

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the State Education System in Victoria

Bendigo – Tuesday 16 April 2024

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WITNESS

Travis Eddy, Principal, Kennington Primary School.

The CHAIR: Welcome, Travis Eddy, to our inquiry. Before I continue I would like to introduce my panel. I am Trung Luu, the Chair of the committee. My Deputy Chair Ryan Batchelor is to my right, with Ms Rachel Payne, Ms Melina Bath, Mrs Moira Deeming, Mr Aiv Puglielli and Dr Renee Heath. We also have Mr Joe McCracken on Zoom with us.

Before I continue I just want to read this to you regarding your submission today. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege, as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975*, and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. The transcript will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

Could you state your name and the organisation you are representing, please.

Travis EDDY: Yes. Travis Eddy, Principal of Kennington Primary School and the Bendigo Deaf Facility, which is just up the road from here. I have been in the Department of Education for 25-plus years, and of those, 16 were as a principal.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We are open for you to make an opening statement regarding your submission.

Travis EDDY: Yes, no worries. Looking at the terms of reference, I think there are a number of key elements here to speak about when it comes to the state of education in state schools in Victoria. I suppose all of those points are very relevant to what I would like to say today, and it is going to be very hard to condense all of it obviously into that amount of time.

As I said, I have been doing this job for 16-odd years as a principal, so I have seen lots of changes. I think one of the questions that I probably raise when I look at the terms of reference is: we talk about it as a system, as a state system and as a state school system, but what is it that we actually mean when we say that, and what do we stand for? That has changed dramatically over my journey and more so since COVID times, and I understand that is part of the terms of reference as well. What I mean by 'changed' is that, as a state system, once upon a time we gave, we did, we put out and we volunteered. We did all of those things. That has increasingly become harder to do as a principal and as an educator, and that challenge for schools is right here and right now. We talk about the effect that COVID has had on the shortage of staff, the retention of staff and all those things, and those impacts have just become tenfold over that time. The challenge there is that we also have a number of changes. When we talk about the system, what is it that we actually stand for as a system? It is really muddled at the moment, I believe. I think it is quite grey. We are somewhere in between what the state system was and what the private system is, and I do not know that we are finding a really good footing in any camp at the moment. That is to do with a number of things.

When we talk about state education, we are talking about funding. We are all aware of the current SRS and the 90 per cent that state schools are funded at the moment. We are also aware that the ideal of what education is in a state school is that kids go on camps and kids get swimming lessons. Anything and everything that becomes an issue in society comes back through the schools, yet how can we possibly do that when we are not funded enough to do it? We have gone from a system where once upon a time you would have a camp and people wanted to go on a camp, as educators, because it was great for relationship building and it was great for all of those things. Now they get paid for it. They only get paid for it if you have got the money to pay them, otherwise it cannot happen. So the very fabric of what I believe state education was, for quite some time, is rapidly changing and changing at a rate of knots.

That probably leads me into the next part. I have spoken about funding. I have spoken about what it looks like for us in school. It also leads into the teacher training side of things. We are going to be playing catch-up for

quite some time, particularly after COVID. We have still got people coming through our schools – if you liken the teacher trainers to the preps or the kindergarten kids that were in COVID when it first hit and were not going to school, that was the same as the teacher trainers. So the teachers that were at university at that time were either doing it remotely or were not doing rounds at all. And significantly, there is a disparity between what we were getting six years ago and what we are getting now in terms of graduate teachers.

That being said, my school, Kennington, used to have 100 applicants for every job that we put up. Now we have no more than five. So the role of retainment and all of those things is quite interesting. Some would say that the extra payments for teachers are fair and valid, particularly in regional and rural areas. I would argue: why can't we pay everybody a little bit extra in retaining and keeping them, looking at their workloads, all of those sorts of things? So teacher training is there.

Another part of the terms of reference was around students with special needs. I have got a very big question about that. What is meant by 'students with special needs'? Because what is meant in policy or what is written in policy is completely different to what we deal with in schools. Are students with special needs kids that are funded – that have applied for funding, that have a diagnosis, that go to a paediatrician, that have medication and all of those things? Is that what we include as a child with special needs, or is it a child that has special needs? You live and breathe the work that we do in schools, and my day consists of students with special needs all day. I am in a government school. We have got 625 kids. We have probably got about 200 of those on NDIS at the moment. Now, out of those 200 we probably have about 30 that I would say and argue that the department classifies as having special needs because they are funded by the department under PSD or the DIP program.

We talk about training staff to actually work with kids with special needs. What are we training them in? Are we training them in intervention and protection, because they get hit and kicked and spat on? Are we training them in teaching kids how to read? You know, there are lots of questions about how we teach kids how to read now, around phonics and whole language, and that is dividing the community in education as well. So there are a number of things that we talk about when we talk about kids with special needs, but I would argue that every child has got some sorts of needs that need to be met regardless of who that child is and where they come from. So the blanket of 'children with special needs' is a really important one to say who is classified in that group and what is, because the children that get funded in my school generally speaking are not the ones that we spend all the time with. The ones that we spend all the time with we are normally walking past the All Seasons trying to find. So there are a couple of things there.

The inadequacy of the funding – it is a real cyclic set-up. We now have a funding system that works like it did, let us even go back four or five years ago, yet we have an EBA which conflicts with it. We have an EBA that has taken time off face-to-face teaching, which is great. It pays time in lieu. I am not sure how many other people deal with this at a HR level, but dealing with time in lieu and the questions when there are no guidelines – there are guidelines, but they are very grey, pretty much principal discretion – what does that look like? Dealing with that on a day-to-day basis – I have got a staff of over 100 people. Everybody has got a question, everybody wants to know when they can take it, what it looks like, when does it go. So we have a system that has this amount of money and we have an EBA that says A, B, C, D and E, and they do not correlate. We would like to think they do. We would like to think that the work that teachers do that is outlined in the department resources is the same as what teachers actually do, and it is not. It is not close.

We have a model in FISO that looks at excelling. When you go through a review and the review says you are doing everything you can possibly do but you are not excelling and staff are saying 'We're working far too hard,' how do you ever get there? How do you ever meet that? So we are dealing with a moral dilemma all the time because we want to be there, we want to do the best for our kids and we want the staff to have all this training, but it is near on impossible to get it done. There is just not the time. And the EBA now allows teachers – and it should – a 38-hour week, time in lieu, all of these things. That is not how the state education system was set.

What I am saying is that the parameters we work within are not the parameters. We are working in a space where, as a principal, you do not have the ability to make those decisions, you do not have the ability to be able to do those things because (1) staff leave. They are quite happy to go to other schools, whether it be a local government school or private education. They will leave. They can do that. They know they can do that now.

Then (2) we have got kids that – when we talk about special needs and what it is. And (3) the funding is not adequate.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Travis. There are a few lines of questions we need to ask you in relation to your submission. I will just touch on one question and then I will open it up to the panel. You mentioned special needs. I just want to ask you: are school educational systems or the school itself catering for special needs? Are they able to cater for special needs? You mentioned special needs, a range of them – those who are funded and those that are not funded. Those that are not funded we have seen through the various stages through the years. But those that are funded – are we actually catering for those, and if we are or not, do you think we need any additional staff for each school to assist those kids?

Travis EDDY: Absolutely I think we cater. I think all schools cater to the best of their absolute ability with what they have got. What they have got is not enough. We have students across the board that need one-on-one support to be in school all day, full stop. The disability inclusion program, in terms of how that looks now, is a much better process than what we had with the PSD. It is not a deficit model. It is actually looking at what we need to put in place for these kids to succeed. There are still the parameters and the hoops you have to jump through. We are talking about families that need to go to a paediatrician to get assessments done. They cannot get into a paediatrician for 24 months. What happens to that child for those 24 months? In a school setting what happens to that child is we make do. We try and keep them engaged, we try and work with them, we work with the family – those sorts of things. Adequately do we do what we are meant to do with the money we have got? Yes, we do. Could we do more? Absolutely.

The CHAIR: I will throw the questions over to the panel before I come back. Ryan?

Ryan BATCHELOR: Thanks, Chair. Thanks, Travis, for coming in. You said at the start you did not know what we stand for as a system. What should we stand for? What should the state education system stand for?

Travis EDDY: Look, my belief is that it should be equitable. We stand for equity. We give not the same but what people need. I think once upon a time we did that. We did it better in communities as well. So this is not just a Department of Education issue, it is a society issue. We know that. I believe it needs to be about equity. What do these children need to succeed? What do our staff need to succeed? What do our schools need to succeed? Equity.

Ryan BATCHELOR: The other thing, to just go from the big picture to micro: you spoke a bit about really the time for things, like the time off in lieu requests that you as a principal are having to spend making a series of administrative and management and human resource type decisions on. It is obviously intricate and I can only assume very time-consuming for a principal who has got 100-odd staff on the books. It has been suggested by others that the administrative span of control that principals have is too small for scale and the department statewide or regions are too large for effective support. Any reflections on that? Do you feel that the kind of system support you get from the department at a regional level, for example, helps with the running of your school administratively at a day-to-day level? Would there be any benefit in having a different sort of arrangement where there were clustering models and the like to try and take some of that administrative burden out of the hands of principals, giving you more time to do the kind of educational leadership that many principals excel at?

Travis EDDY: It has always been a burning question. I think there are two parts to it. Do we get the support when we need it? When we talk about HR administration support, that comes from a central base, not so much a regional base. We can make that phone call and we can wait to hear back, basically, or we wait online and then we get the help that we need if it fits the purpose. Sometimes it does not.

Ryan BATCHELOR: What do you mean by that?

Travis EDDY: Let us say, for instance, that we are talking about retention of staffing. We have no power to extend people's contracts past six months. That was something that got into the agreement I think two agreements ago, because what was happening is obviously people were getting jobs without applying. But if we need it at any time, we need it now. We do not have the ability to do that anymore. Like, I have got some good staff that are on six-month contracts. Why would I put them through a process when I know they are the right person for the job? What is the point? But I have to do that, because they are the rules. So that part being said, the next part I would probably answer is in the sense that in my example, in both schools that I have been in I

have had a number of staff – one being a very low SES school and one being a midrange school at the moment with a component of that low SES in it as well – I have always had a number of staff, but if I was working in the faith-based system or the private system, I would have an HR manager. I do not have one. That is me. So my time is taken up with those HR issues all the time. If you asked me what my major role is, it is HR.

Ryan BATCHELOR: It is human resources.

Travis EDDY: Yes, absolutely. HR and then behaviour management.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Dr Heath.

Renee HEATH: Thank you. Thank you so much for your submission and your presentation. A couple of things – you mentioned when you were talking about special needs kids that the first thing is the ones with special needs do not take up all of the time. So the kids that are taking up the time, what is that with? Behavioural issues?

Travis EDDY: Yes.

Renee HEATH: It is behavioural issues?

Travis EDDY: Absolutely it is behavioural issues. When it comes to things like that, I know that there is a theory around education time, socio-economic status and those things when we are talking about these kids. It is not always the way. I have seen it from both ends, both with very affluent families that have got children that have got needs that are not getting the support they need because it does not want to be recognised and then the flip side of it from low-SES, non-educated families as well. The challenge that we face is that when these kids come into your school – imagine walking into an environment where you get hit, you get sworn at, you are kicked, your table is flipped, and then as a teacher you have got this moral obligation to the other 24 kids in the classroom to make them safe. How do you do that? So the things that we are dealing with when we are talking about the kids that have got these additional needs is that we have got so many children that are complex and their families are complex and everything else is complex about them, yet we have to provide a safe and secure environment for everybody.

Renee HEATH: Obviously you cannot control what happens at home; that is outside your scope. But do you think that part of this is downstream of classroom management and classroom discipline not being taught at university?

Travis EDDY: Yes and no. I think that teachers do not come in with it. I will only use Kennington as an example. We teach our staff how to do that. That does not stop kids from doing what they choose to do. It never does.

Renee HEATH: The other thing you spoke about in that same part was that you said phonics is dividing the community. Do you teach phonics?

Travis EDDY: Not the way that it is being promoted at the moment. That is a very –

Renee HEATH: As in the OG system? Which system do you mean? Which one is being promoted?

Travis EDDY: At the moment there is that narrative around whole language versus phonics instruction within schools. We try to utilise our teachers as the people who pick and choose what they teach and how they use that with kids. We have a teaching and learning model, and within that model we would expect our teachers to make equitable decisions for what children need. So if a child needs phonics instruction, the teacher should be skilled enough to give that phonics instruction. If a student does not need that phonics instruction and needs whole language, they should be skilled enough to do that.

Renee HEATH: Do the children in your school meet the proficiency standards?

Travis EDDY: As they come in?

Renee HEATH: As they come in. We have seen through the Grattan Institute's recent report that one in three children do not meet proficiency standards in reading and writing in Victoria and half in rural and regional communities. Where does your school sit within that?

Travis EDDY: Our data seems to be quite cohort-based. We can have years where it is fantastic, depending on the children.

Renee HEATH: And what would fantastic be?

Travis EDDY: Fantastic would be 75, 80 per cent, 85 per cent.

Renee HEATH: Okay. What years are they? The higher years?

Travis EDDY: No, I just mean in cohort-specific groups. If you look at our NAPLAN results, year 3 NAPLAN can be really good, and then in year 5 it will be really good again, so when those kids hit year 5. Similarly, if it is low in year 3, it will improve but it will still be low in year 5, based on those cohorts.

Renee HEATH: You also mentioned that you are not excelling, though. One of the things you mentioned was that you are not excelling and that staff are working too hard. What do you mean by that?

Travis EDDY: The FISO model, when you look at a review for a school, has four categories: it starts at 'emerging' and ends in 'excelling,' and there are four stages you can be at. In our model, in the report was that we were doing a fantastic job, we were doing all of these things, but we were not excelling. Then the conversation came: 'But staff are saying they are working too hard.' How can you ever get to that point of excelling if your staff are saying they are working too hard?

Renee HEATH: By changing the teaching methods, perhaps? Would that work?

Travis EDDY: Depending –

Renee HEATH: By going to phonics?

Travis EDDY: No, it is not just around the reading. This is just working too hard in terms of the workload. It is one of the questions in here. It is the dealing with the children, it is dealing with the parents, it is the planning, it is the reporting, it is the assessment, it is the yard duties, it is the stuff after school, it is the meetings – it is all of those things coming together, and they are saying, 'We are working too hard.' I said, 'You guys are doing a fantastic job, Kennington does a great job, but you're not at excelling yet.' But then I am having a conversation with people – not my staff but the review panel – about 'Hey, your staff are saying they're working too hard. What's going on here?' How do you get there?

Renee HEATH: Thank you so much. The bell went, so that must be my time.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mrs Deeming.

Moira DEEMING: Do you have any suggestions for a better way, other than that model, that would be more encouraging and more realistic instead of 'excelling' being right out of your reach all the time, even if you are doing well?

Travis EDDY: I think the feedback that we get is really important as a school and as a system. You have to have a model.

Moira DEEMING: Yes, absolutely.

Travis EDDY: There has to be a model. The problem with the question I have got is that when you are being told on the one hand that you are doing a fantastic job but on the other hand people are saying to you, 'Your staff are working too hard,' or the staff are saying they are working too hard, where is the balance? As it is with most schools, you have your own teaching and learning model based on what the department put out there. You come up with that, you have an agreed model, and you try and be as consistent as possible. But yes, definitely we have lost teachers because, they would say, they worked too hard at Kennington, there was too much expected of them; the expectations were too high. Yet we are a school that is not 'excelling'.

Moira DEEMING: Yes. Thanks.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Puglielli.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for coming in today. In your contribution earlier – I just want to clarify one of the points that you made – I think you said that once upon a time there were over 100 applicants applying for a teaching position at your school and now you are getting less than five. Is that what you said?

Travis EDDY: That is correct, yes.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: That is a shocking figure. I am sure it shocks the entirety of this committee. Do you have a view as to why that is occurring?

Travis EDDY: I do not think people want to teach. I think the message out there at the moment – I had a conversation this morning with someone: ‘My husband’s going into teaching. I don’t know why he’s doing it.’ The recognition, the status of teaching, has gone by the wayside, the respect for teachers has gone by the wayside and the respect for education has gone by the wayside, and we have a real divide. We have the divide of: we have got government education and we have got private education. We are well aware that in areas where government education does really well, that is the main point. That is the focal point. You cannot have your cake and eat it too. You cannot say, ‘We’re going to fund one model this way and fund another model that way,’ and then say, ‘We’re going to compare apples with apples.’ You cannot do it. That is what happens. People do not want to do the job.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. On the topic of respect, as you noted earlier in your contribution, there is the relationship then with funding. You know, if you respect something, you fund it well, right, across the board?

Travis EDDY: Yes.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Unless something has changed that I am not aware of, we are still not with a time line for reaching that 100 per cent school resource standard in this state, noting that when that was set out its intention was that that would be a minimum of funding to ensure that we are achieving the education outcomes that we need for our kids. In your view, what do you think would be possible if schools truly had their full allocation of needs-based funding?

Travis EDDY: If I just use my school as an example, we currently miss out on \$1.6 million a year. Our budget is about \$8.5 million. We miss out on \$1.6 million a year, so for the last 10 years we have missed out on \$16 million. You know, anything is possible when you have got that amount of money. You have only got to drive around Bendigo to see the difference. Our school would be seen not as an affluent school, but it would be seen as a real middle-class school. But in terms of the support that we could put in place – you know, funded positions, whether it be speech therapy or whether it be counselling services or all of those things. You would have access to be able to set yourself up with those sorts of things. I spoke a lot about the kids with special needs. We have teachers working with children that are not funded, and we have education support staff working with children who are not funded full-time, so they are not funded at all. The people who work with them are working full-time with them. That is where the money would go.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. With the remainder of my time, if you can comment perhaps on the state of mental health and wellbeing in schools. What more is needed in that sense, both for students and for teachers?

Travis EDDY: Yes, I was about to ask whether it was for both. Heaps. Heaps is needed. I think what we forget is that teachers are human. They have their own space. Teaching is a job where there is a moral obligation to be there and to be there for your children. That is why we people go into it. When teachers are not there, it makes it difficult to come back. We also have to remember too that through the COVID pandemic – I am not sure what everybody else here did, but I was at school every day. My three kids were at home by themselves every day, because I am a principal and my wife is an assistant principal. Yes, they could have come to school, but what we were saying to people at the time was, ‘Keep them home if you can.’ Could they stay home? Yes, they could. Did that help them? No, it did not. Where was my time going? So the mental health of everybody – kids and staff – is massive. Yes, there are parameters that the department put in place for

that, but it is almost like you need somebody at the school all the time to support that, and it cannot be the principal.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Puglielli. Ms Bath.

Melina BATH: Thank you. Thank you very much for being here. It is really good of you. We really do appreciate your long-term expertise and lived reality. Just following up on that question, on social workers, mental health workers and, dare I say, chaplains, what is your position, Travis, on any and all of those?

Travis EDDY: It is really interesting when you put people into education that do not have an education background. I have had a number of opportunities through my career to have people within our schools, whether it be paediatricians, speech therapists and all those sorts of things. When we are talking about people that do social work and chaplaincy and things like that, if they do not have an education background, it makes it really difficult, okay? We work under the parameters. When people work in your school, they work as a paraprofessional, an ES or a teacher. That is where they fit in the categories. Now, if that person comes in and does not have an understanding about – when you work in a school, part of your role is to do all these other things as well. You are not just here to be a social worker. You do the social work part as a majority of your role, but in a school you are part of a community. In a government school this is how we have to do things. I have got one gardener for 10 hectares. So my take on it is – sorry, are you all right?

Melina BATH: I am going to follow up with one. Please.

Travis EDDY: That is all right. My take on it is that it would be fantastic to have those people in there, but they also need to understand that they are working in a school; they are not working in their private practice.

Melina BATH: In isolation.

Travis EDDY: Yes.

Melina BATH: I actually taught at Mirboo North Secondary College. We had a chaplain who lived and worked in the whole school for a decade and was well loved. That is a separate issue. But on that, let us look at that. Should we have a teaching degree where the teacher goes in as a social worker, not in the classroom? Is that a recommendation? Flesh that thought out.

Travis EDDY: That is an interesting one, and it is a real balance. The challenge is teaching is such a complex job. Being in a school as an educator, whether it be a principal, an assistant principal, a teacher or an ES, is really complex. When you unpack the complexities of that job, if somebody was to come in and do a different job with the same degree, then it would be really interesting to see what the equity would be around that for the staff and what that would look like. A teaching degree is really good –

Melina BATH: Teacher harmony, in effect.

Travis EDDY: Yes, it is. Schools work predominantly on getting along. We teach our kids that. We want the teachers to do that, and without that harmony it makes it a really difficult place to work in.

Melina BATH: Yet on the flip side, for a teacher that is teaching a full load, then all of that additional emotional support and mental support et cetera impacts on their ability to teach that load.

Travis EDDY: Absolutely, yes.

Melina BATH: It might be a rhetorical question, but where is the balance? Even if you go away and have a think about it, we would be most interested in your feedback on that for our recommendations to government, because we are sitting here looking at you and others for recommendations to improve the system.

Travis EDDY: That is a really fine line, that balance. I have walked out of that this morning, and I will walk back into it when I leave here today. It is a really fine line, and there is not much balance at the moment. It outweighs it – the amount of time that goes into the education, the mental capacity of the staff, the wellbeing

side of it all, all of those things. It takes its toll. There is not a lot of balance, I would say, at the moment, so it is a really interesting point.

Melina BATH: Can I also ask finally: Bendigo Deaf Facility – can you explain that relationship? Is it that you are the home of Bendigo? What we need to know in a very short space of time is: how does the education department need to support those deaf students and teachers of deaf students?

Travis EDDY: Teachers of the deaf are like hen's teeth. You cannot get them. Since I have been at Kennington we have not had a full load of fully qualified teachers of the deaf. So to support it – look, it is not that the money is not there. The money is there to support it in terms of how the deaf facility is funded. It is almost a separate budget, but it is not. It comes in as a separate budget, but then it just goes into the big pot, so you have to manage it differently. There are not two SRPs for it. But basically, the money is there. You just cannot get the people.

Melina BATH: You cannot get the teachers.

Travis EDDY: Trained teachers, no.

Melina BATH: We have heard, or perhaps I have elsewhere, of the importance of having deaf teachers teaching deaf students as well. Do you agree with that?

Travis EDDY: Yes, absolutely – well, having deaf models. We also have got to remember that I talked about system change. When I got to Kennington seven years ago there was one child with cochlears. Now all of our children that come in deaf have got cochlears. That is different. So the landscape there is changing in its own right as well.

Melina BATH: I think, Chair, we might be speaking to –

The CHAIR: The Deaf later on, yes. Ms Payne, any questions?

Rachel PAYNE: Just briefly, being mindful of time, thank you for coming in and speaking with us today and sharing your wealth of knowledge. You talked about with teacher training that you are playing catch-up since the pandemic. In your experience, how do you feel we could recover from that?

Travis EDDY: It is almost like you have got to stop schools, teach teachers and then bring them in once they have been taught. We know that that is not something that can happen. That is no different from upskilling people in dealing with behaviour management and things like that. It is almost like you have got to stop everything and go, 'This is what we're going to do – so no kids at the school, we're going to do this.' We know that that is not going to happen. That is the challenge, I believe. I think there is a lot of catch-up that needs to be played there. Again, we are talking about states. We are getting people that are teacher-trained in Queensland and WA and things like that, and it is completely different to what happens in Victoria. There is not a lot of consistency there either, which makes it difficult. But yes, definitely, my real gut feeling is that we need to have internships. They do it in everything else. They do them, and proper ones too. Not just an internship of 'We'll call it that and we won't really' – it needs to be a proper one.

Rachel PAYNE: It is more a practicality, isn't it?

Travis EDDY: Yes.

Rachel PAYNE: In other jurisdictions in other states, are they doing it better? You mentioned Queensland.

Travis EDDY: Look, I would not know. I just meant that when we are getting teachers trained coming from different systems, it is different. You look at medicine, you look at nursing: people do their rounds. They do all that sort of stuff; they work together. In education they do, what, a four-week block, a five-week block, and then they walk in. Honestly, they walk in and they start teaching, and it is like walking into a brick wall. There is so much more to it than what that gives. So to have a proper internship like they used to do would be my recommendation for the panel.

Rachel PAYNE: Thank you.

Travis EDDY: No worries.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Payne. Mr McCracken is also online. I am aware of the time. Joe, were you going to ask one or two questions?

Joe McCracken: Yes, I do have a few questions. Thanks for your presentation. I have really enjoyed it. I have got a few things to go through. I will try and be quick. You said before that you strive for equity in order to succeed. What would you define as success? Because you talked a lot about equity. What do you consider to be success?

Travis EDDY: Success is being able to support every child the way that they need support. We cannot do that at the moment. We try to, absolutely we try to, but we just cannot.

Joe McCracken: We are going to write some recommendations and some findings for government as a result of this report. What do you think are the key changes that need to happen in the education system that would enhance your ability to achieve success?

Travis EDDY: First and foremost, the funding model needs to change. We need to get that full allotment of our SRS to ensure that we can then put people into positions that are skilled and are knowledgeable to be able to support children in the spaces they need to be supported. We have got mental health money at the moment. We have got a sand play therapist that is working within our school. Now, that is fantastic for the children that can access them, but that is still only seven or eight kids out of 600. So being able to actually put things in place. That would then also decrease class sizes. With decreasing class sizes comes a decreasing workload; a decreasing workload gives teachers more time to actually spend getting to know children and working with children as well.

Joe McCracken: One of the other things you said too is that staff are too busy working too hard. I am a big believer that if you add something on, you take something off – well, ideally.

Travis EDDY: Yes. No, that is okay, Joe. I understand that, yes.

Joe McCracken: That is what we did in the school I was at. I guess in order to bring back some of that balance, what do you think are some of the things are that teachers could stop doing in order to bring that about? Now, I say that in terms of teachers stopping doing it, and perhaps it could be done by somebody else. I am not saying stop the function, I am saying: what do you think teachers in their workload could stop doing?

Travis EDDY: I think at this stage where the busy work comes from is not the planning, not the actual teaching; it is everything else that comes with it. It is the managing of those students that have special needs or additional needs within your school – the ones that are not funded, the ones that do not get the support that they require. Not that they do not get the support, but as a school you are absolutely – if teachers could do their job and just teach, then that would make a massive difference, but they do not just teach. They are teaching. They are managing classes. They are doing –

Joe McCracken: Social workers.

Travis EDDY: Social workers – they are everything. So yes, to be able to have people in the position to be able to support kids that need that support. Not all the kids need that support, but some of them do, and if they are not getting it, it gets makes it really, really difficult.

Joe McCracken: Just lastly, I agree. Whether you want to call it an internship or an apprenticeship model, I think that is the way to go for teacher training. How do you think that would work in a school, particularly in your context? Would it be a case where a preservice teacher comes in three days a week, two days in theory? Have you had any thoughts on this?

Travis EDDY: Yes, one way or the other. It would not worry me, the amount of time. I can give you an example. We have actually had to do it with some of our graduate teachers over the last two years, where they have actually worked in the classroom with other teachers to upskill them to be at the stage where they need to be at to teach.

Joe McCracken: How did that work?

Travis EDDY: Sorry?

Joe McCracken: How did that work? What did you do?

Travis EDDY: It has been fantastic. I will give you one example. We have got a teacher now who is teaching grade 5 by herself and has just come along in leaps and bounds in the last six months because of it. We are doing the same model where we have a learning specialist who is in the classroom on the Monday and the Friday and the graduate teacher is in there the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The learning specialist is obviously working five days a week and so is the graduate teacher, but they have Monday and Friday in the classroom together and then the learning specialist can access them on those three days in the middle as well.

Joe McCracken: No worries. Thanks for that. I think my time is up, but I really appreciate it.

Travis EDDY: The reality of that, though, if I can say one more thing, is that it costs us twice as much.

The CHAIR: Time is up. Thank you so much, Travis, for coming in today. Thank you for your experience and the submission. It is valuable for us. We look forward to putting our recommendations in, so thank you so much for your time.

Witness withdrew.