statutory responsibility for making sure that young people are attending school. We've established a protocol agreement between our two agencies to allow us to share confidential information. If we're linking at-risk young people back into a mainstream school and there is some specific information that the school or the district needs to know about that young person to assist their linking successfully back into the educational area, then we'll be able to share that information under that protocols agreement.

5 Similarly, we work closely with the Education Department in maintaining young people in schools through some of the processes that we do in the community, which are recording of school non-attenders. If we have young people on our books who are reporting regularly to their juvenile justice officers and we are aware that they are not attending school and they are of compulsory school age, then on a weekly basis we record that information and we forward that through to the local Education Department welfare officer, who then has the role of following up with those young people to ensure that they are attending school or finding out what the issues are and working at overcoming those.

10 Along that same track we provide the names of the young people who are in remand and in detention, so that those young people, although they've disappeared from their local community the Education Department is aware of where they are and that way they're not chasing up kids who are actually within our system. So that works very well.

15 The other thing that we share with the Education Department is going through the list of young people that they have on their books whose whereabouts are unknown. They produce a list on a monthly basis that are all kids in this state who are on the rolls of schools' books who are no longer at that local school, and if we come across those young people in our travels through remand or through community-based orders or the like and those young people are identified then we contact the Education Department and can provide them with the information as to this is where this young person is now residing. And in that way we can hopefully link those young people back into their local school as well.

[Remote and rural juvenile offenders]

20 That's a bit of a general description about how our service links in with the mainstream services. Specific issues relating to rural and remote issues with the young people that we deal with, the majority of juvenile offenders that come into our system from remote and rural areas have educational levels that are below that of their metropolitan peers when they're tested at intake to detention.

25 Alternative education programs that are specifically designed to meet the needs of at-risk or juvenile offenders returning to remote areas or living in remote areas and on community-based orders are generally not as available in regional areas as they are in the metropolitan area. Certainly we have a list of options for placements for young people in the metropolitan area, where we don't have those options in our regional areas.

30 Similarly with vocational training options, obviously far more alternatives for post-compulsory kids in the metropolitan and larger regional areas than in the remote areas, which makes our job difficult when you're trying to put together a good constructive educational plan for these young people returning to those remote and regional areas.

35 When establishing ongoing educational plans for juveniles leaving detention and returning to those areas, one of the things that we can do to help maintain that young person in a placement is to enlist a mentor, who has the role of just connecting with that young person, making sure that they're able to get to whatever the educational placement is, making sure that they've got the requirements, be it uniform, books, shoes, lunch, those sorts of details, and to be a

support to that young person in linking that young person back into their educational program.

5 Sometimes finding a suitable mentor in some of those communities can be a difficult task, and maintaining those young people in contact with the mentors. Also it's a limited type of resource and decisions are made at the individual level as to whether mentors are employed in that area or not.

10 Monitoring and addressing of attendance issues of compulsory school-aged juvenile offenders requires careful attention of juvenile justice officers, Ministry of Justice education officers and Education Department welfare officers. Non-attendance at this stage is only addressed legally through the Education Act. It is not a condition used under the Western Australian Young Offenders Act, which means that we don't generally breach young people who are on an order if they're
15 not attending school.

The view is that we don't lock up kids for truancy. We would tend to raise it as an issue with the Education Department and work with them to address that issue rather than having to breach their current order for whatever offences they've
20 committed. Supervised Release Review Board for that reason does not make attendance at school a condition of their supervised release orders.

I've mentioned the role of the Ministry in working with the Education Department for compulsory school-aged kids as the first priority, some of the other
25 options for these young people, but if they are excluded or suspended from their local schools have to be investigated by our people, and generally we will work also with the Education Department to look at those sorts of options. Some of the difficulties we have is where there is one school in the local town or within the local region and the young person is excluded from that school, they're on some type of
30 order with us and we would like to have them linked back into an education program but there are no other providers in that area, then that creates an issue. With those individual cases we'll work with the Education Department, with Family and Children's Services, etc, to see if we can come up with a constructive alternative, which may include things like distance education or the young person
35 moving from that remote area to another area where they can attend a school.

And one other area that is outside my particular area - which is education and services within the Ministry of Justice - is another area known as
40 community-based services for the Ministry of Justice, and the reason I mention that is we work closely with our community-based services counterparts in the number of programs that are funded across the state. The Ministry of Justice puts approximately \$1.6 million into community-based programs designed to either reduce reoffending or prevent juvenile crime.

45 So it supports all types of initiatives that come from the local areas, which has just moved to a tender basis. So the issues are recognised, identified and once a need is recognised then the Ministry will call for tenders within that local area to address the particular requirements of that local area. Specific details on that will be available in the near future on the Ministry of Justice web site.
50

I do have some limited detail here but it's not due for publication at this stage. It's where we're looking at specific demographics of where the offences are

occurring, what type of young offenders are they, what are the needs in that area, and once that's all put together then that funding will be targeted into those areas. So I can provide a summary of what I've given you there, plus an information brochure on our area, which is Education Services, Ministry of Justice.

5

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much; and particularly we'd like those, if you wouldn't mind, afterwards when you're leaving. Can you just tell me, your education services will cover both kids in detention, those released from detention, but also the community-based orders.

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MR CARMODY: Yes. Young people who are on community-based orders who are of compulsory school age, we'll work for those young people. We also work with post-compulsory kids to get them into an education area as well; also in a preventative basis. So we have kids whose orders have been completed, and we maintain contact with those young people as well if they need that support on an individual basis, yes.

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THE COMMISSIONER: You mentioned there are about 100 in detention, 40 to 50 on remand. Are those 40 to 50 included in the 100 or in addition to the 100?

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MR CARMODY: No, in addition.

THE COMMISSIONER: In addition.

25

MR CARMODY: That's an average. I mean, some weekends it will be 70, some weekends it will be 20. Those young people will go to the courts; some will be sentenced, some won't be.

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THE COMMISSIONER: How many educational staff do you have at Banksia Hill?

MR CARMODY: At Banksia Hill we've got 16 teachers and the Ministry of Justice funds the salaries of those teachers. The Commonwealth funds three of those salaries, and we tap into operating funds from the Ministry of Justice, plus the Education Department also funds us, and we also access IESIP funding through ATAS and VEGAS and those types of programs as well.

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THE COMMISSIONER: Right. So the Commonwealth funding comes through things like IESIP, does it?

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MR CARMODY: Yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: And what does the Education Department fund?

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MR CARMODY: They fund us for running costs, consumables and those sorts of things on an annual basis. They support I guess mainly our running costs - purchases of books, materials, workshop materials, those sorts of things.

50

THE COMMISSIONER: Right. So of the 16 salaries then, 13 would be paid by the Ministry of Justice, three will be paid by the Commonwealth.

MR CARMODY: That's right, yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: Okay. Do you actually do any evaluation of the young people when they leave against those same tests that you assess them by when they arrive.

5

MR CARMODY: Yes, we do. The initial tests when they come in give us a baseline starting point of where that young person's educational ability is. We use that to then link them into accredited programs. So we might pick a program that the young person will be able to complete once they're released back into the community, something like the certificate of general education for adults, the CGEA. That young person will start, once they've had that initial assessment, at a particular level and they'll progress through those levels. They get issued with certificates that are recognised.

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We're a recognised training organisation ourselves and we also enrol the young people externally through local TAFE colleges. So the young people are actually on the books of the TAFE colleges and actually get certificates that have some meaning to them. You know, they'll have Midland TAFE College certificates that go into their portfolio for when they leave.

20

We have done some release testing, where we've used a similar test that we use when the young people have come in, looking at that baseline data. Generally the young people do make a good progression when they're in detention, due to the fact that they're actually getting some individual attention. We work with very small numbers in our classes, no more than eight to one ratio, and the young people have fairly intensive tuition in the basics of literacy and numeracy. We'll bring in mentors for a young person who needs tutors and that sort of thing on an individual basis, and the young people tend to respond to that.

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[11.10 am]

Also the young people coming in generally haven't been attending an educational program prior to coming in. Some of them - you know, an average young person would be 16. They might have a numeracy and literacy ability of middle to upper primary and they might progress within a six-month period, two or three years in their literacy and numeracy levels within that six-month time-frame, and it's on an individual basis; it depends on their motivation and how they respond to the programs.

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THE COMMISSIONER: You mentioned that Western Australia is unique in having the educational services run by the Ministry of Justice rather than by the Education Department. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses in that?

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MR CARMODY: Basically we are part of the holistic planning for that young person. We are very closely linked with the case planning. We put together the treatment programs and everything else to address a young person's offending. It gives us the ability also to put that young person on whatever type of program that suits that young person. So we can take vocational programs off the shelf, we can use a private provider if that's where the young person is going back to and then link in with some training through their father or whoever it is that's going to be there.

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Basically it just gives us the flexibility to totally cater for that young person's individual needs without having to meet requirements, specific requirements, of curriculum frameworks and reporting requirements and having to run school terms and those sorts of things. We pick the young person up from where they're at and we take them as far as we can within the time-frame that we've got. It just gives us flexibility to work within that system.

THE COMMISSIONER: And weaknesses?

MR CARMODY: I guess the only weakness is when we come to linking the young people back into their local schools, having that school accept that that young person is actually part of their system when the young person hasn't been part of their system for three or four years. For us to knock on the door of the Education Department and say, "Here's Johnny, and this is the education that he's been getting with us. He hasn't been to a mainstream school for quite a bit of time." Having them take ownership of that young person is sometimes a bit of a task, but generally it has a good outcome in the end where we involve the district office of the Education Department to do those placements rather than having to negotiate with individual schools to put the young person on.

That's why I was saying where we work with the district office it gives the district office the ability to find the most appropriate program, the most appropriate school, right down to the most appropriate teacher, I guess, within their system to cater for that young person's needs. So that's one of the things that we've addressed over the last couple of years and it's certainly working a lot better now, where we work at that level and leave the actual placements for compulsory school-age kids up to the Education Department and district people.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thanks. Pat.

SISTER RHATIGAN: My only concern - you haven't mentioned, Daryl, the number of young people that are there. I'm presuming that a large percentage of them are Aboriginal. If that is so, within the teaching staff that you have do you cater for AIEWs - - -

MR CARMODY: Yes.

SISTER RHATIGAN: - - - or have you got Aboriginal teachers or - - -

MR CARMODY: We employ two Aboriginal Indigenous Education Workers. We used to call them - well, that was the title that they went under before they were on a contract position. We've just converted those to permanent public service items. We've written up a new JDF for them which fits in with the Aboriginal Indigenous Education worker, but it gives us the ability to maintain those people in a permanent position. They're crucial people in our educational environment. Also our Aboriginal liaison officers, who work within the custody environment as well, linking with the families and that sort of thing. So they're crucial parts of our program.

We have between 55 and 60% of our kids are of Aboriginal descent, sometimes going up to 65%, and obviously having the role model of those people, in being able to walk in and out of the classrooms to work with the young people, is

5 crucial. Having the ability to employ our teachers, we employ teachers on a contract basis. We can second teachers from the Education Department. We can get teachers from the TAFE system. We can get teachers from the private system. We advertise, we interview, and we have targeted specific selection criteria that we're looking for and, with those sorts of numbers of Aboriginal kids - obviously teaching with Aboriginal kids is one of our selection criteria. Experience in working with at-risk youth, troubled youth, etcetera, are the types of things that we can target, and it gives us the ability to employ the right type of teachers to work with our kids, who are able to get the results from the kids.

10 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Okay, thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much.

15 **MR CARMODY:** Okay.

THE COMMISSIONER: John Borserio and Michael King, thank you. I'm sorry to keep you waiting. We're about 15 minutes behind time - - -

20 **MR BORSERIO:** That's okay.

THE COMMISSIONER: - - - which at this stage of the day is not too bad, I must say.

25 **MR BORSERIO:** We'll try and help.

THE COMMISSIONER: But I don't want to be self-satisfied. Could you please introduce yourselves for the record and get straight into any comments you wish to make.

30 **[Catholic education]**

35 **MR BORSERIO:** Thank you. John Borserio, regional officer for Catholic education, and my colleague is Michael King, head of section, student support services, from our Perth office. I'd like to start off this morning by giving a brief overview of our system as we believe it's made a significant contribution to education in Western Australia, both in primary, secondary and in tertiary, and this addresses the item of reference, availability and accessibility in schooling.

40 Catholic schools have been provided in Western Australia in response to parental request to their bishop that they'd like a Catholic school to support them in passing on the Catholic faith to their children. We have no real state or federal legislative imperative to provide educational services, although we are a significant provider of those services throughout the state. Catholic education in Western Australia started in 1843 with a school in Vic Square, and we've had in the
45 intervening 160 years, 150 years, over 30 religious orders have devoted their talents and skills to teaching throughout the state. Through that time there have been significant changes in staffing in our system, and the current staffing of Catholic schools has moved almost totally to lay staff.

50 The size of our enterprise in Western Australia: we have 155 Catholic schools made up of 108 primary schools, 27 secondary schools, and 20 composite schools, composite schools being both - offering both primary and secondary on the

5 same site. Our total student population is about 60,000 and we have almost 4,000 teachers meeting those 60,000 students' needs. In terms of rural and remote schools, of those 155, 60 are in rural and remote areas, which is about 40%, and our rural student population is just over 14,000, which is about a quarter of the students that we have.

10 Catholic education in Western Australia is administered by the Catholic Education Commission through the bishops of Western Australia, and the Catholic Education Office is the operating arm of the Commission. In Western Australia, as well as the central office in Perth, there are three regional offices based in Broome, Geraldton, and Bunbury, and I am the regional officer from Bunbury.

15 In terms of access and equity the first point we'd like to make is that of school curriculum choice. In rural and remote Catholic primary schools, EDWA syllabus materials are used plus our own archdiocese and religious education guidelines. There is no difference in core curriculum across the eight learning areas. Where there is a difference is the range of specialist programs available to rural schools - like music, language other than English, phys ed, art, drama - and often these are restricted due to budget or small numbers of students or the ability to attract and identify specialist teaching staff for part-time positions. That's a difficulty for us.

25 Access to core learning areas in rural secondary schools and secondary TOPS of composite schools is the same as in urban schools. In secondary schools the differences in equity are for the old elective areas - like manual arts, art and craft, technology, performing arts, language other than English - where there's less choice for students in rural schools in these areas. Smaller enrolments in rural secondary sections also increases the likelihood of combined Year 11 and 12 classes. In urban secondary schools this would rarely happen and there are pluses and minuses in that arrangement.

35 **MR KING:** I think the variation in the enrolments John talked about 58 or 60,000 students in Catholic schools. Of those students there are some 2,100 Aboriginal students in Catholic schools and there are some 950 students with disabilities, and that doesn't include students with learning difficulties. Most of these students are supported - the children with disabilities are supported through the Commonwealth targeted programs, specifically the special education program. However, a Catholic school that enrolls a student with a disability has to ensure that it has the resources necessary for the provision of appropriate curriculum for those students, so obviously a significant amount of the additional resources come from the school's own resources.

45 **MR BORSERIO:** In vocational education and training our secondary schools, our rural secondary schools, all offer some vocational training, but the range of programs is restricted; restricted due to the expertise of people to take them, restricted due to the number of children needed to run a viable course, and the provision of these courses is expensive as well.

50 In summary, as well as in some regions there's the lack of training providers, in rural schools, rural areas, there's often a narrow range of employment opportunities in the town that can take up students who qualify through these.

MR KING: I just use one example. I believe recently you've been to Billiluna, and Billiluna is a good example of one of our remote schools, very remote schools, that provides education from kindergarten, or even prior to kindergarten, right through to adult. This is a school where the Catholic system is the sole provider of education within that community, and the ability for that school to provide appropriate resources for that community is through the Catholic system's co-responsibility. In other words, we receive as a system significant funding from both the state and Commonwealth in respect of individual students in our schools, but we then distribute those funds according to need. An example would be Billiluna, of course, that has significant additional costs that are supported by the Catholic system as a whole.

[Teacher recruitment]

MR BORSERIO: A second area, moving on from curriculum, is staff. Whilst we don't have a statistical breakdown of staff experience levels, anecdotally it's true that less experienced teachers often find their first placement in country schools; generally that placement is between two and four years. However, as the Catholic education system does not have a central employing authority, all of our schools employ their own staff so that they can attract teachers who meet the criteria of the school.

There are some facets and conditions that translate from school to school - like long service leave and sick leave - but in terms of the employment, that is handled at a school level, and it's true to say a number of our schools have had significant difficulty in attracting qualified people to teach in rural Western Australia.

[11.25 am]

MR KING: We had recently quite an interesting project, called the Kimberley Literacy Project, where with the assistance of the Commonwealth through its IESIP program we were endeavouring to support students in their first year of formal schooling that required intensive work in standard Australian English. Our response to that was to second teachers, particularly early childhood and ESL experience teachers, from southern schools, both metropolitan and rural schools, for one term in the Kimberleys to work with the teacher, the host teacher, the Aboriginal teaching assistant, to form up a team to provide intensive work in standard Australian English as the children come to their first formal year of schooling.

The spin-off of that was that last year where we seconded six teachers to work in remote communities four of those experienced teachers, as a result of that experience, chose to go back to the Kimberleys this year into permanent positions in our schools in the Kimberleys. So it was a spin-off that we hadn't anticipated; we had hoped for it but hadn't anticipated it.

MR BORSERIO: We offer as a system a range of incentives to teachers to teach in rural and remote areas to encourage teachers to select teaching in a remote school as part of their mission and to reward them for the demanding nature of teaching and living in part of the state. We can't compete with the conditions offered by our state counterparts, but within our limited resources we try to ensure conditions for teachers are adequate and that they are not financially burdened by fulfilling their mission to teach in other than metropolitan Western Australia.

5 Whilst I've said that the Catholic education system doesn't have a centralised employment system, or transfer system, and each school employs its own staff - all of our positions are advertised both externally in local newspaper and state newspaper as well as having a publication that we call Horizons - that all teaching and leadership positions in Catholic schools are advertised openly, and as well as that we have on our home page the Horizons information as part of our web site and more and more people are making contact, first contact in looking for a position, through our web site, which we find interesting.

10 One of the great strengths of our employment process is that schools, individual schools, select the people that they want and need, and that's a plus. A minus of that is teachers who have taught for a number of years in rural parts and want to move to either larger coastal towns or back into the city - we don't have a system that helps that. However we have lots of informal networking and we encourage our city principals to look most favourably on country service as being an important part of a teacher's professional development.

20 We have also seen that teachers in our secondary rural schools who teach a greater range of subject areas than their urban counterparts also enjoy faster promotion to head of department level. Even if the department only has two or three staff members within it they are given the opportunity to develop their leadership potential in that area.

25 **[Boarding]**

In terms of student accommodation, I guess country parents are no different to metro parents in that they would like their children to stay with them and not to leave their homes, certainly in pursuit of education. There are schools within our system who run boarding facilities which offers - I guess it's a fantastic offer to parents who so want to follow that option. But whilst that is a positive there are some negatives to that as well.

35 **MR KING:** Yes, one of the negatives is again to do with the - I guess it's a combination of freedom of choice. We said right at the very beginning that the Catholic system is there because of the choice of parents and yet we also get situations where in remote communities - for example, in the Kimberleys - the communities have asked for us to provide secondary education, which we do, supported again through the co-responsibility effort of the system as a whole. But then you get the issues where many of the other private schools, and even government schools, are looking to gain students and they go through these promotional programs up in the Kimberleys and in the remote areas to look for children to come to their schools. We have this constant challenge for us to balance the provision of providing secondary education at the request of the community, versus the competition from other schools.

45 It is also an interesting factor that where communities have problems, significant problems like substance abuse and suicide, then the parents themselves choose to take their children out of that environment to other schools, but we also know that as soon as possible they want them to come back to those communities. So you get these fluctuating student populations in the remote communities which is a challenge to resource.

[Teacher housing]

MR BORSERIO: Teacher housing is another important facet that has the ability to attract teachers to rural areas but also has the ability to chase them away equally as quickly. Provision of teacher accommodation in the Catholic school system is the responsibility of the local school community and school board or parish. Teachers in Kimberley schools are provided with housing. Improvements have been made in recent years to attract teachers to the region by ensuring that the housing is of good quality but it would be fair to say we've still got a way to go with this. In coastal and larger centres teachers are assisted to source their own accommodation or have access to school parish-owned houses, units and flats, and our school principals receive rental and/or mortgage assistance. Do you want to talk about Aboriginal teachers?

[Indigenous teachers]

MR KING: We have a number of Aboriginal teachers actually teaching in the system. We have about - I think it's 10 at the moment, but I'm sure that Sister Pat has also talked to you about the significant improvement in the training of teachers through Notre Dame. Our IESIP program is currently supporting eight full-time study students at Notre Dame University in the Broome campus, doing the Ed or the community teaching courses over three year and four-year trained programs through the Broome campus, to come back into our schools and into our communities. It's certainly a very strong priority of the Catholic system to improve the number of Aboriginal teachers in the system but it is a process that takes time. We are hopeful, I think, at the end of this year to have the first of those scholarship teachers graduating back into the Catholic system.

[Funding for Catholic education]

MR BORSERIO: Our current funding for the Catholic education system in WA - we attract funding from three separate places. We receive approximately 50% from the Commonwealth, some 25% from state and 25% from private sources, such as fees. Our current capital investment is funded by Commonwealth capital grants, state government low interest loans, system co-responsibility funding and local contributions.

The general recurrent grants are directed to the Catholic Education Office in block and are distributed according to need. Michael has explained a bit of that already. One of our system's basic principles is that of co-responsibility, where schools are levied each year to provide a funds basis allocated on need across the system and our small rural schools are certainly well supported by this system.

[Technology]

Technology in rural and remote education, because of its cost, this provides our system with some difficulty. The current level of technology in our schools is dependent on budget priorities for each school and the level of access to computers varies across the state.

Most classrooms would have at least one stand-alone PC. Some schools would also have computer labs. Nearly all of our schools have automated library systems and computerised administration systems, and schools are working towards reducing the student computer:ratio in schools, and some of our smaller schools are actually advantaged by their size. I'm thinking of schools like Brunswick Junction,

which has a school population of about 70, which has at the moment already eight computers that children can access, and also access Internet and e-mail as well.

5 Internet access is a challenge to rural schools due to STD costs, dial-up costs, capital costs, the maintenance of equipment. The infrastructure of what happens when a computer goes down in Katanning - what do you do with it? Is there a local solution to problems with it or does it have to be sent to a major town? Bandwidth is also another area that restricts use of Internet in rural areas. As a system we're looking to developing management practices to provide support in the
10 area of information technology. In terms of professional development too we see that as a great need. So as well as having boxes on the desk that the teachers can make use in their teaching style, make good use of, what that box can do.

15 There are implications for the initial funding of purchasing a computer but also the ongoing maintenance of those. Professional development is an area that consumes a lot of rural schools' budget, in terms of teacher replacement, travel, accommodation and so the use of technology as a professional development tool is an attractive one. But doesn't bring with it the face-to-face interaction and networking and the positives that ensue from that.

20 **[Student transport]**

An issue that is vexatious to us as a system is that of student transport. At present there's a state inquiry looking at student transport in WA and it would seem that one of its purposes is to look at introducing cost recovery which would impact
25 directly on rural families who have chosen a non-government education for their child or children.

In summary, it's our belief with limited financial resources the Catholic education system is doing a great job in rural and remote Western Australia. While
30 saying that, it's not with any complacency. There's certainly lots more that we can do. We believe our students receive a quality education. We are particularly proud of the work that we are doing in Aboriginal education throughout the state. We acknowledge that technology is a difficulty for us and for our system and it would be our aim to continue to work cooperatively with the other providers in education
35 to ensure that all Western Australian students receive a quality education. We have provided a little pack to support this and these notes, Chris. We would be happy to leave those.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, please. Thanks very much. Thanks for those
40 comments. I must say as we travelled through the Kimberley we received nothing but very positive comments, particularly on a comparative basis, about Catholic education in the Aboriginal affairs area, particularly the scheme that you've got that I know that Pat's involved in with Notre Dame on scholarships for Aboriginal qualification training, so just not certification but bachelor degrees. It's clearly the
45 envy of state school teachers and communities with state schools that such a system doesn't operate in that system and it's an issue we will take up this afternoon when we speak to the Education Department people.

[11.40 am]

50 **MR BORSERIO:** Yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: But we've heard very positive things from people about what Catholic education is doing through the Kimberley in Aboriginal education.

5 **MR BORSERIO:** Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: You mentioned that school transport inquiry, which I hadn't heard about. Could you tell us who is running that?

10 **MR BORSERIO:** It is running from the state Department of Transport; Minister Criddle is the minister responsible for that.

15 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Because issues about transport costs obviously came up quite regularly. I am not sure whether you were here earlier when I was raising it with the Department of Educational Services about subsidies provided in some ways but not in others and there seems to be, at best, a good deal of existing inequity and I would guess that that could be exacerbated if they decided that they would move to a full cost-recovery system instead of extending benefits.

20 **MR BORSERIO:** Yes. It would cause real hardship amongst our rural families - real hardship.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes.

25 **MR KING:** I think it is also an issue of equity access to that transport, as well; that the transport generally is planned to cater for the government school system and not necessarily for the non-government sector, so there is inequity of access to it - is a very crucial issue for us.

30 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Right. The equity issue raised with us was that it is designed to cater for boarding school students rather than for students that are studying on location and who need access to some transport assistance to go on excursions, to take part in inter-school activities, to do all the things that schooling is associated with but who can't get it because they decided to study at home. So I think there are several issues there that we'll be pursuing.

35 **MR KING:** Yes, absolutely.

THE COMMISSIONER: Pat, do you want to - - -

40 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** As we have gone around there has been quite a bit raised about access of Year 11 and 12 students to distance education. Could you just inform us what access Catholic Ed has to distance education for Year 11 and 12 students? Do you access it at all in rural and remote areas?

45 **MR KING:** I find that difficult - I will need to take that question on notice, Pat, and get you some information, but John would have a little bit more than I would.

50 **MR BORSERIO:** My understanding at the moment is that we don't access that a great deal. I guess my answer is constrained by the fact that of the 26 schools that I work with, only two are stand-alone secondary schools and they're large secondary schools that run the whole range of stuff but, as Michael said, we'll get information to you on that.

SISTER RHATIGAN: Thank you. It would be good if you could also if there is a cost issue; we understand there is a cost issue coming up in relation to accessing the units and things like that.

5

MR KING: The reason I am hesitating, Pat, is because there have been some recent changes of not only cost recovery but access to materials, as well, and I would like to get you the latest picture. I believe we are meeting with the secretariat on Wednesday and we'll get that information to you by then.

10

SISTER RHATIGAN: Also, in what you are providing to the Commission have you provided information in relation to the whole scholarship and training scheme for Aboriginal people?

15

MR KING: No, I haven't. I will do that.

SISTER RHATIGAN: I think it would be valuable, would it not - - -

20

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, it would.

MR KING: There are the two scholarship programs; there is the one for tertiary but there's also - for studies - the one to open up access to our schooling, where we offer scholarships to Aboriginal students in the catchment area of secondary schools, but that is a student scholarship to their secondary school. So there are two scholarship programs that we offer.

25

THE COMMISSIONER: It would be very good if you could give us that information as well, please, if you wouldn't mind.

30

MR KING: Yes, we will.

[Racial divisions]

THE COMMISSIONER: I just have one general issue for comment from you. Many of the Catholic schools in Western Australia in the areas we have visited at least tho are on Aboriginal communities and so they are, almost exclusively, Aboriginal schools. There seemed to be issues though in some of the medium-sized country towns where one school - sometimes the government school, sometimes the Catholic school becomes identified as "the black school" and the other one becomes identified as "the white school".

40

I mean, there are some Catholic schools particularly that I visited where - I mean, I suppose I am now reflecting on my own background. I get quite disturbed when I see the Catholic education system becoming predominantly a white education system in some particular parts of Australia. It's an issue that was raised with us in one of the towns that we have been in in the last week. Does the Catholic Education Office have a view about this question of parents choosing a Catholic school because they don't want their kids to go to school with Aboriginal kids, and how is this attitudinal issue addressed through the educational system itself?

45

50

MR KING: I would almost say that you have got the reverse situation here. There are many examples where the Catholic school is the school that Aboriginal parents choose to send their children to and you get the non-Aboriginal Catholics that send

their children to the state school. So it is almost in reverse in the total - where the population is; the major population - if you take Broome or Derby or even a place like Morawa, where the majority of Aboriginal people go into the Catholic school and the non-Aboriginal Catholics go to the state school.

5

The major program that we are trying to deal with that is through our community liaison people, where we employ Aboriginal people to work in the communities to obviously draw the Aboriginal families into the Catholic school and, in the metropolitan and larger country schools, where the Aboriginal population is in the minority, we are looking, if you like, at a promotional program for our schools and the issue of where you get non-Aboriginal people going to the government sector is really one where the parishes themselves have to work with those families to try and draw them back into the Catholic school. It is a complex issue; we don't have a specific policy. We just work with the community people to try and slowly change over time that process.

10

15

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you both very much and thanks for leaving us the material that you have brought, and we would be pleased to receive the rest.

20

MR KING: Thank you.

MR BORSERIO: Thank you.

25

MR REYNOLDS: Again, my apologies for keeping you waiting.

THE COMMISSIONER: Peter Reynolds? We are about 15 minutes behind but thanks for staying around. Would you like to introduce yourself, please, and then just go straight into your comments?

30

MR REYNOLDS: My name is Peter Reynolds. I am the senior lecturer of anthropology and education at Edith Cowan University. In my role I am the coordinator of Aboriginal education within the School of Education and I'm also seconded to the Kurongkurl Katitjin School of Indigenous Australian Studies as a coordinator of the curriculum Teaching and Learning within that particular school, which is the Aboriginal school within the university.

35

I have taught as a primary teacher and a secondary teacher throughout Western Australia and I am the parent of four adult children, who have also at various times taught in primary and secondary schools in rural and remote areas, so I have a family interest as well as a personal one. This is my 44th year of teaching, so my association with Aboriginal education in particular goes back almost half a century and it is my 30th year at Edith Cowan University and its predecessors.

40

[Edith Cowan University programs; Aboriginal education]

45

I want, first of all, to address the question of - just pointing out some of the programs and projects related to rural and remote school education in Western Australia run by Edith Cowan University. In my role as coordinator of Aboriginal education I am associated with the introduction last year of the compulsory core unit in Aboriginal education for early childhood, primary and secondary students, as part of their four-year BEd degree.

50

5 You may recall that this arose out of the Royal Commission into
Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991-1992, which recommended that all teacher
education students be given one unit of Aboriginal studies as part of their pre-
service training. It took a while - 1992 to 1998 - before Edith Cowan got around to
actually including this compulsory unit. Prior to that there had been electives. The
unit, of course, is good in the sense that it does some things. But, clearly, it's quite
inadequate in view of the complexities involved, as it is limited to one semester,
which variously may be 10 to 12 weeks. What I have devised is a combination of
aspects of Aboriginal studies and languages, aspects of Aboriginal schooling and
10 looking at the attitudes of the student teachers.

15 My main focus has been on looking at teacher attitudes in this particular
unit and I am currently doing research by looking at their attitudes both prior and
immediately after the unit, to see what attitudinal changes have occurred as a result
of the experiences which we have been able to build into the unit. It occurs in
third year, so they have already had two years of teacher education and the third
year is now, of course, followed by a fourth year.

20 I think the unit has been very well received but my initial research findings
would suggest that amongst young teachers quite a sizeable proportion see
Aboriginal children as being difficult. They have heard from existing teachers and
from the news media and so forth about the difficulties of Aboriginal education and
I suspect that, as young teachers, they are mainly concerned with establishing
themselves in the classroom as classroom managers and their understanding and
25 interpretation of Aboriginal education tends to be from that perspective; that they
see Aboriginal children as a possible threat to them establishing themselves in the
career that they have chosen.

[Teacher training]

30 The second thing - just the fact that in Edith Cowan University, which is
of course the largest trainer of teachers in this state, being the development from the
old state teachers' colleges through the Western Australian College of Advanced
Education, so we produce the bulk of the teachers at early childhood, primary and
secondary levels, who are practising in either the Catholic system or the state
35 system. As well as this core unit, we have Aboriginal electives in the fourth year
and practising teachers who are wishing to complete their bachelor of education by
external studies or do honours, masters and doctoral degrees, which are available
externally - may do so through Edith Cowan University.

40 As well as this, within the School of Arts we have the facilities to provide
for an Aboriginal studies degree; a degree looking at Aboriginal anthropology,
history, politics, economics, etcetera, type of thing, so most student teachers
manage to combine both the units dealing with teaching, as well as units dealing
with Aboriginal culture and history. One thing I should mention here: I was
45 associated back in 1976 with the introduction of practicums in Aboriginal schools
and it is sad to say that as a result of funding cuts and the takeover of teacher
education by universities and the fight for education faculties to survive within the
university environment that it is no longer possible to have practicums in Aboriginal
schools, and I think that is a very important part of pre-service training.

50 I should broaden this of course to say that, unfortunately, students don't
even get practice any more in rural schools; mainly associated with the cost of

transporting, accommodating and sending out university supervisors to supervise the practice in various country areas. That is one area.

[Aboriginal tertiary education]

5 The second area I just want to touch upon is the fact that Edith Cowan is one of the original 1973 institutions that received money to do something for the university courses for Aboriginal people and I have been associated with those courses now since 1973.

10 These go out to Aboriginal people. As you are probably fully aware, the distribution of Aboriginal people is almost the reverse of the distribution of non-Aboriginal people in Western Australia, although you would have noted from the 1996 census that there has been an enormous increase in the number of Aboriginal people say within the Perth metropolitan area, rising from 25% up to about 35% in
15 a matter of five years; in many cases by more people identifying as Aboriginals rather than - there is, of course, a very definite movement of Aboriginal people to the city.

20 The first thing that we have - we wanted to get Aboriginal people into teaching education courses - that goes back to the middle of the 1970s - and we developed what was then a diploma of teaching course, and we looked at the business of trying to bring Aboriginal people down in Perth. It wasn't terribly
25 successful because of the distance, the movement away from communities, etcetera, the fact that a lot of the people in the north-west of the Kimberleys regarded Perth as rather cold in terms of its climate, and the need for clothing and extra expenses and so forth. So very quickly we looked at the business of trying to provide the teacher education course externally.

[11.55 am]

30 We then realised that a lot of Aboriginal people had missed out, for various reasons, on a secondary education, so we first of all got the university to agree to an Aboriginal student intake test. We allowed Aboriginal people to come in
35 on the basis of a specially designed testing program on the condition that when they were in the university, they would be receiving special counselling and tutoring and so forth. So we set up Aboriginal student centres on the campuses of the university and they are centres of cultural support, ideally - not always reached, of course, but ideally they are centres of Aboriginal music, Aboriginal art, Aboriginal painting, Aboriginal guest speakers, Aboriginal storytelling. But more important from the
40 university's point of view, they are centres of tutoring, and the university agreed to allow Aboriginal people to come into the university on those particular grounds.

45 We then realised that a lot of the Aboriginal people were not particularly prepared for university studies, because many of them had very little secondary education. So we instituted bridging programs and in the latter days of the 1970s Curtin University was given the Commonwealth funding to introduce an internal bridging program and Edith Cowan, at Mount Lawley campus in particular in those
50 days, given the funding to develop an external version, which would be done by students in their home communities. This course is called the Aboriginal University Orientation Course, AUOC, and it's currently running. Even within that, we recognise the need for two levels, a general education level, as well as a university-specific preparation level, so there are two levels of an AUOC course.

5 We realised then that sending out external materials to isolated individuals was not very profitable. So we developed the concept of a regional centre and from 1981, with the opening of a centre in Broome, we developed a program whereby a group of Aboriginal people, who would come through the Aboriginal student intake: would do a compacted bridging program, would then undertake to do the diploma of teaching by external studies, and the idea was that we would have one cohort in a number of regional centres. We realised there wasn't the demand and there wasn't the population to have this as a continuing thing, and so Broome, Kununurra, Port Hedland, Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie, Albany, Esperance - these have all been centres that at one time or another have been used by Edith Cowan University as a local study centre for students who were studying externally.

15 This required the provision of a coordinator and the coordinator would take the students through the external packages. Where we had students still studying individually - and this applied particularly to the bridging program - we were able to get funding from the Commonwealth government, the old Education Department, DEETYA, DETYA - various names and acronyms - to provide us with funding to provide a tutor for that individual person in those remote areas, so that no student was studying alone. We noticed even amongst graduate white students, external studies was not a favoured option and therefore we realised we had to give a lot of support to Aboriginal people, who in many cases didn't have a secondary education or full secondary education, to be facing the loneliness of the long-distance runner by doing external studies. We did this through Commonwealth tutorial assistance and that required also a coordinator.

30 So we now have these degrees that they can bestow, we have a bridging program, we have off-campus centres - currently one at Broome and one at Albany, one at Katanning currently running - but the whole philosophy was to rotate these around. The Broome one, you see, is now going back, after a period of one decade, to look at the training of teachers in that area. Again, faced with the environment that you find in rural and remote areas which are not necessarily conducive to higher secondary or tertiary education, we have on-campus weeks. So we get Commonwealth funding to fly students down and they stay in a hostel near Mount Lawley and they may attend Mount Lawley campus of the university at the beginning of the semester, so that the actual lecturers who wrote the external units can have access to the students.

40 They then go back to their areas to do the courses. About a fortnight before the final exams, the students are brought down on campus again, so they then get some more access to the people who actually mark their assignments. Particularly associated with the scheme are our Aboriginal Education Workers, for both the state and Catholic systems, that they are doing now the bachelor of education course. There are various schemes here, but the most typical one is where an Aboriginal Education Worker - and I know the Catholics call them "teaching assistants", I think - is that right, sister?

SISTER RHATIGAN: Yes.

50 **MR REYNOLDS:** The Aboriginal Education Worker - I'll use that terminology - may be working 50% in the school and then the school is subsidised by the state Education Department or the Commonwealth variously to release the student for

50% while they study the Bachelor of Education course in association with a tutor and those people, the AEWs, also come down to Perth on campus weeks and so forth. Now, I've got some little pamphlets I'll leave, with the details of those. But if I may just make some comments about some of the problems with this program which, as I said, is one of the longest lasting and one of the original - I think Unley Teachers College in South Australia and the Townsville Teachers College in Queensland and Mount Lawley, I think they were the original three in 1973 that received money.

10 First of all, can I just make - in terms of comments and so forth, the financial arrangements for these I think very positive initiatives are a nightmare. It hasn't got any better with the passage of time. It's a mixture of university funding, it's a mixture of special grants from the Commonwealth government tutorial assistance and it's a real nightmare, and I'll just leave it at that. It's a real headache.
15 When I look back at the whole area, when I found out - I went to Noonkanbah a few years ago to interview the elders there about their educational needs and I was shocked to hear that some of the elders at Noonkanbah had to deal with something like 36 different government departments, both Commonwealth, state and local.

20 I feel that Aboriginal education everywhere is being held back by the Australian constitution with the separation of powers between the Commonwealth, the state and local government in the matter of schooling and in the diverse and horrendous sorts of financial schemes which operate there. Just one example you see at Mount Lawley, where this program has now been going for over 20 years. The
25 bulk of the Aboriginal staff we have in the program and the non-Aboriginal staff are on contracts of one to three years, which creates enormous instability, constant turnover of staff and a real headache in terms of trying to maintain the quality of the program that would apply in most other areas of the university.

30 That's the first thing. The second thing is the staffing problems and, on top of that - I think I'm old enough now to be able to make this statement without any fear of retribution and so on - constant university restructuring. This whole business of trying to restructure universities and government departments every two or three years to change staff, affects educational programs. We must recognise that
35 these are evolutionary, they take time. It takes time to build up understandings and so forth. When you have, as you have in Edith Cowan just recently, the whole of the top management being turned upside down, it's very very difficult to maintain that consistency that is so essential. I just think the Australian governments, at various levels, really need to see that we can't change education in the way that you
40 might change a shoe factory or something like that.

The other thing I wanted to mention here with staffing is the lack of a university Aboriginal employment strategy. It saddens me, because I introduced the idea at Edith Cowan back in 1984 and here we are in 1999 and we still haven't got
45 one and with the change of management, it almost means I have to start all over again. As a result of there not being an Aboriginal employment strategy, a lot of the Aboriginal people who we want to have in our programs as role models get affected by general university policies, such as you must have a PhD before you become a lecturer A. Well, most of our Aboriginal staff are at the level of a bachelors or
50 masters degree and as a result, they are not able to get the salaries that they would attract if they were working in St Georges Terrace in one of the airconditioned offices that employ Aboriginal public servants at twice the salary.

5 So I feel that the university Aboriginal employment strategies need to be
looked at in terms of: at the moment we're being given some credence towards
Aboriginality as a qualification for the job. But the universities - and I can't
generalise here, because some do vary - are not prepared to see the Aboriginality
translated into some sort of salary level, but rather uses a sort of a uniform business
of a PhD or you cannot go beyond lecturer A level or something of that nature,
even when you can demonstrate that for the work that they are doing, a PhD is not
necessarily going to be the most appropriate qualification for that particular work
10 that they are doing.

[Parent expectations]

15 Could I just finally make a comment on the Aboriginal side and if I then
may make some more general comments on the rural education. One of the main
factors offending children's attitudes to schooling - and you've no doubt heard this
before - is the parents' own appreciation of schooling. We need to lift the
appreciation of what schooling provides amongst adults in order to help children
and one of the things that I stress in the Aboriginal education unit amongst the
largely non-Aboriginal student population is that they have to see themselves as
community development workers and that teaching is only a part of that broader
20 concept.

I tell them that Aboriginal education requires them, first of all, to be good
25 teachers and therefore I feel that we must look into how we might attract
experienced people into this specialisation, rather than rely, as we have been doing,
on the energy and idealism of young people. It's just so complex a situation in the
rural and remote areas that the lack of specific knowledge of areas like anthropology
and linguistics is such that enthusiasm and idealism may not be all that's required.

30 **[Teacher recruitment]**

Can I just finish, if I may, with a couple of comments on it in general
about rural and remote and not specifically Aboriginal. First of all, attracting
experienced and specialist teachers away into these non-metropolitan areas: I know,
35 from my own family's involvement here, how difficult it has been. In actual fact the
difficulties are such that my four children are no longer teachers because they have
been attracted elsewhere by better conditions and higher salaries, so I feel that there
needs to be some attention given to how we go. When I started teaching, we were
forced to go to the country in return for a bursary that we received in mid-1950 for
teacher education programs and there was no opting out of that, you had to teach for
40 two years in the country.

Secondly, we've got to do something about attracting more males into
teaching. It's becoming critical, particularly in Aboriginal education, but also I
45 think when you're looking at the high death rate, suicide rate, amongst males in
country areas, we need to look at the number of males who are teaching. I'll give
you an example for Newman, where my daughter teaches. It's a mining town up in
the very dry areas of the north-west, the eastern Pilbara. It's a tough town. The
miners are not highly educated but they're very highly paid, so the material welfare
side of things is well catered for in the sense of four-wheel drive vehicles and rather
50 good airconditioned houses and all those sorts of things. There are three schools in
Newman, two primary schools. One primary school has two men and 28 women,
another primary school has two men and 23 women and the high school has

30 teachers, eight of whom are male and 22 are female. So that you have really virtually got no men left in the primary sector in that tough town and yet half the school population is male.

5

[12.10 pm]

10 It also equally applies in many of the areas where you have got Aboriginal schools too. You've got an absence of males - male models, and I need not draw your attention to the importance of Sesame Street and how that grew up in America in the early 1960s and why there are so many African-American men on the Sesame Street programs, as a means of providing male models to young urban blacks in the United States, and particularly the absence of male teachers almost entirely now in American primary schools. We're heading the same way unless we do something about attracting males.

15

20 I teach this Aboriginal education unit to 200 students at this semester, another 200 next semester. Out of the 200 students, early childhood primary this semester there are only 10 males coming through the system. When I go to the secondary there are more males there but the males are concentrated very much in the technology and enterprise area type of thing. There are very few males in the English, social sciences, even in the maths and science courses in the secondary sector type of thing.

[Rural secondary education]

25

30 The third thing I wanted to mention - and again you probably had this, but just a general comment - because I started out as a primary teacher and I switched to a secondary teacher at the time when secondary education was being made compulsory, about early 1960, late 1950s. I think we've got to recognise that there is an acceptance in the community, both the urban and rural, of the benefits of primary education but there is less acceptance of the benefits of secondary education. It's appreciated less generally in the country areas, and the link between secondary education and financial rewards, except in the very obvious cases of medicine, law and engineering, is not so obvious. I don't know what we can do about it but we've got to do all we can to provide a much more stimulating intellectual environment in our rural high schools.

35

40 Part of this is the fault of universities. Again, I just speak from a long experience. When I look at the BEd degree, I find that the two-year teacher certificate has been turned into a three-year diploma of teaching, into a four-year BEd degree, and what has come about is more extensive attention being given to teaching theory, particularly to class and school management, and not nearly so much to content studies. I feel this is a loss. Recently I was on practice supervision in a junior primary school and I saw children being taught by a man, who had opted to go to early childhood, who was a graduate in physics and chemistry from John Curtin University. The grade 1s were eating out of his hand because of his knowledge of science, physics and chemistry; it was so exciting to be in that classroom. But the ordinary run of primary teachers, of course, do not have the background to stimulate the children, and particularly I would imagine in the country areas as well more so.

45

50 So I believe that we do need to look at the structure of the BE degree. There have been no end of inquiries - I can't rattle them off but over the last 20

years since universities have taken over teacher education there has been inquiry after inquiry after inquiry, and nothing has been done, type of thing. The universities themselves have not been particularly receiving of teacher education. They'd seen it as less academic. They have medicine and law and so forth, established professional schools. But just recently, for instance, in a number of universities, faculties of education have been submerged into mega faculties where the distinctiveness of professional training has not been given enough attention, and I feel that education is suffering as a result of its poor status within the university environment.

But if we're going to do something about creating a stimulating environment in rural areas, then we've got to be looking at the background knowledge of the teachers who are going into those areas. I, just by the way, mention that rural sociology and any courses dealing with rural education have virtually vanished from the universities. We do have down on our Bunbury campus of Edith Cowan University a department there, part of the faculty of arts, called rural sociology, but it's away from the bulk of our teacher education programs which are dealt with in the city campuses of the university. I think I have mentioned the importance of having a rural practicum, of getting people to actually have one practice a fortnight, three weeks or whatever, in a rural environment or a remote environment.

[Aboriginal education]

Could I also mention that Edith Cowan University was associated with trying to prepare a thousand Aboriginal teachers between 1980 and 1990. We didn't get so far but what was so sad was that so many of our Aboriginal teachers have been attracted to much better salaries and conditions outside, and a lot of them are sitting in St Georges Terrace rather than out in rural and remote areas type of thing. Part of the problem is one of cultural differences. I got shocked when one of our young Nyoongah teachers was actually sent up to the Kimberleys to teach in a state school and the local community did not like him. They preferred a white teacher rather than a Nyoongah from the south-west. So there are all sorts of cultural and linguistic factors that need to be looked at as well.

Finally, if I could make this comment. When I look at the documents, the human rights documents, that were supplied to me, I'm concerned about the fuzziness of the definitions. I've tended to use the word "schooling" because I don't see schooling as quite the same as education. I think when you're writing a report and so on, we do need to be conscious of the distinction between socialisation in the broadest extent with education as, if you like, a circle within socialisation, and schooling a smaller circle within that framework. But as an anthropologist I'm a bit doubtful about some of the meanings of the word "culture" that is used in some of these things.

Essentially to me the education that we are providing is assimilationist. I would argue that perhaps it can be no other because if you're looking at employment - and Aboriginal and rural people are looking for employment - it is going to be within a technologically oriented and somewhat corporatised society. Therefore if people are going to match schooling with employment outcomes, then we have got to recognise that this is some sort of an assimilationist program, and let's not be dishonest about it by pretending that we can cater for all these sort of

things. Schooling is an enculturation as well, and people's cultures are changing as a result of their exposure to the practice.

5 Just to give one trite example, and I'll finish there. In our own western civilisation of say the conflict between science and religion which often creates creationist-type science course in fundamentalist Christian schools, we're aware that we haven't yet resolved in our own western civilisation the differences between science and religion. How much more have we got to think about when we're
10 dealing with Aboriginals, where even taking what you might regard as a simple geography lesson and saying, "That hill over there is the result of geomorphic processes of sedimentation" or whatever, when for the Aboriginal people that hill is something that was created by ancestral Dreamtime people. We need to sensitise.

15 My son, who no longer teaches but was teaching biology up at Karratha Senior High School in the north-west, where he has a number of Aboriginal students coming through, found that before he could teach biology it was necessary for him to go to Roebourne, the large Aboriginal community nearby, to find what was the traditional Aboriginal understanding of nature. With totemic religious traditions and so forth, a lot of Aboriginal people see themselves as sharing the
20 same spirit as some of the animals, so he had to be careful that when you apply western biological frameworks for Aboriginal children to learn western biology you are in a sense undermining some of the belief structures.

25 So when you look at documents that say every child should have a good schooling, as it were, a good education, but that their culture must also - it's a very difficult thing to ask young teachers, to be able to breach those two areas of looking at spiritual understandings of nature and so forth with the teachings of western science and western biology, which in themselves of course are more likely to lead to employment of people as a result of that schooling experience. So I will finish
30 there by just making that comment as an example but there are plenty of others. In the area of health education there are long-standing spiritual understandings about what causes illness and what causes health, and therefore we're sending out teachers to teach health education in a very western sense.

35 Can I just finish on a historical note. When I started teaching 44 years ago, many of the tribal elders were suspicious of us, because as you know WA state schools were not able in a sense to take on Aboriginal children until after 1948. It was a long time, in the 1950s, 1960s, before schools were actually built in many remote areas type of thing. The tribal elders were suspicious, particularly with
40 women teachers coming in, because knowledge was a male function. In a sense they were a little bit forgiving of male whites coming in to teach this new knowledge, as it were, but very suspicious of females coming in. Now when I go there - it's quite interesting - tribal elders who see their children exposed to videos coming into their communities, and to transistor radios, are saying, "Can you help us? Can you
45 schoolteachers help us to preserve our culture? Where previously 40 years ago you were coming to undermine our culture, now something else is undermining our culture" - western commercial media and so forth coming in so easily into remote communities.

50 They are no longer remote, and this is where the definition of remote has to be questioned. When people can get videos from Canberra so readily, where

they've got their own television stations, radio stations and so forth, they are feeling under threat. So I'll finish there.

5 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thank you, Peter, that was great. The historical overview was extremely important. There was a lot of stuff I had not placed in that context or simply didn't know. So thank you very much for that. I haven't got any questions. Pat, have you?

10 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** No.

THE COMMISSIONER: Good. Thanks very much. We'll adjourn now and we're back at 1 o'clock with the Education Department on next.

(Luncheon adjournment)

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[1.01 pm]

20 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thanks very much for coming. I'm Chris Sidoti, Human Rights Commissioner. Sister Pat Rhatigan is the Co-Commissioner for this inquiry for Western Australia. Could you just start by introducing yourselves for the tape, please, and then making whatever comments you wanted to.

25 **MS JOHNSTON:** I am Jayne Johnston, acting executive director of educational programs - as of this morning.

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THE COMMISSIONER: Congratulations.

MS JOHNSTON: Thank you.

30 **MR JARVIS:** Neil Jarvis. I am the acting executive director of business and resources.

MR HOME: Stephen Home. I am the executive director of human resources for the Education Department.

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THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Well, you can make any comments at this stage you'd like to make and then we can - - -

[School and student numbers]

40 **MR JARVIS:** First of all, we'd just like to in some ways state the obvious, because sometimes the obvious gets overlooked. So just to give you some basic figures, there are 266,000 students in WA and 87,000 of those are non-metropolitan, so that's 33%. There are approximately 770 schools. We have a couple of schools in the process of closure, by the way. 342 of those schools, or 45% of the schools are
45 in non-metropolitan areas. Depending upon the definitions applied, up to 26% of WA's government schools can be classified as remote. So, if you like, of that 45% which are non-metropolitan up to 26% could be classified as remote according to the Education Department.

50 We have got a land area we service of 2.5 million square kilometres, with a population base of 1.8 million as of June 98. I think this gives us an unparalleled virtually - in the Western world in particular - distribution of population per land

area. The distances are great. The communities we serve are endowed with different cultures, locations, landscapes and natural and human resources and. In particular, we are very cognisant of the fact that for a large number of our remote Aboriginal communities English is a second language, and that's an issue that we have been
5 dealing with in quite a concentrated way for quite some time.

So the Education Department recognises that this is quite a unique challenge that we face here in terms of the needs of our remote and rural communities. We have a School of Isolated and Distance Education which services
10 those students who can't attend a school, and some students who can attend a school but who can't get the full curriculum range. So one of the ways we supplement and complement the curriculum offerings in small remote schools is that the School of Isolated and Distance Education services those students as well to try and guarantee that they have a reasonable range of curriculum available to them. Currently the
15 School of Isolated and Distance Education has 760 students enrolled with them.

THE COMMISSIONER: 760?

MR JARVIS: Yes - full-time students enrolled with them. That's in rural and
20 remote areas, by the way. They have a lot more students, but a lot of their students are actually also metropolitan-based adults. We have a country incentives package for teachers in our remote schools that Stephen Home will be able to give you details of later, which has been quite successful, and I think across Australia is considered to be reasonably generous - so generous that the Northern Territory for
25 example think it's too generous. So that's the remote teaching service. We also have a country incentives package which deals with teachers in non-remote schools as defined as remote, but schools that are on the Outer Wheatbelt and places like that.

[Rural student performance]

30 Just to give you some broader background. About, I think, four years ago or five years ago, there was a major report commissioned by the present government called the Tomlinson report. All of the results of our testing programs since the Tomlinson report have fundamentally supported the basic proposition put forward in the Tomlinson report that most educational performance can be explained
35 by socioeconomic factors and cultural background and in particular English as a second language, as it is with some Aboriginal communities as a cultural influence, as opposed to distance as a factor. So the distance factor doesn't seem to be the key issue. The key issue seems to be the cultural background of the student and the socioeconomic status of the student, and of course distance can exacerbate that
40 because the cost of living in some of these places - as you are most probably aware - is very high.

We last year conducted literacy and numeracy tests - the results of which, by the way, are in the public domain - of every Year 3 student in Western Australia,
45 and those literacy and numeracy tests support the basic propositions of the Tomlinson report in terms of what the key variables are. By far the poorest performances were in the Kimberley region, the Pilbara region, and the Kalgoorlie region, and it was interesting to note that the performance of students, for example, in the Wheatbelt type region based in Northam was spot on the state normal curve,
50 so that the performance issue is an issue which is remote - you know, there is a real remote dimension to that, which we're aware of.

As far as retention rates are concerned, in 1998 the retention rate for non-metropolitan students in Year 12 was 46% and the retention rate for metropolitan students was 66% so there is a 20% gap there. The Education Department is obviously looking at those figures and trying to improve them. They are Year 12 retention rates, by the way. Retention from Year 10 to Year 11 is much higher than that. Many students do leave school during Year 11 and Year 12. They get jobs and so on.

One of the major reasons why we have found that our retention rates aren't as high as we thought is that youth employment rates in the state are most probably the highest in Australia, so there is a fair degree of job availability in terms of explaining some of those retention rates, but they're still quite low. In 1997 - we don't have the 98 figures - the retention rate for Aboriginal students was 20%, compared to 63% for non-Aboriginal students. That data comes from an Aboriginal Education Branch 1997 survey. So retention rate into Year 11 and 12 for Aboriginal students is a particular concern for the Education Department.

Under participation, Aboriginal students attend primary school 84% of the time compared to 93% for the non-Aboriginal students, so school attendance is a focus for the Education Department in terms of our Aboriginal student population. And Aboriginal students attend the compulsory years of secondary schooling 81% of the time - that was primary, the first figure I gave you, by the way. The secondary figure is Aboriginal students attend the compulsory years of secondary schooling 81% of the time, compared to 92% for the non-Aboriginal population. All these figures come from that same Aboriginal Education Branch 1997 survey, which is also in the public domain.

In order to improve participation and performance levels of rural and remote students to match the statewide levels, the Education Department is implementing a number of major strategies. One is trying a number of strategies to attract and retain staff, which Stephen Home will give you more details on. Another one is improving access to an appropriate curriculum, and Jayne will be able to talk about that, and we're also trying to look at the degree to which we best use our resources in terms of the provision of facilities in rural and remote schools. So just as an introductory overview, I thought they may be some interesting statistics for you.

[Resources and funding]

In terms of facilities and resources - and then we will move to curriculum and HR - country and rural schools continue to cost the department significantly more to run than metropolitan schools. So the costs are more expensive. For example, the average cost per student for country primary schools is \$3,337. For metropolitan primary schools it's \$2,889. For country students the average cost per student is \$4,539, compared to \$4,057 for metropolitan students. That was part of a submission we made to the Commonwealth Grants Commission review in November of 1996, so they're 96 figures.

An examination of the costs of providing schools shows that it is related to isolation factors, not just school size. Increased costs associated with providing services to a dispersed population are: attracting and keeping appropriate staff - that is a major cost; provision of and access to professional development is a major cost for that staff; freight costs are very large; the cost of transferring staff. Every time

we move staff around the state it costs us a very large sum of money, and if you wanted some detail on that, Stephen Home would be able to give it to you. Maintenance and minor works costs are much higher in the country than in the city because there's no contractors out there, in many cases, who are prepared to do the job. Communications and utilities costs are significantly higher.

As an aside, in particular telecommunications tariffing for Internet access, for example, where schools have to pay STD rates as opposed to, in a large town or in Perth where schools can have access to the Internet at a local call cost - is tending to create in Australia a two-tiered society - those who get access to the Internet and the on-line world at local call cost, and those who don't - and that's of major concern to the Education Department. With all education departments, we are making representations to the federal government on this matter right now, actually.

What are we doing? We have differential site and distance variables built into the school grant that goes to schools, so that schools get more money according to these factors. We have got a series of district offices throughout the state which try and provide support structures to schools. There is a district in the Kimberley which actually has three district offices - one at Broome, one at Fitzroy Crossing, and one at Kununurra - to try and supply backup and support for those schools. We do have a wider differential resourcing formula which in particular takes into account socioeconomic status, but that applies across the whole state and is not just peculiar to rural and remote. And of course we have the Country Areas Program from the Commonwealth government which applies to rural and remote schools where they get extra money as a result of that federal program.

[Information technology]

In terms of information and technology, I have just talked about the STD services. The department, by the way, has been funding these schools for five hours' Internet access per day - those schools that have to pay STD connection calls. So we're trying to compensate them for that disadvantage. It's a very expensive compensation though. All of our allocation for learning technologies has also got the differential variables in it for distance and so on. We've been trialing delivery via satellite to very remote schools.

[1.15 pm]

For example, with Telstra we've just piloted the delivery of broadband on-line services to Oombulgurri from Perth very successfully with two gig down and 528 K backup - very good quality. Now the only issue is the tariff costs of using such technology, but it looks like it might be around the corner.

We're trying to put all our distance education materials into multimedia and electronic mode so that this population doesn't get trapped in some sort of paper based backward sort of an educational environment. We're connecting all of our schools to what we call a wide area network but you might be interested to know that at last count there are 45 schools in rural and remote Western Australia that Telstra cannot supply a reliable connection to so that they can access reliably a wide area network with Internet and other capacity. That's a problem obviously for the whole of Western Australia.

The state government, by the way, is here investigating a major initiative for satellite delivery of telecommunications to all remote communities in Western Australia, so that they can service their police stations and hospitals and schools. That's got a lot of promise. I expect a public announcement soon.

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THE COMMISSIONER: That's on a trial basis, is it?

MR JARVIS: No, that will be a permanent contract with Telstra or someone. Under Schools Facilities and Services - I think I've covered most of the information. We've extended the provision of airconditioning - sorry, air-cooling would be better because it's mainly evaporative that we use. All of the remote areas are now air-cooled and we're now down into a lot of the Wheatbelt that in the past wasn't defined as needing it in terms of whatever - there's a comfort index that the Weather Bureau have got.

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MR HOME: Relative strain index.

MR JARVIS: Relative strain index that the Weather Bureau have got. We're actually extending it now down to areas fairly close to the metropolitan area that get very hot in terms of air-cooling and there's a major program to do that. I think I'll stop there just as a run but they're some of the sorts of facilities and service issues that we're dealing with. Steve, do you want to take over?

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[Rural and remote teachers]

MR HOME: Okay, thank you. I'll give you some demographic information in relation to the human resources of the Education Department and then touch on some of the issues that particularly arise in relation to rural and remote schools. The total teacher workforce employed by the Education Department is 20,412: 14,349 or 70% female; 6063 or 30% male. There are 13,364 classroom teachers in metropolitan schools or 65.4% of the department's total school based teacher workforce.

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The combined average age of all metropolitan school classroom teachers is 42.8 years. The number of school based employees in country schools is 6817: 4714 female or 69%; 2103 male, 31%, representing 33.4% of EDWA's total school based teacher workforce. There are 5642 classroom teachers in country schools meaning that 27.6% of the Department's total school based teacher workforce are country classroom teachers.

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Of these 5,642 country classroom teachers, 4.1% of country classroom teachers or 230 teachers are first-year graduates. I think that's a relevant statistic to give in that there's often a perception that the country is over-represented in the sense of having a lot of first year or inexperienced teachers, but of the graduate pool from last year there's 230 teachers employed in country schools. The average age of graduate country classroom teachers is 31.1 years - again an interesting statistic in that the demographic of graduates coming out of universities is significantly changing, increasingly female and increasingly older than previously.

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95.9% of country classroom teachers or 5412 are not first-year graduates. The combined average age of all country classroom teachers is 37.9 years. Neil just made reference to the remote teaching service or remote schools. We have a number of schools that are designated remote and are covered by a separate industrial

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agreement and separate conditions and form part of what is deemed the remote teaching service. The number of school based employees in these schools is 256. There are 203 classroom teachers in remote schools, the difference being Aboriginal Education Workers and so forth.

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Of the 203 remote school classroom teachers 10.8% or 22 are first-year graduates. The average age of graduate remote school classroom teachers is 28.5 years. Conversely then, 89.2% of remote classroom teachers are non-first-year graduates. The combined average age of all remote school classroom teachers is 33 years. The department has a substantial number of part-time teachers - 7523 - but I don't think the statistics show any particular distinction between country and metropolitan teachers. 29.9% of part-time classroom teachers are located in country schools, which is approximate to the number of teachers that the country schools bear to the overall population of teachers. The average age of country part-time classroom teachers is 40.6 years.

Another issue frequently raised in relation to our teaching workforce in particular is the number of temporary teachers. Temporary teachers are teachers who do not have what is deemed permanency with the Education Department. Temporary teachers are engaged on an annual contract ordinarily, sometimes less, and each year are re-engaged on a new temporary contract subject to performance and the availability of positions. 28% or 5661 teachers of the Department's total school based teacher workforce are employed on a temporary basis. 58% of temporary classroom teachers work in metropolitan schools and 40% work in country schools, the difference being the remote teaching service. The average age of metropolitan temporary classroom teachers is 39 years. The average age of country temporary classroom teachers is 35 years.

2.2% of the Department's total school based teacher workforce are Aboriginal. 25% of Aboriginal classroom teachers or 114 work in metropolitan schools. The average age of Aboriginal classroom teachers in metropolitan schools is 40.3 years. 63% of Aboriginal classroom teachers work in country schools. 12% of Aboriginal classroom teachers or 54 work in remote schools.

In terms of the graduate availability, this is an issue which has certainly come close to our minds this year. This year we have had considerable difficulty in filling vacancies in rural and country areas. That has been fairly widely reported in the media in this state. Generally we would run, based on normal turnover - at any particular point in time we would have up to 15 vacancies in our system. This year we have probably averaged between 30 and 40. Part of the reason behind that is that this year, because of a change in the universities to a four-year degree and therefore a reduced graduate cohort available to us, we have had difficulty in attracting metropolitan-trained teachers to a number of our rural schools.

One of the problems that gives rise to that is that, whereas in the early 1990s some 60% of graduates seeking employment with the Education Department would express that they were available statewide, at the moment only 15% of graduates are prepared to nominate themselves as available statewide. That has led to a situation where there is a very large number of qualified teachers in the metropolitan area registered with the department seeking work but not prepared to take jobs in most rural and remote locations. In particular this year we have had a difficulty in the Goldfields. Traditionally, we have had difficulty in the Pilbara but

this year the Goldfields has been certainly the most difficult area for us to attract people to.

5 In 1994 50% of graduates were employed in country locations. This proportion has increased to 66% in 1995, 69% in 1996 and 75% in 1997. What I mean by that is, of the graduates the Education Department employs, whereas half of them were employed to take up country positions five years ago, 75% are now employed to take up country positions. The department has always faced a problem in relation to attracting teachers to rural and remote localities and over a number of 10 years a range of initiatives have been put in place to seek to address that.

[Remote Teaching Service incentives]

15 The remote teaching service has a quite separate industrial agreement - state workplace agreement and, soon to be finalised, a federal certified agreement which covers the terms and conditions of people employed in that service. It provides a range of substantial benefits above and beyond the terms and conditions enjoyed by teachers generally. They include substantial increases in remuneration, salary increases of up to \$11,000 per annum for someone teaching in the RTS, 20 rent-free accommodation, the payment of all relocation costs, a guarantee of permanency after a period of three years in an RTS school. They get an additional airfare back to Perth above that enjoyed by other people in country areas and additional leave which amounts to up to an additional 22 weeks after serving four years in the remote teaching service.

25 That agreement has been in place for some four years. It has certainly made it much easier for the Department to attract people to remote teaching service schools, and these are primarily very small and isolated Aboriginal communities. But it has not provided all the answers. The existence of that agreement and the terms and conditions of that agreement are not of themselves sufficient to ensure 30 that every year we have a large number of people willing and available to take those positions up.

The difficulties in staffing, as I indicated, extend beyond just the RTS schools, and there's some 30 in the remote teaching service. For this year we have 35 put in place a country incentives package which applies in relation to schools that have been deemed or titled "difficult to staff", and a number of factors determine whether schools fit the criteria for that. Those criteria include staff turnover, difficulty in recruiting people to those schools, the facilities available at that particular community, and so forth.

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[1.30 pm]

45 Under that package some additional 1,800 teachers have become eligible - sorry, 1,900 teachers have become eligible for benefits, which include a guarantee of permanency after three years, additional remuneration, which is currently being negotiated and hopefully soon finalised with the state School Teachers Union, or the Australian Education Union, and additional transfer points.

50 The transfer points relate to what has been the cornerstone of the department's human resource deployment strategy, if you like, and has been in place for some 10 years. Schools are allocated transfer points based primarily on their isolation and distance from Perth, and teachers serving time in those schools

pick up a number of transfer points for every year they serve in those schools. The highest number of points that apply under that system would be three for a community like Wyndham, down to one for a metropolitan school. So people accrue transfer points at all schools.

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The transfer points then form the basis of the filling of vacancies that appear in schools at the end of each year. Every year we determine where positions are becoming vacant by virtue of resignation, retirement, or whatever, and those jobs are filled on the basis of the nominations by teachers themselves, teachers who wish a transfer, as to their preferences, and then those positions will be filled based on the person with the highest number of points that has nominated the school that has that vacancy then being transferred into that school.

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So for a number of years that system has operated, but that system has not operated as well as any of the parties which negotiated it would really have hoped. That is by virtue of the fact that although people can accrue a substantial number of transfer points by serving in a country area, particularly an isolated country area, there is a very limited number of vacancies that actually emerge in the more desired locations. We have an exit rate in the Department of approximately 2 to 3%, which is relatively low. That will increase in future years as the baby boomers, if you like, reach retirement age.

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But there is a bit of a gridlock in the south-west corner where most people ultimately wish to return, and increasingly we're hearing, "There's not much point going out to the country and earning all these transfer points if you haven't got any vacancies for which you can use them." That has created certainly some debate and some tension within our workforce and people are increasingly indicating reluctance to go to the country unless they can be guaranteed that they won't be stranded there, meaning, therefore, that they expect that we'll be able to return them within some reasonable period of time to a coastal location or to the metropolitan area. That is undoubtedly a difficulty for us.

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As the statistics which Mr Jarvis provided to you indicate, the vast majority of our schools and our jobs are in the metropolitan area. People returning to those locations don't vacate them; they generally retire. Once someone has done their service in the country and returned to the metropolitan area they rarely go back to the country, and therefore, without vacancies emerging in Perth, the people in the country have restricted access to positions back in the metropolitan area.

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We certainly believe that mobility and the ability and willingness to serve in the country as being a major - actually an essential - characteristic of people we engage, and we clearly wish to be able to create a situation where those people can be provided with a right of return. Other jurisdictions have tried guaranteed rights of return and ended up with more teachers back in their metropolitan area than they actually have jobs for. Clearly we have a very difficult but important balance to strike between guaranteeing those people or trying to maximise the opportunities of people to return to Perth but without creating a situation where we guarantee them something that goes beyond our means in terms of available positions.

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Quite a number of strategies are in place, apart from those that I've mentioned to you, to assist in attracting people to country locations. I have to confess it's somewhat exasperating to face the difficulties as we have this year in

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attracting people to places like Kalgoorlie which - I'm not sure if they fit the definition of rural and remote within your terms of reference; many people wouldn't deem them as such. But we have a substantial number of graduates and qualified teachers sitting in Perth - well, living in Perth and refusing to move to a place like Kalgoorlie. If we've got a problem in Kalgoorlie you can see that getting someone to Laverton and Meekatharra and more isolated and remote places again is a difficult task for us.

We will continue to look at means to redress that, but clearly it's a fairly fundamental obligation of the Department and a requirement by me in my position to ensure that we have sufficient staff in all of these locations to be able to take classes of children. Notwithstanding the vacancies that we've had this year, we have had qualified teachers in front of these children but in many cases they have been local relief teachers whose preference is not to work full-time but who are doing so this year in order to ensure that we have teachers in front of the classrooms. A consequence of that has been that local teachers have had very limited access to relief and therefore haven't been able to take professional development opportunities and other things. So there's been a number of problems that arise from it and which we're treating as fairly serious issues for us.

As I indicated earlier, we had a reduced cohort of graduates this year, which has highlighted this problem, but I think what it has done is reveal something that more fundamentally was appearing or emerging prior to this year and which maybe the large number of graduates from university have disguised somewhat, and that is the increased reluctance of people to go and teach in the country. Perhaps if we hadn't had the reduced cohort this year we would have filled all our vacancies. It would have been difficult to fill some of them and it takes many calls to many people on our books in order to fill them, but we probably wouldn't have had the number of vacancies which has led to a lot of attention being focused on us this year.

But there is something fundamental changing in terms of the demographic of our graduates and the attitudes of our graduates. The increased proportion of women and the increased proportion of older people graduating with teaching qualifications means that there is a reduced mobility and reduced capacity or willingness to take up positions in rural areas, and that is of serious concern to us. We have devoted considerable resources to seeking to rectify that.

I've probably taken more than my amount of time, but I can ensure that some of the strategies we're putting in place are in the written submission that we will submit to you before the end of September. Some of those strategies really go to actually trying to get people out into these country locations and experiencing them. There is a considerable amount of anecdotal evidence that people were refusing to go to these sorts of locations without actually knowing what they're like, and we're looking at moves to actually take students, teacher students, out to these locations on practicums, because the anecdotal evidence has been that once these people do something like this a significant proportion of them change their attitudes towards these country communities and are prepared to go back.

We recently launched a joint initiative in Kalgoorlie with the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, the State Department of Commerce and Trade, and involving considerable members of the community to fund practicums for students to go to

5 Kalgoorlie. That presents us with something of a dilemma in the sense that although it's something we see that we need to do to increase the likelihood that people are going to take up country positions we don't see ourselves as being in the business of training university students, but that's effectively what we're doing by having to inject funds into initiatives such as this. We're actually sponsoring to some extent the education and the training of university students in order to address some of the problems we have in getting them to make themselves available for country schools.

10 If that's okay, I'll leave it there. I'll take any questions, if we have time, and pass over to Jane.

15 **MS JOHNSTON:** The area that I'll talk about is essentially the curriculum and I'll start by outlining the broad initiatives that we're implementing at the moment in that area and try to make the connection to the provision for rural and remote communities, then I'll briefly talk about the provision for students with disabilities, and then spend some time talking about Aboriginal education.

[Curriculum]

20 We are in the first year of a five-year implementation of a new curriculum framework which has been developed really by the curriculum council for all schools in Western Australia, but the Education Department has had a major input into that development, and alongside that we have a framework of outcomes and standards.

25 The curriculum framework really - I mean, one of the driving forces behind the curriculum framework and the development of the outcomes and standards framework was a social justice sort of initiative in that we have moved as an organisation from in a sense a view that we provided for equity across our system by having equitable inputs, and we've shifted to really understanding that the real measure is on outcomes and how well those inputs produce the outcomes for students. So the curriculum framework and the outcomes and standards framework are essentially about describing the key outcomes that all kids have a right to achieve as a result of coming to our schools.

35 In the development of the curriculum framework and outcomes and standards framework there was quite significant - in fact, I think very significant - community input, and the Aboriginal community, probably for the first time in terms of really a mainstream curriculum development, were heavily involved in the consultation, and so we believe that what we have is - as much as one can make this claim - an inclusive framework.

45 Now, the trick then is to actually develop our schools and what goes on in our schools in a way in which those outcomes really can be achieved by all students, because we all understand that students come to school with different backgrounds and learn in different ways and in different rates, and so if we have a view that we've got outcomes which are significant for all kids, then the real, I think, sort of pressure is on our schools and our teachers and the support that is provided to them in order that that can be a realistic achievement. Now, we've got five years of implementing this as a policy framework for curriculum and beyond that we'll be certainly, I think, continuing the sort of support that will lead to those sorts of outcomes.

5 The sorts of initiatives that the Education Department has in place for its schools is firstly a curriculum improvement program, which is a very substantial support program, which is really about in-servicing the teachers who we already have in our schools. That's run mostly through the districts. In each district there are curriculum managers and curriculum improvement officers, including of course in our country districts, who have a role in working with the schools in implementing these changes.

[1.45 pm]

10

[Students at risk]

15 Along with the curriculum improvement program there's also a significant project and policy addressing students at educational risk, which is almost a necessary co-initiative with developing an outcomes approach, where, if we genuinely believe that all students should be able to achieve these outcomes of significance, then we clearly do need to have the means by which we can address individual needs and the needs of particular groups, and particularly those groups who have traditionally been disadvantaged by our curriculum provision. So that is a major initiative which again works through district provision and central provision, and also schools can access money directly.

25 One of the other reasons, apart from the social justice reason and there are a few others, why we've moved in this direction in curriculum is also about, I guess we call it devolution - but really trying to, in curriculum terms, make the curriculum at the chalk face more relevant to the students who are receiving it. So in the past our curriculum provision and policy has been at a level of detail that has, I don't think, stopped teachers from making sort of good decisions about what kids need in their local communities, but at a policy level hasn't particularly supported that view, whereas the outcomes and standards framework and the curriculum framework that we are putting in place very much shifts the locus of control, in terms of how these outcomes are achieved, to the local community and teachers.

30 **[Early childhood education]**

35 Of course, with that comes a huge shift in responsibility as well and this is why we have the level of support at district and school level that we think is necessary to achieve that change. I guess the other major initiative is in the early childhood years where we have changed our entry age for students and we also now have a four-year-old provision and five-year-old provision. So at the moment the provision is for two half-days for all four-year-olds in the state, a guaranteed provision, and four full days for five-year-olds, and by 2001 that will move to four half-days for four-year-olds and five full days for five-year-olds.

45 This brings us in line, I think, with most of the other states in Australia. But that has been, and still is, quite a huge sort of initiative. When I talk about the Aboriginal education I think there are some significant achievements that are already showing in terms of the focus on the early years.

50 I'm not going to touch on issues like the provision of the curriculum because Neil mentioned side and some of those initiatives. But clearly I think that some of the issues that have already been talked about clearly do impact on the capacity of the Department to be able to maintain the quality of education that we

5 want to in remote and rural communities. But I think probably in the last five years what has been achieved by the Department is really a much better understanding of the complexities of those issues and how we might use more creative ways of ensuring that students get the access to the curriculum, and that teachers indeed are being developed in ways which mean that the kids are getting the level of access that we deem desirable.

[Students with disabilities]

10 I'll move on now to the students with disabilities. For students with intellectual disabilities there is essentially four strategies or four means of provision that we use in Western Australia. One is that we have education support schools, and I think these are only located in the metropolitan area. Yes, I'm getting a nod. We also have education support centres which are generally co-located with a
15 mainstream school, and that's where we would have generally about 20 or more students with ed support needs. Many schools have education support units, so that's where we have less than 20 students and they again are part of a mainstream school but have special provision in terms of staffing and support. Then the fourth strategy is students with disabilities who are included in the mainstream classrooms.

20 For students in rural and remote localities, and we do have centres and units out in rural localities, clearly the issue for ed support particularly in remote communities is one that needs to be addressed through the mainstream provision. For students with intellectual disabilities in both rural and remote areas, they are treated more favourably in terms of the teaching and non-teaching staffing resources
25 than their counterparts in the mainstream. So one of the mechanisms we use to support those students is through extra staffing provision.

The second strategy we have is what we call a district service centre for learning difficulties, which is based in Perth but one of its key roles is to assist rural
30 schools with the provision of specialised equipment, support to teachers in developing individualised programs for students, curriculum adjustment where it's required, the support in selecting suitable teacher aides and building modification where that's required. Schools also can access financial grants to assist with the provision of special needs for these students.

35 A third strategy is that each district has a student services coordinator and those people, along with psychologists and social workers in districts, provide ongoing support to teachers with students with disabilities. So it's a major part of the coordinator's work to be assuring the provision and the support for those
40 students. Our students educational risk strategy which I mentioned before really has quite a broad front in terms of a definition for educational risk, but schools again with students with disabilities can access money through making submissions for extra support in terms of curriculum provision and support for teachers.

45 The final strategy that we have as a pilot is an inclusion program, and again this is really having a pretty serious look at the issue of kids with disabilities in mainstream schools. So we currently have, I think, 50 students across the state, country and city, participating in this program where additional teacher time is allocated to schools in that program. That's really in response to pressure from
50 parents who firstly want a choice. And therein lies a problem of course for remote communities and some rural communities, but also who increasingly want their - many parents want their students to be able to access the local school.

5 So the issue of really looking hard at what it would require us to be able to make mainstream schooling accessible for students with disabilities is one that we're piloting at the moment. In the pre-primary area, or at least the early childhood area, students in rural and remote communities who have disabilities other than intellectual disabilities can also access additional teacher aide time in order to support the school in the provision of education.

[Aboriginal education]

10 I'll move on now to Aboriginal education. Western Australia is committed to the national approach set out in the national strategy for the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which was developed in 1995 and is a national strategy ranging from 96 through to 2002. The Department has developed
15 an Aboriginal education operational plan which essentially sets out some strategies around six key focus areas that have been identified. Indeed the first three really relate directly to students and to schools - access and participation issues, literacy and numeracy issues and the learning environment. The second three relate to broader issues, the fourth one is the Aboriginal community participation, the fifth one is community decision-making and the sixth one is employment.

20 In terms of the access and participation, Neil gave some of the figures for primary and compulsory and post-compulsory retention rates as a comparison between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. But the information in regard to preschool I think is something that we probably need to do a little bit more work to sort of see
25 what's underneath these figures. We have attendance rates of 90% Aboriginal students at preschool, which is still 6% less than for non-Aboriginal students where we have 96%. But nevertheless in comparison to the primary and particularly the compulsory secondary years that's quite a significant area.

30 So it no doubt has something to do with the extra provision that has been provided over the last few years, but I think it also may be related to the fact that we do have some Aboriginal preschools in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas where those preschools are predominantly for Aboriginal students, although non-Aboriginal students can go there. They are run in very close association with
35 the community and in some cases are run by the community where there is a strong emphasis on the Aboriginal culture and environment, and those preschools sort of being a strategy for transition into mainstream schooling.

40 So while I'm speculating, I think that's an area where we probably need to have a closer look because we seem to be achieving some good outcomes, and it would be worth seeing if we can extend whatever it is into the later years of schooling. The issue of retention and participation is clearly one that is a difficult issue in metro and non-metro schools, but is particularly an issue for remote and rural communities. A major part of the students education risk strategy is a
45 retention and participation strategy, and there is also particular focus within that on Aboriginal students. Again it's really looking at local solutions to issues of retention and participation where many of these students, and it's particularly an issue in the secondary schooling years, are quite disaffected from school.

50 So working out strategies which will hopefully identify the sorts of issues that cause the disaffection, and can work on that before students are really at risk because they are not at school, is one strategy that the Department has embarked on.

5 Again, local districts and schools are working in that area. Also where students are already alienated at school, setting up some strategies to either bridge their return into school or provide some strategies into employment or into further education and training, are the sorts of initiatives that are being looked at and they do vary across the state because of the particular local needs.

[2 pm]

[Early childhood pilot projects]

10 I will just return to the early childhood area. For remote students in the early childhood area, remote students who live in Aboriginal communities in particular, we have a couple of pilots that are being piloted at the moment in the Fitzroy Basin area. One is a mobile kindergarten, pre-primary initiative which is aiming at the mobile unit actually going to and staying for reasonably significant
15 amounts of times in remote communities and working with the local community to establish K and pre-primary provision.

20 And again it's about having Aboriginal and Islander education workers and the local - generally the women in the local community actually working with the teacher who is running the service, with a view that it would become a self-sustaining provision; that is, that the mobile unit wouldn't need to keep returning, although there may be some need for support, other levels of support. That's a new pilot that's just being put in place at the moment.

25 Another initiative is the Department is working with Family and Children's Services and looking at the provision of education in the early years, or at least an infrastructure for that, with child care and early child health issues sort of being dealt with with one infrastructure if possible. The hope is that there could then be more educational access taken up, because the child care issues are clearly
30 ones that are also issues. So those two things are pilots and we're hoping that they will bear some fruit.

[Aboriginal education; literacy and numeracy]

35 At the district level in terms of Aboriginal education, all of the 16 education districts have a coordinator of Aboriginal education and have Aboriginal liaison officers who work alongside schools but in particular play an advocacy role for parents and the Aboriginal community. Also, each district has an Aboriginal education council which is chaired by a local Aboriginal person and is aimed at providing a decision-making and participatory voice for Aboriginal people within
40 the district structure and also, we hope, in the school structure.

We have ASSPA committees which are - I can't remember what it stands for actually, but Aboriginal parent committees.

45 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes, Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness, isn't it?

50 **MS JOHNSTON:** Yes, that's it. Thank you. In many schools - not all schools but many schools have ASSPA committees, or at least schools with a significant Aboriginal population, and many schools have Aboriginal and Islander education workers who are not trained teachers but again whose role is to work directly with

the students and the community and with the teachers to try to support the education of the Aboriginal students.

5 In terms of literacy and numeracy we have the sort of benchmark information that Neil referred to and also our own monitoring standards and education sampling that we've been doing for a number of years within the Education Department, which covers more than just literacy, and what that information tells us very clearly is that there is a very significant difference between the achievement of non-Aboriginal students and the achievement of Aboriginal students.

10 In our own work the gap does seem to be diminishing in the literacy area. In the numeracy area it isn't diminishing as yet. One of the reasons why it may be diminishing in the literacy area is that we have a number of strategies. We actually have a literacy strategy for which Aboriginal literacy is a key component, and the sorts of initiatives that we are putting in place there include an Aboriginal English policy, which is actually about ensuring that all teachers recognise and value Aboriginal English as a dialect of English that's spoken by Aboriginal students.

15 That's a pretty significant shift and it's only just become a policy. And alongside that is a professional development program, the ABC of Two-Way Literacy and Learning, which is targeting schools statewide, using Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal personnel, and is really about the delivery of an inclusive curriculum for the benefit of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Built into that is the acceptance of Aboriginal English as being a legitimate form of communication.

20 There's a number of other initiatives of a curriculum sort in the literacy area. In numeracy we're about - or I think we're about to get to a point of implementing our first steps in a mathematics project. That project in its development took serious sort of notice of the issues to do with numeracy for Aboriginal students in remote and rural locations by having a lot of its research actually taking place in remote and rural communities in the Goldfields and in the Kimberley.

25 So some attention was paid right at the beginning of the development of that project because probably in the area of numeracy the biggest issue is that there is very little understanding of what the differences in terms of development might be for students that are brought up in a remote community in comparison to a rural or a city community.

30 Finally I guess I'll just mention probably what is the most fundamental issue in respect to Aboriginal education in our schools, and that is the learning environment. I guess the aim is to make our schools welcoming and inclusive places for all students and, in respect to that, we have an initiative where all staff of government schools - not just teaching staff; non-teaching staff as well - will participate in a cultural awareness program over the next few years.

35 By the end of this year each district has to have a plan and a strategy in place for how that is going to be enacted in their district, and it's a program which has already been developed and trialed and is delivered by Aboriginal people in the local community. So the delivery in for example Fremantle, or the content, may

have some broad structural similarities to what is being delivered in Kimberley but the actual details of understanding the local community is brought to the process by the local Aboriginal people.

5 I think I should stop there. There are other things but they're probably the broad initiatives. And I guess in terms of issues of educational provision or curriculum provision in remote and rural communities, apart from the issues that Steve has talked about in relation to getting teachers there, I think that the Department in the last five years really has taken a very serious look at the way in
10 which its provision and support is provided and is now, I think, in a position where we have some strategies in place.

The strategies I don't think are biting yet. I don't think we're actually getting the across-the-board difference that we would want to get, particularly in
15 relation to Aboriginal education, but I think in the near future we will begin to see some very positive outcomes as a result of the work that's being done. That's it.

[Funding and staffing formulae]

MR HOME: Commissioner, I neglected to say something which I thought I
20 probably should have raised. I talked at some length about the way we actually deploy resources to rural and isolated communities. What I neglected to talk about was the way we actually determine the resource entitlements of those schools. I just wanted to alert you to the fact that the staffing formula which applies to all our schools does have factors in there for isolation, socio-economic disadvantage and so
25 forth, and therefore rural and isolated schools are differentially resourced in comparison with metropolitan schools to have regard for those factors.

One in particular is something called a curriculum access factor. Where, particularly in secondary schools, there is a restricted curriculum and no alternative
30 schools within travelling distance for students, there is an additional staffing component made. Effectively what that means is we put additional teacher numbers into those schools to assist them to deliver a broad curriculum to those students. In addition, a lot of the smaller isolated schools end up with fractional allocations of staff meaning for example, 3.6 staff. We generally round that up to four because, as
35 you'd be aware, it would be pretty difficult to attract someone to go and teach point 6 time in one of these communities.

Just one other thing in conclusion I think I should alert you to in terms of some of the expenses associated with trying to ensure an adequate provision in these
40 areas. The Department currently spends in the order of \$7 million every year moving teachers to, from and between primarily country schools, and subsidises rents for teachers in country areas, where government housing is provided to the tune of \$15.63 million per annum. So there are substantial costs that the Department incurs in order to ensure that teachers are attracted to teach in these particular
45 locations.

THE COMMISSIONER: Maybe I should just say, you know, I very much appreciate that overview and we look forward to the full submission. What I think would be most beneficial would be for us to perhaps raise with you initially now
50 some of the issues that you've raised that we'd like a bit more information on, but particularly to present you with some of the things that have come up during the

course of the last week, where there are issues that you might be able to address on the spot or alternatively take on notice. Yes, Pat.

[Aboriginal Education Workers]

5 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Thank you. An enormous amount of information there to take in. One of the issues that did come up, as we've raised continually, that of AIEWs, the process for allocating AIEWs to schools, career structures for AIEWs and I suppose the whole question of Aboriginal teacher training as a whole. Can you make any comments on that for us?

10 **MR HOME:** I'll get some more detail to you, but I can certainly say that considerable effort is currently going into examining the career paths of AIEWs and we are certainly looking towards trying to facilitate movement of that category of employee all the way through to the classroom in terms of ultimately potentially even teaching without a formal teacher qualification. There's a substantial amount of work going on in that area. I'd be quite happy to provide you with a written submission that will detail how far we've got and what we intend to do in that area, but it's certainly an area that's received a lot of attention over the last 12 months.

15 **MR JARVIS:** And in the last few years we have substantially increased the number of AIEWs available, but it can never be enough.

20 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** The career path for trained Aboriginal teachers, is there anything specific for them, or they're within the mainstream of career path? Is there a recognition of their Aboriginality or their desire to teach in remote schools and locations as they start to come through and be trained?

25 **MR JARVIS:** We're investigating programs to take Aboriginal Education Workers through either TAFEs or other university courses, with special programs into teacher training. I believe one of them is with South Metropolitan TAFE here and we are exploring other connections with the South Australian government who have got an interest in this area as well. It's an area we'd like to make some progress in if we could. It's very difficult to progress, though, because you tend to have to offer the training at the local site where the employee is. It's unrealistic to expect them to come to Perth and engage in higher ed.

30 **MR HOME:** We are looking at options with the universities in terms of teacher training without having to bring people to Perth, and one would hope that that will particularly be useful in the context of Aboriginal people who wish to teach. In relation to where those people might be allowed to teach, we certainly place a high priority on getting Aboriginal teachers in front of particularly Aboriginal students and we can, particularly at the moment, pretty much guarantee an Aboriginal teacher a place wherever they want to be, particularly if it's in a rural or remote area, and we generally facilitate that.

45

[2.15 pm]

50 I think the statistics that I read to you showed a fairly disproportionate number of Aboriginal teachers, in a remote teaching service, for example, in comparison with other areas and we certainly seek to allow them to take a placement where they want to be, and generally we can facilitate that.

MS JOHNSTON: We also have some positions which are quarantined for Aboriginal people at the moment. There I think it's half of the Aboriginal education coordinators in the districts. It may not be half but, for example, I've come from the Fremantle district where our position was quarantined for an Aboriginal person so it couldn't have been taken up by a non-Aboriginal person and I think we are also investigating a systemic school which will be systemic Aboriginal schooling in the metropolitan area, which will have an Aboriginal principal, I think is the plan.

So that sort of sense of actually trying to mark out a career path that doesn't necessarily take people outside the classroom, which is what the Aboriginal education coordinator one does - or at least outside the school I think is one that we've just started to sort of have a little look at. I don't know that it's - well, it's fraught, I think, with some real issues.

THE COMMISSIONER: Is the Department providing scholarships where the AIEWs can actually undertake full-time university studies to upgrade to a teaching degree?

MR HOME: Yes, there's a number of scholarships available for Aboriginal students generally to go into teaching and also I think available for Aboriginal students already at university. The number of them isn't as high as we would like but they are fairly expensive scholarships. We are certainly looking at a range of strategies to try and increase the number of Aboriginal secondary students going on to a higher education and trying to ensure that we can get them into teaching. As I indicated earlier, we can pretty much guarantee them that we can place them where they want to be. Actually getting them into tertiary education is a major component of that.

THE COMMISSIONER: The AIEWs that we spoke to on a number of occasions said there was nothing comparable to what exists within the Catholic system for their Aboriginal teaching assistants, where they can go on full salary for three years or four years, as required, to do the degree. Is that the case? I mean does the scholarship provide the full salary for an employee during that period?

MR HOME: No, certainly not. I'm not aware of what applies in the Catholic system but we don't have any scholarships that - - -

THE COMMISSIONER: Apparently there's around about a dozen given each year. We heard about a dozen go off and start upgrading their certificate. Once they've got the high level diploma they can get the BEd in three years rather than four and they get a full-time scholarship to do that full-time on full salary for that period.

MR HOME: No, we don't have an equivalent.

THE COMMISSIONER: Certainly the AIEWs that we spoke to were very envious of their counterparts in the Catholic system, that they've got this opportunity. The points that they made are twofold. Firstly, that by the time they are an AIEW they have generally got kids themselves, so it's not like a late teenager, early twenties, person going off for the first time, and for that reason can't afford to really drop salary completely. The second thing is that to do it on some part-time external basis carried it over, the degree qualification, to such a protracted period that it's almost

impossible to see through to the end of the thing. So this system gives the salary support to maintain the family while ensuring that the study can be done in the minimum possible time. So that might be something worth looking at.

5 **MR HOME:** Yes, we will certainly look into that. I hadn't heard of it. It would certainly be a fairly costly exercise.

THE COMMISSIONER: Without doubt.

10 **MR HOME:** But I'm certainly interested in looking into that.

THE COMMISSIONER: The other thing on the AIEWs, if I can just cut in on that subject - maybe if Pat and I go backwards and forwards on a subject-by-subject basis - we were also told a number of them are employed under direct state
15 government funding and some are employed through the IESIP funding that the Commonwealth provides. Would you have a break up of how many are under which category and if so does the state government have any intentions or commitments in relation to those who are employed under IESIP in the event of IESIP disappearing or being reduced?

20 **MS JOHNSTON:** I don't have those figures but we can find those.

MR JARVIS: No, we can provide those.

25 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes, but part of the exercise - I mean I know that some of the specific stuff you won't know, and we will of course be giving you all the type up of the transcript when it's made, which is fairly quick, so you can go through it as well.

30 **MR JARVIS:** Yes.

MS JOHNSTON: Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: That's the other thing that we're interested in. Perhaps in
35 addition to that too a bit of information about how IESIP projects are actually decided in the government school system; what's the involvement of Aboriginal people? I understand that the Aboriginal Education and Training Council plays a major role but if we could just have a little bit more detail about how that is actually done.

40 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Yes, the other area relating to AIEWs was it appeared that in some of the remote communities a number of the AIEW positions, and in some cases all of the positions, at a couple of particular schools have been turned into casual positions. So you've got all the AIEWs on casual positions and none of them
45 on substantive positions, and a number of reasons were given for that, but if you provide some feedback on that too.

MR HOME: By "casual" do you mean "temporary" or genuinely day-to-day employment contracts?

50 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Both.

SISTER RHATIGAN: Both, yes.

MR HOME: So their engagement is on a day-by-day basis, some of them?

5 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Yes. Say a school that had an allocation, as we would
understand from EDWA, for, say, three positions, which should have been full
positions the year round, and whatever, that had been, with the allocation of other
money, turned into six casual positions. There's a disadvantage there to Aboriginal
10 people on that because I understand they wouldn't therefore access PD [professional
development] and a whole lot of things. So that was kind of raised to us in a couple
of places.

MR JARVIS: You couldn't supply us with the names of the places or a particular
instance?

15 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** It would have been somewhere in those six or so places you
visited - is that right - with the Kimberley - - -

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, it was pretty common in one form or another
20 across the Kimberley, I must say. Ranging from one school where one of the non-
Aboriginal teachers said to us that all the AIEWs were casual through to a mix in
some schools between casual and permanent. Some were on 12-month contracts;
some were on three-year contracts; and some were on total casual which really
25 meant indefinite day-to-day employment. It wasn't that they waited for the knock on
the door or the phone call every morning but indefinite day-to-day employment until
something happened.

MR HOME: We will explore that. I mean without knowing the facts behind it it
would seem to be a concern. The Department does have an Aboriginal employment
30 strategy and we have set ourselves to try and increase the proportion of our
workforce who are Aboriginal people up to 3% over the next couple of years. So
we clearly have a strategy and a target in mind in terms of increasing the
employment opportunities for Aboriginal people and clearly those sorts of
communities are key parts of that strategy. So we will look into that.

35 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: Just on the Aboriginal employment strategy for a minute
40 too, my understanding is that 3% target is a statewide target rather than having
particular regional targets.

MR HOME: Yes, that's right.

THE COMMISSIONER: In trying to achieve the target are the regional directors
45 given some notional figure as to what their contribution to it should be or is there a
higher target, say, in the Kimberley than there is in Perth metropolitan area?

MR HOME: No, we haven't set particular targets. I mean perhaps that's something
50 we will need to look at in terms of monitoring how the strategy is working or not
working but at the moment we haven't set any particular target. It may be
something we need to look at.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thanks. Back to you, Pat.

5 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Yes, the question of perhaps naming Wyndham as - there seemed to be concern raised at the meetings from various people from Wyndham in relation to where that school was placed and I gather now from the information you've given it's not on the remote area it's on the other - - -

[Funding formula; staffing formula]

10 **MR HOME:** Difficult to staff.

SISTER RHATIGAN: That seemed to be a kind of anomaly in the Kimberley in relation to other places and was causing a lot of concern.

15 **MR HOME:** Wyndham has been seeking remote teaching service status for some years but it's not alone. Other schools include - I think it's Derby, Sandstone, Laverton. There's a range of communities which have sought RTS status, some of them much more isolated than Wyndham. Wyndham is an hour's drive from Kununurra. I don't think we have got any other RTS schools that have that level of proximity to major services and Wyndham is one of the - I think Wyndham would be larger than any school - sorry, any community which currently has RTS status.

20
25 Under the country incentives package which is currently being finalised, the monetary allocation to Wyndham is the highest of any school in the state under that arrangement. The government provided us with funding of \$13.9 million over three and a half years to create incentives for people to teach in those areas. Someone who has been in Wyndham for three years before this year will have permanency at the end of this year. Anyone going up there now will have permanency after three years and that's ironically generally seen as more of an attraction than the money.

30
35 They will be earning a very high number of transfer points - they are already on three and they will get a multiplier on that - which means they will be pretty much assured of a place back in Perth and they would receive - I'm going on memory here and this hasn't yet been finalised with the union, but will be going out for consultation to its members shortly - in the order of about \$19,000 over three years. That's a lump sum bonus that goes to teachers working in Wyndham. So although it's not an RTS, and we don't believe it fits the criteria of RTS, it's on the higher level, if you like, of the benefits that apply under the other system.

40 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Thank you.

45 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Perhaps mentioning or staying with the question about the retention and transfers for teachers. Again we're told that in spite of the point system, the earning of points that you've described, that doesn't give a guarantee of a job back in the city?

MR HOME: No.

50 **THE COMMISSIONER:** But rather priority where two people are equal, all other things taken into account. Is that about the way that it works or could you put it in better words than I can?

5 **MR HOME:** Generally if a vacancy appeared in Nedlands or in Hollywood Senior High School and someone had been teaching at a district high school in Wyndham, if the person in Wyndham had the highest number of points of anyone in the state who expressed a wish to transfer into Hollywood then they would win that position.
10 But what they have to rely on is that vacancy appearing in Hollywood Senior High School. If there's a range of other teachers who have higher points than the teacher at Wyndham then they might ultimately only get their tenth preference or they might get their fiftieth preference and they then make a decision as to whether the school that they can win with their current number of points is worth committing themselves to.

THE COMMISSIONER: Or building up more points as the alternative?

15 **MR HOME:** Yes. A lot of people make the decision to stay and earn sufficient points to be guaranteed what is deemed to be an attractive school rather than perhaps come back to a metropolitan school that is seen as difficult and that's a decision that they have to wrestle with. The issue I'm sure they raised with you is that there are not a wide number of vacancies that appear in Perth, particularly so at the moment, because we have done some restructuring of schools.
20

[2.30 pm]

25 A couple of schools have closed, and people who are effectively losing their jobs in their current schools will get priority above anyone. So the vacancies will first go to people who are genuinely redundant, if you like, in their old school; then someone wishing to transfer on points would be slotted into the vacancies that would remain at the end of that process. If someone has got equal transfer points I am not sure how the - - -

30 **MR JARVIS:** Merit.

MR HOME: No, that is only on a transfer.

35 **MR JARVIS:** Yes.

MR HOME: On teacher transfer it's not done on merit, I don't think. I think it is randomly - - -

40 **MS JOHNSTON:** No. Luck.

MR HOME: Yes. If they have got the same number of - - -

MR JARVIS: Do we toss a coin?

45 **MR HOME:** Yes, it is just done randomly.

50 **THE COMMISSIONER:** There may in fact then be a misconception out in the bush because what was said to us explicitly - and it was at a meeting where the district director was present - was that essentially it was all merit selection now and the transfer points were only relevant if there were two people who were considered to be equal on merit.

MR HOME: They may have been talking about not teachers but people in administrative positions; for principals, deputy principals and - - -

5 **MR JARVIS:** Subject coordinators.

MR HOME: - - - subject coordinators - - -

MR JARVIS: Maybe promotional - - -

10 **MR HOME:** That is right.

MR JARVIS: That's probably what it was.

15 **THE COMMISSIONER:** That's the consequence of an equal opportunity ruling.

MR JARVIS: Yes. It was said in that context generally; apparently it's a state Commission ruling - - -

20 **MR HOME:** Yes. We don't have a transfer system. We have a transfer power which we use at the director-general's discretion, but we don't have a transfer system for promotional positions any more; that was deemed to be indirectly discriminatory and we had to abandon it and go on full merit selection at the beginning of last year, So, for teachers we still have a systematic process of transfer, but, at those other levels, people have to win jobs on merit. Sure, you had
25 a number of people raise with you - because they have raised it with many people - people who went out under the old system with a guarantee that if they went to be a deputy principal in the Kimberley, after a number of years they would eventually rise on seniority for getting their first preference for a vacancy back in Perth.

30 Now, that has gone and anyone who is teaching in a country school in a promotional position has to secure any alternative position on merit and that has caused some difficulty for some of them but the Equal Opportunity Tribunal ruling gives us no option. We are exploring the capacity to use the transfer power in
35 compassionate cases and so forth but we would not be able to introduce a system of a systemic transfer of those people back without running foul of that Tribunal ruling.

40 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Okay. The lack of understanding was on my part, obviously. I wasn't distinguishing between promotions and lateral transfer into teaching positions, so that makes sense now - what they were saying. Thanks.

MR HOME: Yes.

45 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Obviously these questions about recruitment, retention of teachers, came up regularly, so we will have a look and we will be dealing with those because they are national issues and perhaps comparing what you have already done; that is, comparing the various states and territories and their approaches.

50 **MR HOME:** You have had hearings in the other states?

THE COMMISSIONER: Really just starting. In the Northern Territory we have had a day like today, but that is the only other one.

MR HOME: Because there is a national strategy starting to be looked at through MCEETYA on teacher recruitment.

5 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes. That might actually present some good solutions, taking the best of each.

MR HOME: Yes.

10 **[Travel subsidies]**

THE COMMISSIONER: The next one which is again one that I would just like to raise with you on notice because it concerns your colleagues in transport rather than yourselves. I don't know whether the Western Australian government is looking at a whole-of-government type response or whether we should go ourselves to the Department of Transport, but it relates to this question about the free fares in different educational contexts.

20 From what we were told, the Department of Transport provides return airfares to boarding schools each term, so basically four return airfares a year at no cost and no income test or means test associated with them. The difficulty that was raised with us is that that's fine and is not to be sneezed at but it's establishing an inequity on the part of those who decide to stay local and do their education local, which is the desire of many parents but also tends to be increasingly the way in which resources are being put so that kids can actually get accessible local education, but there are no subsidies available for going on excursions, for example, let alone to the kind of inter-school - whether it is sporting, debating or any other types of things.

30 The example was raised with us in Port Hedland where, I think, they're having a combined geography excursion-school band trip down to Perth for I think 22-26 people and it is going to cost them \$27,000, whereas any kids from Port Hedland who want to go to boarding school in Perth get four free fares a year; meanwhile, two teachers at the school have turned themselves inside out trying to raise \$27,000 to bring the kids down for these two events.

35 There is a subsidy - there is a free fare, I think - two free fares - available for kids who are doing School of Isolated Distance Education in Years 11 and 12, but this was raised as a problem in Kunanurra because that is subject to 75% of SIDE subjects. Kunanurra is trying to boost its core teaching and is now delivering four or five core Year 11-12 subjects and this year their kids aren't going to be able to get the SIDE subsidy for the two trips to Perth for face-to-face work on the SIDE subjects because they're not doing 75% of the total.

45 So in these two areas it seems that there is first a disincentive from keeping your kids in your own area because they can't go off and get any of the excursions, as distinct from boarding them and, secondly, a disincentive from providing more face-to-face teaching in the local schools rather than using SIDE for 100%, for which you can't even get the Years 11 and 12 subsidies. Both of those issues, I must say, I find quite worrying. I don't know whether the SIDE subsidies are provided by Transport or by Education.

MR JARVIS: No. The School of Isolated Distance Education subsidies are really for their full-time students because of their absolute isolation.

5 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes.

MR JARVIS: You could actually question whether they should have been getting it in Kununurra at all because it's really meant for students who are living on stations in very, very remote communities, where there is no school, no teacher.

10 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Well, up until recently there was no 11 and 12 in Kununurra anyway.

MR JARVIS: That's right, so that was how we supplemented and complemented.

15 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes.

MR JARVIS: If we did that across the whole state then the cost implications - every school all of a sudden would have students doing one subject at School of Isolated and Distance Education and they would be claiming a return airfare to Perth, because we try not to restrict the availability of School of Isolated and Distance Education subjects to communities that have small numbers of students and their curriculum is supplemented, but that school has a very limited budget and they can't afford to get into an area where they are really cross-subsidising a much broader social equity issue out of their local school budgets. It is just obviously not on, so they have got to set these local rules which enables the school to live within its budget because they're really School of Isolated and Distance Education students; the moment they become defined as Kununurra District High School students then they're not School of Isolated and Distance Education students.

20
25
30 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Can I ask who was actually paying the airfares for the school - is it coming from their direct budget or is it a Transport - - -

MR JARVIS: If they are School of Isolated and Distance Education students it comes out of the budget for the School of Isolated and Distance Education. It is not a systemic provision; it is a provision that they have made in their budget because those students are so isolated that they have got to come to Perth just to get into a science lab or a manual arts room. In reality, that is not the problem in Kununurra and I have to say I am fascinated to know that people in Kununurra have been accessing the airfares from the School of Isolated and Distance Education.

35
40 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Apparently they did up to and including last year and, this year, they have been told they can't.

MR JARVIS: I think it's quite an understandable decision, given that it's a School of Isolated and Distance Education budget and it is not provision that's made from the Department's budget or from government sources for all students. So it is a decision the school has made to better service their very isolated students, most of whom don't live in a town even at all.

45
50 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes.

MR JARVIS: So I would say that the Kununurra thing was actually an aberration. I personally would question whether they should have had it in the first place. The other one is definitely - the Education Department - that's Transport.

5 **THE COMMISSIONER:** And apparently it has got some lengthy history attached to it but, as worthy as it may be, it just seems odd when there are such enormous difficulties for kids even getting the excursions that they want.

10 **MR JARVIS:** It actually goes back to a period when there was no secondary provision in these towns.

THE COMMISSIONER: But that was my supposition, I must say.

15 **MR JARVIS:** Okay.

THE COMMISSIONER: There was nothing, so they had to bring them in.

20 **MR JARVIS:** A lot of these towns like Kununurra, by the way, are quite split over whether they even want the Education Department to put Year 11 and 12 provision in the town because the - I must choose my words carefully here - the highest socioeconomic group in town basically don't want us to make provision in town because that would then eliminate the Commonwealth subsidy for their students to go to boarding colleges - Scotch or whatever - whereas another group in town, who can't afford that anyhow, definitely want us to make provision and, wherever possible, we will make provision, so that it becomes a divisive issue within the town.

30 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes. It came across very clearly to us, you know, right down to saying, "We want our high school in Kununurra to be top class Year 11 and 12 high school and not only can't we provide facilities for our kids to do so, but this transport subsidy means there's an inducement for some of the better kids...The wealthier parents who could well be putting a lot into the school send their kids off to Perth and do it all there". So there are all those complicated issues; it is not just a matter of fair equity that is on people's minds, although that is one part of it. It is also the broader issue of what part of the population in the town is going to go to the local school and what part isn't, and the implications of that.

35 **MR JARVIS:** That is the issue in Kununurra, I put to you.

40 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes. I picked that up fairly easily. Again, go down to Port Hedland for a minute: one of the reasons why they are doing this joint band competition-geography excursion and why they are so concerned about not getting any travel subsidies is that they were saying that - I'm not sure whether it is Year 11 or 12 geography syllabus has a compulsory 40% component where they have to study the geography either of the Perth metropolitan area or south-west in Western Australia and, although, technically, that can be done on the books, it gives an enormous advantage to those majority of kids who live in the Perth metropolitan area or the south-west, and that is worth 40% of the mark.

45 **MR JARVIS:** My advice to you would be to consult the Curriculum Council because I am sure that that's an exaggerated interpretation of the requirements of the syllabus. But seeing it is not my syllabus it is not my prerogative to state that to you

in an expert sense. But I'm sure the Curriculum Council could deal with that issue for you.

5 **THE COMMISSIONER:** It's separate from your Department, is it?

MR JARVIS: Yes. I can't believe it's true because, if it's true, it is too discriminatory for words.

10 **THE COMMISSIONER:** It sounded, I must say odd to me, and I felt simply for them in wanting to find some way of getting their kids down to actually have a look at the area they're supposedly studying.

15 **MR JARVIS:** They do have to do that study. My understanding is that they do have to do that study of Perth and the south-west but the field study does not have to be of that area. The field study has been written so it can obviously be of the local area the students live in, so that the field study requirements of the course, to my knowledge, can be gained by students in their local environment. I believe the exam is written in such a way that no student is advantaged if they happen to live in Perth and do their field study in Perth in the theoretical sense of the exam. I am
20 sure the Curriculum Council have taken note of all these issues but, if you want to follow it up, they would be the people to follow it up with.

[Itinerant students]

25 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Okay, thanks. Another question that was raised - I am at a loss to know how it can be dealt with - is the question of itinerant kids; highly mobile. It was mentioned to us earlier today that the Aboriginal Education and Training Council was looking at some tracking system. A tracking system will certainly allow you and others to know to what extent a particular kid is present or not present in a school, but I don't know how the curriculum needs or the program
30 needs of a particular child can be addressed in that situation. Is that something, Jayne, that has been dealt with through your curriculum area?

35 **MS JOHNSTON:** It is clearly a big issue and it is one of those tensions that you have when we move to a broader sort of notion of a curriculum framework, so we haven't got every kid doing the same maths lesson on the same day. The way in which we imagine or hope it will be dealt with - I mean, we do need a tracking thing because, at the moment, you know, we lose the kids, and that's really a fundamental problem.

40 **[2.45 pm]**

45 But in terms of the tracking of the information, the curriculum information about the students needs to be in such a form that that is transferable and understandable from one site to another. So what we'd be hoping to develop - we're just investing in a fairly big computer system that's going to help with the transfer of that sort of particular information about students, but the first issue - well, that is another issue. The first issue is actually finding out where the kids go to so that that information can follow them.

50 The second issue is making sure we can provide that information in a way that has some communicability across different sites. So it is a recognised issue that we need to deal with over the next few years, and we're hoping that the student

information system which is about to be trialled and launched in the government school system will assist in that. But, yes, it's going to be one of the tensions of going to a broader framework in terms of curriculum provision.

5 **[Aboriginal language teaching]**

THE COMMISSIONER: Okay. Thanks. Perhaps two other things worth raising with you: the first is the issue of the teaching of Aboriginal languages. That certainly dominated our visit to the Territory a fortnight ago and there's still a strong element here - both the teaching of languages and the provision of resources for the preparation of curriculum material. Is this a curriculum council issue again, or is it an Ed WA issue?

MR JARVIS: Both.

15 **MS JOHNSTON:** Both, yes. I mean, I think we have two or three Aboriginal languages which are part of our LOTE provision - languages other than English. That's about as much as I know. In the area that I've been working it's been - - -

20 **MR JARVIS:** A lot of work has been done in the Aboriginal language area with the local universities in both mapping and recording, getting it into a written form, and getting all those fundamental things in place which would enable you to do some curriculum work with it. The problem in a lot of cases is it's not a written language - in many cases.

25 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes. We saw some really terrific material that was produced just by one of the small independent community schools - top-class material - and we didn't really see anything comparable at all in any of the government schools that we visited. That may just be coincidence, or it may be that there's not the resources there to do it.

30 **MS JOHNSTON:** Yes. I have just come from the Fremantle district and we've got one school that teaches Nyoongah and has some terrific resources that certainly have been produced by the Department and the local community together.

35 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes, well, it needs to be both.

MS JOHNSTON: Yes. But I don't know what the extent of that is.

40 **THE COMMISSIONER:** All right, we can leave that one.

MR JARVIS: We can take that on notice.

[Alternative education for excluded students]

45 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes, that's right. The last issue I was going to raise - Pat may have some more - is just the question of educational options for those kids who have, for whatever reason, been excluded from the school system. Different forms of alternative education options are possible in capital cities where you have quite a large number of kids, but it's pretty difficult in the rural areas. Are there ways - there may even be comparable ways to dealing with transient kids - in which the
50 educational needs of these children can be met, in spite of the numbers problems?

MS JOHNSTON: We're experimenting with a couple of ways, but even in the metro area it's a very difficult issue.

5

THE COMMISSIONER: It's a problem.

MS JOHNSTON: I think at Carnarvon there's a sort of alternative site; the camp school is being set up for kids who are particularly alienated. That's happened, or is about to happen?

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MR JARVIS: About to happen.

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MS JOHNSTON: It's in the process of happening. So it's alongside the school, but the issue is really - well, one of the issues being addressed there is actually that the typical school environment clearly is one that doesn't suit those kids, and those kids don't suit that environment, so it's trying to have a different sort of an environment for those students. I think in a sense the issue of numbers - to put the resources into that sort of provision you've got to have enough kids for whom that is a problem. I think our longer-term solution has to be about making schools better able to be flexible in order to meet the needs of students who are alienated for a whole range of reasons.

20

I think there's something happening in the Kimberley which is about having a hostel - I don't have too many details on that, but we can follow up on that as well - - -

25

THE COMMISSIONER: All right.

MS JOHNSTON: - - - which again is for alienated youth, and I think there's some agricultural component to it or something, but we'll follow up.

30

THE COMMISSIONER: All right, and if you could give us some information about the Carnarvon pilot as well, that would be good, thank you.

MS JOHNSTON: Yes.

35

THE COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much. We have gone well over the time that you have, but it's because we have heard and seen so much last week - we just had a terrific week - and thank you for being so detailed in what you've given us today, and we'll look forward to the whole lot. Thank you.

40

[Telecommunications]

MR JARVIS: Thank you. If you could influence the Telstra tariffing policies that would be great.

45

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, that's high on the agenda, I can assure you.

MS JOHNSTON: Good luck.

50

THE COMMISSIONER: I mean, even in a closely-settled state like New South Wales it's a major issue. The New South Wales Education Department is now reimbursing all schools in the state who have to have STD calls for Internet access - the full cost of the calls.

MR JARVIS: So are we.

5 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes, well, I remember you saying you're allowing five hours a day, which is basically the whole school day.

MR JARVIS: Yes.

10 **THE COMMISSIONER:** So it becomes enormously expensive.

MR JARVIS: Yes. The federal government is about - before Christmas - to put out their information economy strategy, and I think once that window closes it's going to be difficult.

15 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes. Thanks a lot. I'm sorry that we're now well over time, because we had a lot to talk about with the Education Department. I should introduce us, because most of you have come since we started. I'm Chris Sidoti, and I'm Human Rights Commissioner. Sister Pat Rhatigan is the Co-Commissioner for the inquiry for Western Australia. Helen, would you just like to say who you are for the tape, and your organisation, and then go straight into your comments.

20 **MS NEWLAND:** Yes, certainly. My name is Helen Newland. I am from the Isolated Children's Parents Association Western Australian State Council. I am going to read to you some of the things that ICPA have compiled for this meeting, if that's all right?

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes. Thank you.

[Isolated Children's Parents Association]

30 **MS NEWLAND:** Do you want a bit of background on ICPA for the tape? ICPAWA State Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's national inquiry into rural and remote education. ICPA is part of an Australia-wide voluntary parent body dedicated to ensuring that all geographically isolated students have equality with their

35 non-isolated peers of access to an appropriate education. Our association comprises approximately 3,300 plus member families residing in rural and remote areas all over Australia. We all share a common concern of gaining access to education for the children and the provision of services required to achieve this. Membership comprises a cross-section of Australia's rural and remote population and includes

40 fishermen, miners, itinerant employees, farmers, pastoralists, and small business owners living in these rural and remote areas of Australia. It is felt there are three basic rights for these residents, those being access to education, access to health services and access to quality communications. Referring to the terms of reference and the related issues, ICPA wishes to comment as follows.

45 **[Availability and accessibility]**

The availability and accessibility of primary and secondary - students of families living in the remote areas of WA that are isolated from schools or bus services are educated through schools of the air and the Perth-based School of Isolated and Distance Education which serves mainly primary students, although

50 there are many secondary students using the educational facilities provided by SIDE.

5 The students of families in rural regions use rural schools in their local towns. Smaller towns only have primary schools with district and regional high schools located in the large centres. Many children living on farms bus to these schools. ICPA has a real concern that if these rural schools close down through lack of student numbers and a trend towards bigger and more centralised schools, many children will be forced to travel for longer periods, which could be to the detriment of their education, bearing in mind that some as young as five years old already travel up to three hours a day.

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[School of Isolated and Distance Education]

15 The quality of educational services, including technology services - is that most people who use the facilities provided by SIDE would agree that the quality of material and the service provided is high, but it is the problem of the home tutor, usually the mother, teaching up to sometimes six hours a day, supervising and motivating the student or students, sometimes with pre-schoolers as well, along with the lack of other facilities such as sport, cultural activities and socialisation, that compels parents to send children away to board, whether it be at a hostel, school, or private board, once they reach secondary school age.

20

25 Many children who do stay on to complete their secondary education through SIDE do not achieve past Year 10, isolation and motivation being the biggest deterrents. Those students who attend rural schools are often hampered by multigrade classes and lack of facilities. The current shortage of teachers applying for teaching positions in rural schools has resulted, in some cases, with classroom teacher positions being vacant, even as I speak. Support and training for teachers in these areas can also be inadequate, especially when dealing with children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many teachers in rural schools do not have the expertise or experience to deal with the wide range of problems associated with teaching in areas where district support is not readily available.

30

[Costs; income support and subsidies]

35 Whether the education available to children with disabilities etcetera complies with their human rights, ICPAWA cannot comment fully on all aspects of this issue, just its effect on the rural and isolated students we represent. Our students are disadvantaged because of where they live, and in many cases are denied access to education for this and financial reasons.

40 Some of the issues that we see are the costs for families associated with education in rural and remote areas. The costs of educating in the bush are high compared with those in the city. The average boarding cost per year at a hostel or boarding school is \$6,000 per year. Added to this are uniforms, clothing, books and day-to-day expenses. There can be another \$6,000 per annum for tuition fees if applicable. There are other expenses that must be met when teaching the child at home - that is, the cost of running vehicles to attend school functions, often up to 45 six and eight hours away over rough roads, causing much wear and tear on vehicles; also the cost of running generators for extended hours to provide power for computers and other necessary power-driven school items for those being educated at home.

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As boarding is not a satisfactory alternative to all, some families choose to set up a second home in a larger centre where daily access to a school is . This

option also is expensive for geographically isolated families, but these are the cold, hard facts. The equity and adequacy of social security and other provisions to support children in education also has its problems. There must be some recognition of the problems faced by families who have been geographically isolated from secondary study and are unable to assist their children any further to pursue the tertiary study which they consider of utmost importance and an essential component of their earning capacity in adulthood.

The asset testing on the Youth Allowance and the introduction of the actual means test has effectively excluded many rural and remote families from any form of assistance at all towards tertiary study, and a survey carried out by the federal council of the ICPA estimated only 1% of isolated families received the Youth Allowance, while the figure for the general population is said to be 25%. Education facilities, no matter how well they provide for the needs of the community, are of little consequence to those students who cannot access them due to distance and cost.

It is a well-known fact that there are alarmingly low participation rates in tertiary education for rural and remote students. ICPA seeks the provision of a fair actual means test on the Youth Allowance, modified to ensure that it does not disadvantage access to the Youth Allowance by remote families. This income and assets cannot be separated from the business they run for the purpose of determining their eligibility and availability to provide secondary and post-secondary education funding for their children.

ICPA supports the need to raise the discount on farm/small business income earning assets from 55% to at least 75% for the purpose of determining Youth Allowance eligibility. Within the target population addressed by the Youth Allowance, there needs to be some provision for the recognition of the unique problems faced by those students who are geographically isolated from any form of tertiary training, and have been isolated from high schools for their secondary education. The provision of the rent assistance is recognition of the extra costs for young people who must live away from home to access education, but unfortunately, many of the targeted students - that is, geographically isolated from any tertiary training - are unable to access the rent assistance as they are ineligible for the Youth Allowance because of assets testing and the actual means test on their parents. It is only if they are able to achieve independent status that this rent assistance then becomes a reality for them.

[3 pm]

[Country Areas Program]

The funding models that we see as important are the continuation of the Country Areas Program and this needs to continue in all states and territories on an equitable basis. The CAP funding should be weighted more heavily for small and remote school communities or where normal services aren't available. We also believe that CAP should remain a separate program as it is the program which addresses the unique need of students in schools who are disadvantaged because of isolation. It is vital that the original philosophy behind the Country Areas Program, that is to improve the quality of rural schooling experience and promote parent and community participation in the decision-making processes of country areas, not be overtaken by other priorities as programs move through their life cycles.

5 The sense of innovation, flexibility and school community participation
that were associated with the aims and objectives established in those early years of
this program should remain the essential element in maintaining clearly articulated
Country Areas Program outcomes which continue to raise community awareness
about this program and its benefits. It is of real concern to us at ICPAWA that in
Western Australia this much-needed funding could disappear into the big bucket and
there is a feeling amongst some rural and remote teachers that this is already
happening, as there appears to be no overall planning or direction of where funds
10 should be spent from a state level.

15 There is also a real concern that with a lack of a coordinator in 1999 and
the disbanding of the state and local area committees in 98, parents and schools are
unaware of the history or intent of CAP and the purpose of how and why this
funding is allocated. Without an overseeing committee or coordinator for guidance
and the ability to monitor outcomes of where CAP funds are actually being used in
relation to the original intent, funding could eventually just become another funding
item, eg school grant. Also, if the eligibility becomes too broad, funds will be
spread so thinly that they'll be totally ineffective.

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[Transport]

Transport funding: for families living in remote areas to send their
children to and from school in most rural and remote areas is very good, but there
are still many areas that miss out on transport subsidies and for these people the
costs of getting their children to and from an education is very high. For those who
25 meet the criteria, the Assistance for Isolated Children or boarding away from home
allowances are available, but even these fall far short of the money outlaid by those
families seeking to access their children to an equitable education.

30 **[Teaching incentives; staffing formulae]**

For teacher incentives, we see that there is an urgent need for plans to be
put in place to attract teachers to school. The teaching-training universities must
take some responsibility for the teachers' reluctance to go to the bush to teach. It is
completely incomprehensible to us that we have a situation where most of the
35 schools in WA are in the country, yet country pracs have been discontinued and
there is no specific training to assist teachers to cope with the many, varied and
different aspects of rural positions. These teachers have been trained for the city,
with no thought given to educating children in rural and remote areas at all. The
abolition of the transfer system and introduction of merit selection has created a
40 situation where country children are being disadvantaged and their education
appears to be being sacrificed as teachers can no longer feel confident of returning
to a metropolitan teaching position after spending time in the country, sometimes in
extreme isolation, therefore making them reluctant to apply for rural and remote
teaching positions at all.

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Whilst ICPA appreciates the transfer system may have discriminated
against female teachers, our members are of the opinion that rural and remote
children are being discriminated against by being denied a basic education, as there
are too few teachers in rural classrooms. There needs to be a more appropriate
50 staffing policy for rural and remote positions, eg small class sizes, and a more
appropriate number of support staff. The curriculum should be suited to rural and
remote conditions and teachers should have access to appropriate staff professional

development and relief staff. Incentives for teachers are needed to attract and retain staff, especially in the area of administration. The majority of principals in rural and remote position at present are filled by acting principals, for fear of being stuck in the country because of the promotion system.

5

There needs to be a combining of other agencies, such as health and police, to share resources, such as housing and there is an urgent need to use the survey and consultation results from the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council of WA, along with past reports such as Tomlinson and implement the strategies resulting from their findings. Unless there is some guarantee that those teachers who are willing to spend time working in the country can be rewarded with a more favourable posting when they've finished, there seems little hope that the situation will improve and, therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that rural and remote schools will be offering their students a very mediocre education, which is a denial of their basic right.

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[Distance education; information technology]

With regards to distance education, changing technology must not disadvantage students studying by distance education - that is if unable to access 24-hour power, phone, video, etcetera, which a lot cannot do - by content of material. The marketing of materials internationally must not affect students at the local level and technology must remain a tool and enhancer and not replace face-to-face teaching. Not all children are suited to this mode of education, needing the motivation of peers and good teacher skills to be successful in reaching their full educational potential. Technology must work. For example, there have been problems in small schools studying units by telematics, not being able to access this information a lot of the time due to lines being down.

20

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There needs to be financial and technical support for establishing technology in schools and extra funding should be available to achieve this. The itinerant teachers need to be reinstated to schools of the air and this unique position should not be lost because they are a vital part of the integral system. These unique schools, schools of the air, need to be guaranteed to retain their name and identity in their remote areas and not amalgamated or based in Perth, which has been talked about. There need to be quality staff with special training; for example, diagnostic and identification skills for students experiencing difficulties with learning, gifted and talented, etcetera, in schools of the air, distance education and rural schools, and staffing must be maintained to be able to access adequate and appropriate support and PD [professional development].

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It cannot be denied that there is much to be gained by improved technology for the development of rural and remote education and as it progresses so will opportunities for students in the bush. But educators and governments must be aware that many students, as stated before, need the skills of a teacher to keep them motivated and learning, not left to themselves without the maturity or motivation needed to keep them on task. Access must be adequate and the infrastructure needs to be correct, available and fault-free with available support systems and maintenance.

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[Student health]

For health issues, if a child has a health problem, there is very likely to be a learning problem and therefore requires access to health services. These services

5 need to be adequate and contain mobile early intervention and prevention services that are accessible to rural and remote families. These need to be mobile and in central places, as it is not feasible to travel 500 kilometres to a speech therapist and another 200 kilometres to see the physio, etcetera. Rural and isolated students have a right to access education pertaining to their special needs and requirements, whether experiencing learning difficulties, disabilities, gifted, etcetera, and there needs to be a greater link between health and educational services.

[Home tutors]

10 ICPA seeks the provision of a geographically isolated parent school supervisor and child carer allowance in recognition of the central role played by home tutors in distance education delivery. Distance education today is a demanding role for the home tutor, usually the mother. It is essentially the job of a teacher, without the training or remuneration, and usually included with the other daily tasks
15 of an isolated mother, bookkeeping, cooking, helping on the property, etcetera. ICPA seeks a GIPSAC allowance as a form, firstly, of respite for the mother, perhaps providing the means to obtain some temporary help with the teaching or the cooking or supervising the preschooler who needs mother's time too. Secondly, the allowance could be used as the means for the mother to obtain professional
20 development, as travel or accommodation funding to attend seminars, classes, etcetera, which would enhance the mother's ability to cater for her student's needs.

In conclusion, ICPA sees a genuine need for commitment to rural and remote education for rural and remote communities. There needs to be a partnership
25 between the education system and communities to ensure the educational needs of all children are met, including those at risk. Education in rural and remote schools needs to be valued and not seen as second-rate. Attitudes need to change and the education in these areas needs to be appropriately resourced and funds allocated to meet students' needs, despite geographic isolation. If because of distance costs are
30 higher, then so be it if this is what is needed to achieve the desired outcome.

Every child deserves to have access to an appropriate education, whatever their needs, to ensure they reach their full educational potential, no matter where they live. Home tutors, usually the mother, who supervise their children's daily
35 schooling through distance education, usually in primary schooling, also deserve recognition for their untiring and selfless contribution to attaining this outcome, because without their input, the whole structure would collapse. ICPA would be pleased to provide any additional information if required. Thank you.

40 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thank you very much, Helen. We would be grateful if you could leave that with us and we can work from that. Pat, any question?

SISTER RHATIGAN: No.

45 **[Students with disabilities]**

THE COMMISSIONER: The question I wanted to ask was about children with disability that you mentioned in the course of your comments. Has ICPA got any statistics about how many children with disability are actually doing distance
50 education from home with the mother or father tutoring?

MS NEWLAND: In Western Australia?

THE COMMISSIONER: In Western Australia.

5 **MS NEWLAND:** ICPA did a survey. We do have a program that is in its infancy, on a trial period for 12 months, where a support teacher goes out to each of the five schools of the air to support the teachers and, in so doing, will support the home tutor and support the student, but I think it worked out roughly - from memory, when we did the survey which was in 1997, I think there was almost a third of all the children enrolled at schools of the air that had some sort of difficulty with learning, whether it be a reading problem or a curriculum problem. ADD is another big problem out there and those students from families have no access to any facilities.

THE COMMISSIONER: When was that survey?

15 **MS NEWLAND:** I think it was in 1997.

THE COMMISSIONER: 1997. ICPA have got the results of that, have they, or was it done by somebody else?

20 **MS NEWLAND:** No, we did it ourselves. We just wrote to the schools of the air, because of the very small numbers involved and I think it was very close to a third in each school of the air had some sort of learning difficulty.

25 **THE COMMISSIONER:** I would be grateful if we could get hold of the results of that.

MS NEWLAND: Yes, certainly.

30 **THE COMMISSIONER:** If the Western Australian branch has got it, you might sent it to us.

35 **MS NEWLAND:** I will have it, yes, because we did a submission to Cheryl Vardon because there were so many children just falling through the system, falling by the wayside, with learning difficulties that weren't being picked up and there was nowhere for the mothers to go, so that was how ICPA picked it up - out of frustration - and it was very interesting.

40 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Was this pilot program for the support teacher established as a result of that?

MS NEWLAND: Yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: So it ties in.

45 **MS NEWLAND:** It's being evaluated right now, so hopefully it will be ongoing, and they have closed Chidley for the time being and are trying to take the services out to the isolated areas instead of bringing the children in, because a lot of families aren't prepared to or can't afford to send small children to Perth for terms at a time. It's very disruptive, especially if there are other children still on distance education
50 at home.

THE COMMISSIONER: So Chidley is the school that they were going to for that, was it?

5 **MS NEWLAND:** Yes, it's a centre in Mosman Park that was set up for students from all over the state with learning difficulties, but it was the brainchild of ICPA when it was instigated.

[3.15 pm]

10 **THE COMMISSIONER:** What aged kids does that take?

MS NEWLAND: Primary level.

15 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Primary school?

MS NEWLAND: Yes, we cater to seven. Well, it wouldn't be. It would be one to seven, but that's in mothballs at the moment to see if this other model works and then they're just starting to work with district officers in the rural areas to get their students at educational support programs - see if they can get that up and running, but it's not going very smoothly at the moment. I've been watching it while I've been down south in the area where I'm staying.

THE COMMISSIONER: You're not originally from the south-west?

25 **MS NEWLAND:** No, I'm originally from Perth but I live up north, but I have to leave up there in the summer because I have an allergy. So I go down there.

THE COMMISSIONER: All right, thanks very much.

30 **MS NEWLAND:** Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: David Kelly. Again, David, apologies for keeping you waiting. Would you like to introduce yourself and go straight into your comments?

35 **MR KELLY:** Sure, thank you very much. My name is David Kelly. I'm the general secretary of the State School Teachers Union of Western Australia. We're related to the Australian Education Union through contractual arrangement. We represent about 70% of all educators in the state system. Those people would be covered in the colleges, in secondary schools, primary schools, early childhood area, as well as education support centres. First of all, can I thank the Commission for the opportunity to address it? This is another forum that for years we have had to address or we have been happy to address, and the difficulty, I suppose, in coming into the Commission -and we are looking at education, the delivery of education and people's human rights around this.

45
50 The difficulty is we continually put the same types of things up, and it doesn't appear to be getting any hearing that's going to result in any proper changes. Our union is committed to the accessing of a quality education for all students in this state, and particularly those students in what is termed rural and remote parts of this state. The difficulties that we have seen over the years in the delivery of education to these rural and remote areas is first of all the constant cry that there's not enough money to address issues that are identified. We believe

there's a direct relationship to the delivery of a quality education to students in rural and remote Western Australia, the ability to have teachers go to these places and indeed to retain staff in these centres, and if you don't address the issue of attracting and retaining teachers into rural and remote Western Australia, we believe the
5 impact on the delivery of a good education system is indeed going to be continued.

[Teacher recruitment; industrial issues]

The issues that I would like to address if I can: we believe that in looking at what might attract teachers to rural and remote centres is for some statement from
10 government and some action from government to recognise indeed that there is a responsibility on government to have the role and to take the role to deliver education to all students, no matter where they might be in this state. The tyranny of distance in this state is not a good enough reason for government abrogating its responsibility, and it's to this area I'd like to address some remarks.

15
Over the last five years, at least, the number of changes that have been foisted into the public system particularly have caused instability with regards to teaching as a career. The notion of profession no longer seems to exist with the casualisation of labour, particularly in the college system, what used to be called
20 TAFE, and the same model seems now to be starting to be foisted, if you wish, into the secondary area with what is a rationalisation of resources. The impact of this on country schools is quite dramatic, from our point of view.

25 To rationalise resources confines the resources in particular spots, usually large centres. Western Australia is not a state that can rely on the large centres to deliver and be the sole deliverer of education, and hence you have the existence of School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE), SOTA (schools of the air), and the plethora of visitors coming out into rural settings to deliver updated curricula to teachers to assist them in the delivery of their education systems. That's the backup
30 to this rationalisation, and we're seeing more and more of this. At the same time we have going through parliament at the present time a new education bill. The community, particularly the community involved in the area of disability, has felt disenfranchised with regard to the development of this bill, and major concerns exist with the onus and the responsibility being shifted on to parents now around the
35 delivery of education to their children who have specific needs.

This bill is going to look like a bill that is going to empower the community, but what it does at the same time is it moves a huge responsibility onto people who are least able to respond. In the country this is exacerbated. My
40 background in teaching is 17 years. I've taught in Victoria, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. My background is education support. That's learning disabilities, and children with learning disabilities are those who are disabled in many ways. As a teacher and practitioner in Western Australia in the Goldfields, first-hand experience with regard to the ability for me as a professional to access a
45 quality profession developmental was one of the biggest difficulties that I had.

Part of that was also professional isolation - getting access to technology to let me plug into some course in some distant place did not give me the ability to test my theories and to work with colleagues with similar experiences and to develop as
50 a professional. Professional isolation for me, because there's not enough of my type of teacher in rural and remote schools, is absolutely at crisis level in this state. It is almost impossible to attract teachers with education support qualifications into

country locations at the present time. There is such a shortage of these types of people that they are not able to indeed cover positions in the metropolitan area. Country then becomes a very, very poor cousin with regard to attracting a teacher or teachers out into the large centres like the Goldfields, the Geraldtons, Carnarvons
5 and some of the north-west towns.

The ability to attract such expertise out into other locations more remote, the Tom Prices, the Wyndhams and then into the actual - what is designated the remote teaching service now - is obvious, and it's an area that requires urgent
10 attention. The Teachers Union has for 10 years now identified areas that may assist, and the areas that we have identified that would indeed start to maybe address some of the issues, is first of all to look on the delivery of education in rural and remote, has two facets for a professional who is not based in the country or is not from a country location. There's an area of compensation, in other words, to go out into
15 the country.

As a professional, you must be compensated. You shouldn't be disadvantaged. That may be in housing, access to quality professional development or indeed an acknowledgment that at some stage you will get employer assistance to
20 give you an opportunity to practice in a location where you can access quality PD or indeed study. So the compensatory side of it is an area which just compensates you for where you are going to be living if you're out teaching in some of these places. In order to retain the professional out there, a quality professional, then we come to an area - which we deem as incentives. What will make us stay out there? What is
25 the attraction to stay out there?

As a practitioner, and I'm visiting many teachers out there, they love the environment, many of them. They love the opportunity to get hands-on. That is
30 beaten out of them very quickly when their personal needs are not met. You come away with nothing if you stay out there two or three or four years. You come back in; you're not even competitive in the metropolitan area. So professionally you have not been able to keep up. So you're not competitive in this world of merit selection, and you're also caught up in the area where this government, certainly, and the federal government is going, in the area of casualisation of the workforce.
35

In the last four years in this state there has been no permanency granted except to the start of this year; no permanency granted to any primary teachers. What this has led to is an exodus from the country of teachers who up to three years
40 ago, on going to places like Mullewa and Morawa or going to Yarloop or going to East Kalgoorlie, these people had a reasonable expectation that they would access permanency. The system, because of a formula, decided that they couldn't grant permanency in the primary area. Therefore we've had teachers, young teachers, going out first of all, having left family behind despite the lack of proper compensation, and despite the lack of incentives, going out into those country
45 locations and not accessing permanency, staying there for two years.

As soon as it was apparent that they were not going to get permanency they left and they came to the likes of Perth and some of the other larger centres in the south-west and they picked up relief teaching. They could live with their loved
50 ones, their families. They could access further study. The cost of living was cheaper. They could share with friends and they could pick up relief teaching and make as much money, and if they didn't pick up enough relief teaching, they could

always access some other part-time work which would subsidise their salaries. Many of them will never return to the country because of their experiences. These were teachers who had already given two and three years, and the continuity of an educational program for those children was greatly affected.

5

[Remote Teaching Service]

An example which I will cite in this state with regards to where government, and particularly the Education Department recognised the problem and addressed it is the remote teaching service. They chose to combine a group of schools in the remote parts of this state - I go on memory here. I think it's something like - it would be about 40 schools in very remote parts of Western Australia - about 250-odd teachers, and I include in that administrators and so on, and AIEWs. They gave them a package which first of all recognised that there's a huge monetary call on you if you're going to teach in these areas, and they gave them this money up-front, guaranteed.

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They also gave them a guarantee of a transfer out after a particular time. They also guaranteed that they would give them, after three years' service in such a place - and I'll talk about places like Wiluna, places like Jamieson and Warburton - they guaranteed them that after three years in such a location they would be given 10 weeks' paid leave guaranteed and if they spent the fourth year they would give them 22 weeks' paid leave.

[3.30 pm]

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The result of that type of package - and there were other things that were in there, free housing was also part of the package - was the remote teaching service was over-prescribed with regard to applications and expressions of interest, and indeed the Department has the ability now to call for expressions of interest and has managed to maintain some type of continuity in those very, very remote schools in the state.

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The impact of that on the communities, based on our members out there, is a decrease in violence in the schools, which was a major problem about four, five years ago. There is still violence in some of these communities, but generally violence now has lessened. Relationships have been able to be built between community and the professionals in that they knew the professional wasn't going over the hill after a year or after two years, they were going to be there for three or four years at least - a camaraderie between the professionals in that they got together as a group on a regular basis with regard to the professional development and the planning of curriculum. They got together regularly in certain centres - like Uluru and so on and in Murchison, in the Kimberley. They got together as groups and shared on a regular basis professional contact.

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To go to those types of things, and there's one this week in the Murchison, you see teachers sitting down planning curriculum, sharing the problems, and talking about the common issues, and it's all learning centred stuff, and it's a wonderful experience to see how these people come together, and the stuff they do when they come together - it's absolutely marvellous. That's an example of once the Department realises, and putting appropriate resources in, what can be achieved with regard to the delivery of quality education in those most difficult places in the state.

[Regional centres]

5 The real poor cousins in the country at the present time, when we're talking about equity issues for education, are those types of places like Carnarvon and Mullewa, Morawa, certain parts of the Mid-West district, the Goldfields district, those places which can access what one would call regional centres. What we're seeing in those places is teachers will not go there and stay there. The numerous accounts of violence in the schools certainly has filled the media here, and our members have been subject to numerous incidents of violence.

10 Many students are disenfranchised with the delivery of the types of programs in some of those schools because of lack of resources, because of the lack of continuity, and also with again the fact that teachers go for a short period of time and move on. Many of these types of schools do not retain the leadership in the school for long periods.

20 In Meekatharra this year I think they're now into the third head, the third principal acting. This is an example - if you wanted to concentrate on the likes of Meekatharra and visit it, it goes back - in the last four or five years I think they've had six different heads of school in the last three or four years, six different. That is impossible for a good relationship between the community. The teachers don't feel that they're going to be listened to and it's worthwhile putting in and they're bypassed. There's no educational leadership, and the community can't develop relationships, and Meekatharra is probably one of the worst ones that I'm aware of with regard to that, the continuity difficulties.

30 When we look at some of the issues we would say that the government must pay attention to the professional needs of teachers in the first instance if they're going to address the issue of equity and quality education in rural and remote schools. The example of the RTS, the Remote Teaching Service, may be used as a model. We have participated in the Tomlinson Report several years ago and numerous of those recommendations still remain unaddressed from that Tomlinson Report.

35 A proper induction program for schools, which includes practicums of teachers in colleges to country has started this year. Sadly, at the very same time where they're addressing some of the induction programs and getting students into these country centres, we find that in order to fill the shortages in these country locations we have the attraction going, with regard to scholarships, to other states and overseas teachers to fill positions which cannot be filled. At the present time in the Goldfields in May 1999 we still have about 17 unfilled positions in that particular district at the present time.

45 The continuity and again the relationship building can't take place because of this and the patchwork fixing of this problem, the short-term nature of it, doesn't address quality education issues for students there. It is appalling, and students just can't develop a relationship when they don't know the teacher is there next year. They don't even know if the teacher is going to be there next week, and the example of trying to get overseas teachers for short term, and we know it's short term, is not a way to address quality education issues for us.

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[Disability]

5 With regard to the professional issues, I've spoken at length about that. If I can just very quickly concentrate on the area of disability, as a practitioner and also as the general secretary of the Teachers Union I am very much aware of some of the issues that our members face in rural centres and the delivery of their educational program. Because they are segregated, or have been segregated up to now, as a group aside - like an attachment to a school - there has been a professional isolation, which I've mentioned earlier, which has been an ongoing problem for those practitioners: "You're not part of the school," type of thing.

10 Now, in some schools that's better than others, but that's a real professional issue for those educators, and it's like the preschool teacher - you're not looked on as a proper professional; you're not part of the whole. These are issues that really need to be addressed, and the importance and the continuity of education in rural and remote schools are exacerbated, the problems are
15 exacerbated, with regard to those little professional divisions that occur and are highlighted in those types of communities.

20 With disability, the range of disabilities that one can encounter in country and rural schools and remote schools stretches any professional's ability to the limit to deliver a quality education program to all those students. In the delivery of certain educational programs to students with specific disabilities you require other para-professional support that you cannot access. There was a time where if I had a child who was hearing impaired I would have a teacher who would be available to me maybe once a fortnight to come and address those issues and work with that
25 child. That person now is stretched to the limits.

The back-up of school psychologists, the breaking down of that profession - indeed, the intent of this particular Department at the present time to spread these people across numerous schools, particularly in remote schools, remote locations,
30 across maybe five or six different schools, means that a child cannot access this type of person when they need them, so usually what you end up having is a referral list that a teacher puts together and then you're called out of the class and the para-professional, the psych, can see you. This is pathetic in the extreme with regard to a child accessing quality professionals when they're needed.

35 **[Specialist itinerant teachers]**

Itinerant teachers - music, LOTE, language other than English, those types of itinerant teachers - in one case in the south-west - and that's not a great problem with regard to lifestyle, we have one teacher who teaches across 11 different schools
40 in one week, organises two bands, and they are a temporary teacher, in other words, they're casual. They're dependent for a job next year on a tick, so that teacher has no loyalty to the system, but is breaking up and burning, and it's a young person. They're breaking up and burning because as a professional they feel insulted, not supported. They absolutely have no collegiate support because they
45 don't belong to any school; they're across 11 schools. The principals want them in and they do their best to get them in, but they don't have a place. They don't even have an office or a desk in any school and they do most of their preparation at home on their computer.

50 **[Information technology]**

I'll finish my remarks if I can with regard to technology. In rural and remote schools one of the major problems we have in this state with the tyranny of

distance is technology. Even if it was available, it cannot be accessed because of the actual technical difficulties of accessing information technology. I am not an expert on the details of this, except in talking to educators out there and to some parents of isolated students - is that you can receive information but you can't broadcast, or vice versa. It's one way or the other: you can either get it and you can't receive it or send it, or vice versa.

The dependence that we seem to now be placing on technology to deliver education is causing major difficulties. Where there is a great deal of talk about resourcing technology and that every school is going to have enough computers, etcetera, etcetera, we are finding there is a division, particularly with regard to our children in rural and remote Western Australia - if you can't afford to have the computer at home you are not literate, you're not computer literate; that's if you can get the thing down the tube or off a satellite dish. You don't have the technology at home. You don't have centres like you would in the likes of Kalgoorlie, the large centre, or in Perth. You don't have a place where you can actually go in and access the technology in a particular site. At least you can get onto a terminal.

So there is a division occurring - early days - in this state where you've got the haves and have nots, and there's going to be further discrimination, if you wish, with regard to if your parents can't afford the technology, and much of the curriculum - maybe that's a bit unfair, a good deal of the curriculum is dependent on you being computer literate and, for example, being able to access the Net, that is creating a discrimination of itself, and we have not addressed it.

As a Teachers Union our members are expected to be able to be conversant with the new technologies. I would love to see some proper dialogue and some strategic plan in place: how are we going to educate the educators around this technology in a way that's going to make it strategic and focused on the needs of students? I haven't seen the plan and the problem is on us, because more and more we have some students and some teachers who are highly proficient, but we have an ageing workforce across Australia; it's about 47 years of age, from memory. They are not the group that loves this technology, but we have not addressed it. The ageing workforce and new technologies are something that needs addressing. That requires investment.

[3.45 pm]

My very last remark is as the Teachers Union we have got two lines that we take with regard to the delivery of education here. We're committed to public education - absolutely committed to it. In doing that we have two themes that we will consistently run and that drives us. One is the industrial rights of our members, and our industrial rights are related and integrated with the other aspect that drives us and that is the professional rights of our members. There are two streams that overlap most of the time, sometimes are separate: the industrial rights and the professional rights.

If we don't ensure, and I'm talking from our position, that those two things are looked after, we believe that it's going to have a deleterious effect to delivery of public education, and we do not see the private systems taking on the problems associated with the delivery of education for disabled children, for various groups, particularly the Aboriginal population in this state and the widespreadness

of that particular group of people, the issue of the violence across the state and the need for schools and the onus that are on schools at the present time to answer for the ills of society. So we are totally committed to looking after the professional aspects of our members and the industrial. As I say, they generally overlap; sometimes they are separate. I'll stop there, thank you, commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much. Pat?

[Aboriginal Education Workers]

SISTER RHATIGAN: The AIEWs, does their award come under your bracket at all?

MR KELLY: No, they come under the Miscellaneous Workers Union generally. We have had, over a number of years, many of these people - and I've spoken to many of them out in the remotes because I used to teach out there - want to come in with us. They feel because we've been, if you wish, volatile, if I could use those terms, with regards to pursuing our members, they feel that we would best look after their interests.

The AEU, which is our federal body, is definitely interested in taking on the role of looking after the interests of this particular group of educators and I suppose first-hand knowledge of working with some of these, what used to be called AEWs, AIEWs now, it is one of the most saddening things for me as an educator, when I taught out at Jamieson for a very brief period, to see the salary and working conditions of those people and the lack of acknowledgment for their skills in the delivery of language and to be able to teach in language. I know my dependence on my AIEW when I was out there to deliver anything that I was doing. The salaries and working conditions and the continuity again expected of these people has been appalling.

THE COMMISSIONER: My question was going to be exactly the same actually because of what we saw. But are there any discussions with the MWU about transferring responsibility?

MR KELLY: Yes, it is quite contentious at the present time. Federally the AEU is looking at indeed progressing this particular matter into the federal Commission. We have had discussions as late as last month with the local Miscellaneous Workers Union and there's contentions and tensions around it. We intend to pursue it with regards to the needs of those particular workers and the development of a proper career path for those people. The qualifications issue and the registration of AIEWs, across particularly South Australia, Queensland, probably northern New South Wales and ourselves and Northern Territory, we have had a joint meeting of these groups over the years and the issues are common, particularly in those remote areas.

The specific issues for AIEWs in the metropolitan area here are horrendous. I suppose I'm diverting here a bit but some of the requirements of AIEWs, say in Perth in the metropolitan area, they are caught up in community issues which tear them apart at a local level. If they take a particular action on the needs of the system which drives them and pays them on a particular matter around Aboriginality in a metropolitan school, it can alienate them in their own community here. I don't see any addressing of those types of issues here.

5 We believe that the need for crisis management - there are groups of
Aboriginals in this state here available, particularly in the Department of Justice,
who are expert in the area of getting into schools and working with communities
and schools to get them working together, and using the AIEWs in a different way.
That hasn't been practised as much as we would like to see here, although we're not
directly involved in that particular thing. We have tried to utilise these people where
the teaching profession, if I could use that, and schools have not been able to
communicate effectively with Aboriginal communities in parts of metropolitan
Perth, and we've had some horrendous experiences because of that.

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15 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Certainly there is some logic in having them in the
Teachers Union, particularly because of the career progression, trying to assist them
to upgrade their qualifications to become qualified teachers and not just Aboriginal
Education Workers I think is very important. That makes more sense to associate
them with the Teachers Union for that reason.

20 **MR KELLY:** Regardless of where we would sit it is essential, and we would not in
any way block the ability of an AIEW to access qualifications through a different
method, that would give them recognition and registration as a teacher in this state
or indeed across Australia. Then whatever happens after that, as far as I'm
concerned, the main thing is to have the teacher and then if a union is involved at
that point - I have an interest in it, but certainly to me that's a secondary interest.
We are not addressing the basic interest and the basic interest in my view is get a
proper career path in place, get proper recognition of what these people do and what
they contribute to education and then let the other stuff take place if it's going to,
and it will.

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30 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thanks, David. Just one other small thing: when was the
remote teaching service set up?

MR KELLY: I think it's into its fourth year this year.

35 **THE COMMISSIONER:** So it was about 96?

MR KELLY: Yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: Okay, thanks very much.

40 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Yes, thanks, David.

MR KELLY: My pleasure.

45 **THE COMMISSIONER:** If you would like to leave us whatever you've got that
you can leave behind or if you would like to send us material - - -

MR KELLY: If it's okay with you I will write a brief submission to you and touch
on the points I've raised.

50 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Yes, sure, thanks very much.

MR KELLY: Thank you very much for the time.

THE COMMISSIONER: Elaine, come on up. Thanks for your patience and your persistence.

5 **MS RABBITT:** No, thank you for fitting me in this afternoon.

THE COMMISSIONER: That's all right. Do you want to introduce yourself and make your comments?

10 **MS RABBITT:** Good afternoon, I'm Elaine Rabbitt, I'm the coordinator of the Broome regional campus of Edith Cowan University. My first comments are related to the retention rate of secondary students in a senior high school. Firstly, I'd like to bring it to the attention of the Commission that there are some inequities in the system whereby students may be paid to go down to Perth each term if their parents
15 choose to send them away for their schooling, rather than keep them in their local town.

[Travel subsidies]

20 In the case of Broome being a senior high school there are provisions for a limited amount of subjects that students can be taught in Years 11 and 12. There are also many students who are studying in the high school, who are doing distance and isolated subjects through SIDE. One inequity that has been brought to my attention is that students who are enrolled at SIDE, and also enrolled in their local district
25 high school or senior high school, are not eligible for funds to travel to the city if say, for example, if they need to go to a camp or training or some type of thing that's happening in the city for isolated students in their subject.

30 So I believe that this is a gross inequity. Whereas their counterparts who have decided to leave their town and their family can have their air fare paid each term backwards and forwards, but a student that is actually enrolled there in the town can't receive any assistance to go down for part of their course. That's my first point there.

35 **THE COMMISSIONER:** And we're well aware of that point.

MS RABBITT: Right, okay.

40 **THE COMMISSIONER:** I don't know if you were here earlier when I raised this with the Education Department people.

MS RABBITT: No, I wasn't.

45 **THE COMMISSIONER:** We've heard a lot about both of those issues of boarding school versus excursion and SIDE subsidies, but only payable if you have over 75% of SIDE courses. So we are aware of those and we will get more information on them from the education authorities.

[Abstudy]

50 **MS RABBITT:** Okay, good. So I believe that this does affect the range of subjects that students are able to study and in turn the retention of students staying in Years 11 and 12 in the rural and remote schools. Another issue is that the changes in Abstudy will grossly affect, I believe, Indigenous students, their retention rate

5 also in secondary school, which has further ramifications of those that will reach university. Now, we all know that the retention rate of Indigenous students in secondary school is very low compared to the non-Indigenous students and institutions like Edith Cowan University have initiated teacher-training programs in rural areas.

10 Now, in the Broome regional campus we have got Indigenous students in, for want of a better word, the mainstream bachelor of education program and we've got Indigenous students in the AIEW teacher-training program. The point I'd like to make now about the changes in Abstudy which affect those students doing their teacher training is one that to complete a bachelor of education the students have to go on a 10-week teaching practice. Now, we're encouraging Indigenous students to do their teaching practice in remote communities, in their own communities where they may come from, or their family or to just go out to a community even if they have no family affiliations there.

15 It's brought to my attention this year that through the changes to Abstudy those students that elect to go out into the communities to do their prac teaching are only eligible for 40 days away from home allowance. So this leaves a shortfall. If we're talking really remote where the students can't come in on the weekends, it leaves a shortfall of up to 30 or 40 days where there is no allowance covered for their teaching practice. In the current situation now, some students are experiencing severe hardship and poverty because of this, because they want to be out in the community doing their prac teaching but the allowance doesn't cover them.

20 This is a big issue, I think, that will have ramifications all the way down the line for primary and secondary education in our state, because we have taken the initiative to train up Indigenous people so that that can address problems that I've heard here in my short time, of other speakers, about retaining teachers in rural and remote areas. So the initiative has been taken to train people locally, to keep them in the area, but then we come up against these shortfalls in funding which make it very difficult for it to progress. That's about it.

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35 **THE COMMISSIONER:** That's about it? Fine, thanks. Are there other areas where you've noticed potential negative results of the changes to Abstudy?

40 **MS RABBITT:** Well, I believe, as Pat will know, that there's going to be a session in Broome that will inform us of the changes in Abstudy. So I'm not ofay with other changes that come to my mind now, that I'm familiar with. Once I've heard what the changes are then I'm sure it will have other ramifications.

45 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Okay. If there are particular things that come up or even particular individual cases that come up, can you let us know? The Commonwealth has said basically that it's not going to have any significant detrimental effect and - I mean quite apart from that complexity, looking through these pages and pages of documents that we have, to actually pin it down to what it's going to mean to individuals is very difficult to do even for us, let alone for an individual recipient. So we're just trying to actually get a picture of where the negative consequences will be so that we can do some more work in those or take it back to the Commonwealth and say, "Well, these are the areas where there may be unintended consequences or alternatively where the consequences are too serious to be permitted." But we need actual cases.

MS RABBITT: Right. I can give you an anecdotal case whereby because the Abstudy is under the means test up until you're 25 years of age on your parents' income if you're a single person, a particular student decided that she would be better off to get married because her and her partner's income would be under the threshold. So that that is an outcome of this means testing. It seems such an unusual circumstance to have that, that because of the rules you have to be under your parents until you're 25 so you take another option. So people are actually looking for alternatives to get around this - but, yes, I will keep that in mind. That is the one most pertinent at the moment, about the teacher training and the prac teaching that is currently affecting students at this very time now.

[4 pm]

THE COMMISSIONER: Does the Edith Cowan teacher education programs you've described, the B Ed program, the AIEW program for Aboriginal students, are they both funded out of core university money or are you reliant on specific-purpose external grants to maintain those programs?

MS RABBITT: We are, through Kurongkurl Katitjin which is the School of Indigenous Australian Studies at Edith Cowan University, and we have our set allocation of funding in our department. The students in the mainstream are in through the Faculty of Education. The students in the AIEW program are in the Kurongkurl Katitjin faculty. So they are in that area but they are in education as well. I don't think I've explained that very clearly, have I?

THE COMMISSIONER: No, I understand that. So it's not therefore dependent upon IESIP funding or anything like that continuing?

MS RABBITT: No, it's not, no.

THE COMMISSIONER: The University will just continue to run it, come what may.

MS RABBITT: That's right. That's what the intention is, to keep running the programs so that there can be more Indigenous people trained.

THE COMMISSIONER: Have the staff involved in the centre got tenure or long-term contracts?

MS RABBITT: In the Broome Regional Centre?

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MS RABBITT: No, not at all.

THE COMMISSIONER: So what's the arrangement with the staffing situation there?

MS RABBITT: They are contracts. In my own case my contract will expire at the end of this year because it has to be addressed where the university is going to next.

THE COMMISSIONER: I see. We heard earlier today from Peter Reynolds.

MS RABBITT: Yes.

5 **THE COMMISSIONER:** He was saying that it moves around from place to place.

MS RABBITT: That's correct.

10 **THE COMMISSIONER:** And so they engage staff depending on where it's located.

MS RABBITT: That's correct, yes.

15 **THE COMMISSIONER:** A transient program with itinerant staff.

MS RABBITT: That's right.

20 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Does the university offer any scholarships for any of the Aboriginal students doing the courses?

MS RABBITT: Yes, there are scholarships available through Kurongkurl Katitjin. There's also emergency assistance offered to the students, and my students out on that prac teaching now have all applied for emergency assistance through the school. It's imperative. They need it. There's no other way around it.

25 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Are they going to get it?

MS RABBITT: Yes, they will get it.

30 **THE COMMISSIONER:** They will all get it, will they?

MS RABBITT: Yes.

35 **THE COMMISSIONER:** So that will just top up the Abstudy deficiency?

MS RABBITT: That will top it up, but even so it will top it up and that will alleviate their situation but I still think it needs to be addressed.

40 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Sure, because it's a stopgap measure.

MS RABBITT: That's right.

45 **THE COMMISSIONER:** From what you say too it's money that should be better used for scholarships for new people rather than trying to make up the deficiencies in existing Commonwealth programs.

MS RABBITT: That's right.

50 **THE COMMISSIONER:** It makes sense. Thanks for that. Pat, sorry.

5 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** Just an aside, when you raised the scholarship thing, are any of the students affected by or would they be affected next year, or some of the students be affected next year, by the withdrawal of the scholarships that the Commonwealth government was giving for needy students? Are you aware of that, the \$10 million program that was axed in the new budget?

MS RABBITT: No, I'm sorry, I have to admit I'm not aware of that.

10 **SISTER RHATIGAN:** I presume that some of the scholarships would be coming from that program.

MS RABBITT: Yes, I'm sure any withdrawal of funding for scholarships filters its way right down to the students who need it the most.

15 **THE COMMISSIONER:** All the way down the line.

SISTER RHATIGAN: Yes, thank you very much.

20 **MS RABBITT:** I also just would like to make another point, that I did have some difficulty in finding out how to make an appointment with the Commission and that is really why I think in the end I missed out on speaking to the Commission in Broome and so I followed it up down here as I was going to be here, and I'm sure it's just one of those - what will I say - in the newspaper it said that the commission was coming but it didn't give any contact of where, where you rang or anything like that.

THE COMMISSIONER: I thought it gave a phone number.

30 **MS RABBITT:** Pardon?

THE COMMISSIONER: No phone number?

MS RABBITT: No phone number was in the newspaper.

35 **THE COMMISSIONER:** That's a serious breach, isn't it?

MS RABBITT: So just for your PR or in the future.

40 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thank you. It should always have a phone number in, so I'm not sure why. It must have been just either forgotten or slipped down somewhere.

45 **MS RABBITT:** That's right. So then when I rang up the venue of course I was told, "We're hosting it but this isn't where you make the appointments", which was a fair enough comment, but I was able to get the information from the venue in Broome.

THE COMMISSIONER: Good. Thanks for that.