

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne – 10 May 2004

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Mr G Allen, chair;
Mr P Brown, chief executive officer; and
Mr J Stafford, education consultant, Country Education Project; and
Mr G Milner, principal, Maffra Secondary College.

The CHAIR — I declare this hearing of the Education and Training Committee open. The Education and Training Committee is an all-party joint investigative committee of the Parliament of Victoria. It is hearing evidence today in relation to the inquiry into the suitability of current pre-service teacher training courses in Victoria. I wish to advise all present at this hearing that all evidence taken by the committee, including submissions, is subject to parliamentary privilege and is granted immunity from judicial review pursuant to the Constitution Act and the Parliamentary Committees Act. The committee welcomes the Country Education Project officers and invites them to come to the table. Welcome, gentlemen. For the record, before you speak, could you give your name and title. Perhaps you would like to start off with a short statement about the project or about the terms of reference and then we will open up the committee for questions.

Mr ALLEN — Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee to support our written submission addressing your terms of reference. I am Gary Allen, chair of Country Education Project Inc. Victoria. On my right is Phil Brown, the chief executive officer of CEP. Also present are Mr Glynn Milner, principal of Maffra Secondary College and Mr John Stafford, education consultant. The interest of CEP in putting its submission to you arose out of our role as an advocacy organisation for rural and remote schools. We have as our membership about 350 remote and rural school communities, and we take a proactive role in supporting them through various programs and also through an advocacy role.

In meeting with our constituent school communities one of the issues that is foremost in their mind is the whole question of teacher recruitment and retention in hard-to-staff areas. And central to the whole question of teacher recruitment and retention in these areas we believe is the question of pre-service teacher training. That is why we have an interest in putting a submission before your committee and also the interest to appear today. I am an ex-principal of a school. I retired in 2001 and became bored and then became chairman of CEP. As I said, Glynn is the principal of Maffra Secondary College. John was director of CEP when it was supported by the government and Phil was a field officer with CEP, so between us we have a fair amount of experience in rural and remote schools and the issue of pre-service training, the importance of it in terms of staff for those areas and the quality of the teachers that are coming into our schools. I have the dreaded lurgi, so Phil is probably going to lead us through — —

Mr PERTON — You sound better than our chairman.

The CHAIR — And make more sense, probably.

Mr BROWN — We will leave that one right alone. Do you want us to go through the paper point by point, recommendation by recommendation, or do you want us to field questions?

The CHAIR — Summarise the summary.

Mr BROWN — I guess from our perspective as an organisation — as a project across the state working in this area — there are four areas that we have identified as critical to ensure that rural schools especially, but country Victoria generally, have access to quality staff. One is around ensuring that the course structure, its emphasis and its content within the teacher training institutions is appropriate and relevant, and we probably have some comment to make about that specifically. The second is around ensuring that young people who are trainees within those organisations have relevant placement arrangements and possibilities that are flexible to accommodate their needs in relation to rural education. The third is around promotion and support incentives that are available for graduates to enter teaching positions within rural education. The final one is an ongoing support and professional developmental training strategy for rurally employed teachers.

From our perspective we do not think that you can treat these four in isolation from one another to get a worthwhile and a vibrant teacher work force in “the bush”. The focus of our presentation today is on the above.

In terms of teacher training course structure, and I think it is important that we just get into a dialogue here, I will summarise the points and then we would be happy to go from there: we need to get the training providers of teacher training to be more flexible, more appropriate and more responsive to the client base that we work with, ie, rural communities. Providers also need to acknowledge that within the content that they deliver, also they provide support mechanisms that allow the trainees to take on experiential learning within the workplace in rural communities. I guess we have a concern that a number of those tertiary institutions and training organisations do not support young people very vigorously in terms of getting placement within rural communities. It is much easier to do it within a metropolitan or regional centre base. I guess the second thing from that is that through our office

we get a lot of phone calls requesting information and the value of teaching in rural communities from potential graduates.

The comment that we get often is the fact that possible rural placements are not getting promoted through the institutions or the organisations that provide that training, and I guess that that is an issue for us. So I guess there are some there. We would like to recommend that within all the teacher training programs there is an inclusive course content, rather than there just being add-ons. Areas like rural education; like disadvantaged schools-type concepts, etc, are presently offered as electives but are generally not offered as core modules within university programs. If we are going to address the issue of rural recruitment of teachers, then that seems to be an area that we need to work on.

Another area in terms of teacher training — and Gary could probably talk about this in a lot more detail because he has had first-hand experience — is re-entry of people into the teaching profession. Within rural communities we are starting to see an interesting dynamic happen, and that is about a number of people with skills in areas that teachers and learning organisations are starting to call for: your engineers, your motor mechanics and the like. What we are seeing in a number of rural communities is that their business is declining, but the difficulty for them to fulfil their interest in getting involved in the education sector is confronted with a number of hurdles put up in front of them. There is a need to have retraining programs that are more flexible; that can be done within an environment that trainee teachers want to see happen so that things like family commitments, travel, and employment commitments are accommodated.

Gary was involved in a program at the University of Ballarat that linked such a concept with education, but it required those people to relocate to Ballarat to do a full time program. So the concept of on-the-job training, on-the-job mentoring, on-the-job supervision and the like is critical in this area. I guess some of the issues that come up are around that notion of competency-based approaches and on-the-job training, and the importance of having such an approach is central to teacher training.

The final area that we wanted to make a point about was the fact that young people these days, or trainee teachers, have a lot of pressures on them in relation to having to generate income to cover their costs; some commitments elsewhere on weekends and social commitments. Placement programs in a block to go to Mildura for a period of four weeks is a fairly difficult task, and they tend not to do that because it is easier to pick one up in metropolitan Melbourne and accommodate their other needs.

In terms of teacher placement programs in universities, I guess what we would like to see happen is an approach that is a more flexible to accommodate teacher trainees need. A number of tertiary or training organisations that we come into contact with have operated on that traditional block-release arrangement. We have started to work with those universities in terms of flexing that up a bit, so that placements are more project focused so that there is a contract developed between the trainee and the host school or host cluster of schools. An example of that is what we have just developed with the Australian Catholic University in Ballarat, where students are linked with two clusters of schools to negotiate a placement arrangement based on need and availability. I guess it would be fair to say that the project has been involved in this area for a number of years and has coordinated a number of projects, and we have reports here that we can table with you today in terms of the evaluation of these projects.

Through these projects we have found that if a trainee teacher is provided with a supported placement program or an experiential program within a rural community they are much more likely to then take up a teaching role within a rural community. But it needs to be supported, the placement needs to be much more than just an experience within the classroom; it needs to be a whole-of-community approach, because once you take up a rural teaching position you have to be the executive officer of the school council; the secretary of the footy club; and there is a whole range of other roles that you are expected to take on as part of your function as a teacher within that community. I guess these briefly outline some of the issues that we would like to put on the table here.

The CHAIR — Is that the end of the presentations?

Mr ALLEN — Do you want us to go through each of those points in more detail?

The CHAIR — No, we have those. I am sure I have got some questions, and I am sure some others have too. We will open up for questions. Who would like to start off?

Mr HALL — First of all, thank you, gentlemen, for the submission. It was a very good submission, and I enjoyed reading it. I think it will add to the work we are doing with this inquiry. One of the things I am interested in is on page 8 of your submission where you speak about the country education program that is currently investigating courses run overseas and it seems there are alternative training models.. At the end of that paragraph you talk about a recommended body that can be a school or local education authority, university or religious program at a university. I agree with the point that you make that if you are locally trained then you are more likely to be locally employed in future. So how are you going with that research? Are there actually models that you have looked at from overseas where you have got the equivalent of our TAFEs or schools actually become one of those recommended bodies to deliver on behalf of universities, the training programs?

Mr ALLEN — We have had great contact with the director of a program at the London Metropolitan University, where they accept students who are mature age, above 20. They enrol in a school and the school becomes the provider. So not only schools but a whole range of institutions can become providers of the training, but predominantly schools. So the mature person with — I think it was — an equivalent of one year's academic training would work in the school for four days and go to the university for one day. So the school became the registered provider and the teachers were doing on-service academic and training work with a mentor at the school. So it was a model that we were interested in exploring because we felt that it could suit our rural areas where you have people who are skilled, maybe have done some tertiary training and have not got the capacity, say, to go to Ballarat or Bendigo and do some training but could go into their local school if the school was a registered trainer linking in with some institution — one university in Victoria. So it is a model we are very much interested in exploring. We have only made initial contact. I mean I would like to go to London to explore it further. But yes, we are looking at their courses and looking at it as a possible model.

Mr HALL — As a current principal, do you see that might work in maths for example if you are short in the maths-science area you could potentially take on some local engineers or somebody like that for redeployment?

Mr MILNER — The issue of mature-aged entrants and them getting the necessary qualifications satisfied with the VIT — Victorian Institute of Teaching — is a really big one for schools. We know of people in our communities that would be keen to do it. Previously we had the instructor class that we could employ people under. Financially that was not usually a great incentive for an engineer to give up their position to do. My previous school was Corryong up in the north-east, which is one of the most isolated in the state. I had two people there who had come from the local community that had done the retraining to become qualified. The problem was they had come to Melbourne to do that training and that was a real problem for them. If there had been some arrangement by which the school could be auspiced to make sure it was meeting the requirements, it would have certainly made it a lot easier for those people. Now, from the school's point of view I gave those people time release at the school's expense to be able to go down and do their training, because it was in the school's interest to do it. We need that sort of flexibility built into the training program for future teachers, otherwise we are just going to turn those people away. They are there and as you said before, if you live, grow up and work in that area then you will stay and teach in those areas and you will not be looking to move on after a year or two.

Mr HALL — Yes I was very impressed with that comment. I think there is something that we might explore there.

Mr ALLEN — In my experience at the University of Ballarat, where I was engaged on a short-term contract, the university felt there was a need to retrain electricians, plumbers and tradespeople to take up materials technology teaching in our secondary schools where there is going to be a chronic shortage in a couple of years time. Something like 75 per cent of them are due to retire maybe in three or four years time, so we developed the BA-B.Ed. tech course. Just in the Ballarat area I had expressions of interest from 120 tradespeople who were interested in retraining. We were only funded for 30 places and the financial problem that they were suffering certainly was a huge problem in reducing that number, but of that 120 we got 40 people who were definitely interested and we recruited 28 to fill those places. So there definitely is a need for people in their 30s and 40s who are looking for a career change to support them to do that.

Mr PERTON — Can I follow up on that question. I have had some discussions with open learning who are looking to put on a BA-B.Ed, it would almost seem ideal for a place like Corryong to be able to do an open learning course and then do a placement in one of the schools in that area?

Mr MILNER — Anything along that line would be better than what the requirement is at the moment. Whether it is an open learning requirement, or on-the-job training recognised within the school, either would be a better solution than what we have now. The other aspect that comes into it is that there has to be due recognition of whatever experience a person brings into the school environment. We are going back to the situation where the only recognition is going to be a four-year university course. I might be digressing slightly, but that deters people who have years of formal experience that would be well and truly worthwhile in the school environment. I do not have the solution to what recognition needs to be given to that degree of experience, but somehow it needs to be built into the future quality of teachers. Why should somebody who has got 10 or 20 years experience have to go back and do a four-year course to be able to teach?

Mr HALL — You said one of your recommendations was that increased support is given to rural teachers to support the placement of training teachers within their school cluster. Phil, you mentioned the fact that if you are in a small school you end up being maths coordinator, English coordinator, year 10 coordinator and the whole works, and therefore it is a workload issue sometimes supervising a teacher. Is that a detriment to some of the schools within CEP to take in trainee teachers or is there always an open-door willingness to get as many trainee teachers into the schools that you represent as possible?

Mr BROWN — My answer would be: that it is a double edged sword because on the one hand they know they need to do it because they need to attract the teachers to rural areas, but on the other side it is a workload issue and there is an increased commitment that they need to make for those students to come in. We need to acknowledge that — how we put in place strategies to accommodate that is a bit of a challenge. One of the projects that John was involved in at Yarrawonga looked at group trainee teachers going on placement, and the benefits that you could use with five or six students being in a location at one given time might be one way of addressing that.

Mr STAFFORD — Certainly in Yarrawonga and then subsequently at Ararat we ran a couple of trials where we took groups of young people from institutions and we organised their accommodation, travel, and introductions in the local school community. So it was done as a bit of a celebration of those young people coming into the community. They lived together during that time and they supported each other as they went through that experience. In some ways we were able to lessen the load on the teachers and the schools by undertaking that support and organisation — we helped them to do that. It also meant that the young people who went there felt supported, felt celebrated as being part of that community. We got the local mayor to welcome them to the town and those sorts of things. We took on more, but we took some of that workload off the school in terms of administering. In too many cases we found that young people were going off — usually if they had country experiences they organised it through connections that they already had — so then the school had to do all the local organising whereas we took on that administrative function and made it a larger program.

Mr HALL — Is there any extra support that you feel could be provided at the school, community support which you spoke about? I know if you are a frazzled teacher and you have classes to look after with all these extra responsibilities, also having the time to spend with a student teacher is difficult?

Mr STAFFORD — Absolutely. I suppose one of the issues we found in those couple of trial programs is that we were taking the students in there last year and in fact in the Ararat program they were going out in October, so they were only a blink of an eye away from completing their qualification and what those young people wanted most was to experience being in the classroom and being in total control. I admit I could not understand why all these young people had to do was complete that placement experience before they would be qualified and yet under the legal requirements they still had to be supervised. I think one way of managing the workload on teachers is to re-examine the supervision requirements. There were young people who, when they finished, became teachers.

Mr HALL — Perhaps we should make it compulsory for their last teaching round to be a country school in their final fourth year.

Mr STAFFORD — I would be happy with that.

Mr ALLEN — I must add something to that. I think with the workload it is not a question about money, nor should it be about money; we need to promote it as a celebration. It is my experience a lot of teachers are burning out and they see it as a burden to take on training teachers. Perhaps we should be promoting it as a celebration that as experienced teachers with wonderful knowledge to impart, it is exciting to want to impart this knowledge, instead we do not celebrate what they are in fact doing when they take on a trainee teacher.

Mr PERTON — I was in Traralgon South on Friday and they had a number of students, one who had been the primary school student of the teacher who was supervising her. You could feel in this whole school the incredible culture — the students were coming from Monash Churchill campus to do their placement and there was a very strong connection. You felt that the school felt relieved by having these students on placement, helping them with the burden.

Mr MILNER — It is important for schools to have those young people. In relation to your question, Peter, with schools I do not think there would be an issue; certainly in the two schools of which I have been principal, the aim was to get as many young people involved as possible. The individual teachers may have an issue because they are tired and run-down. I would make a broad statement that across the state most schools would be more than keen to have potential graduates coming into their school. Individual teachers, for a range of reasons, may not be as responsive.

The CHAIR — Good point. I might just take this opportunity to welcome Mr John Scheffer to the committee. It is the first hearing of the Education and Training Committee Mr Scheffer has attended, although he has a great background in education working with schools, and I might invite him to ask some questions.

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes, I would like to ask my inaugural question. Regarding the answer to Peter Hall's first question, and you have covered some of the material, you mentioned a project where an experiment in the United Kingdom had training teachers in situ in the school. How were the mentors backed up?

Mr ALLEN — That again is part of their role: to provide training, professional development for the mentors. The university takes on that role.

Mr SCHEFFER — Is that what it does in the UK?

Mr ALLEN — Yes. One of the main responsibilities of the director is quality assurance. Because obviously there is the question when you have got so many mentors of the quality assurance of that mentoring; that is one of his main responsibilities to put into place quality assurance programs.

Mr SCHEFFER — So that means that tertiary training institutions need to be geared-up as well to cope with a raft of mentors?

Mr ALLEN — Yes, and quality assurance of those mentors.

Ms MUNT — I am interested in two aspects. The first aspect is when you were talking about mature-age entry into teaching and how to go about it. Have you any thoughts on how the selection criteria should be worked to select which mature-age applicants would be suitable?

Mr ALLEN — That is difficult. I suppose it comes back down to the interview being vital to work out the passion that the person has to want that career change and the school gains the confidence that they will be able to cope with moving into a training institution — that is, if it is training institution based. I found that dealing with most of the tradespeople it was their partners who spoke to me on their phone, it was their partners who made all the arrangements because they were really lacking confidence. 'Here I am going to go to Ballarat university to do a degree' and they were so freaked out by it. There needed to be at the institutional level some support for them, but we really got a better feel for who were going to be successful teachers through a one-on-one interviewing process. What has been surprising — I have rung the university since — is that the percentage of retention is very high, higher than what the university normally inputs in its funding projections, and higher than the VCE cohort that went into the same program. We think we made good choices on the basis of the interview process and the passion the person displayed.

Ms MUNT — Who made up that interviewing selection panel?

Mr ALLEN — It was the head of the school and myself as the project officer who was introducing them, so there were only two of us.

Ms MUNT — And from mature-age students. I am interested now in new students coming through, and I was interested that you said from the project's experience of rural trainee teacher placements, field placement officers rarely visit the rural community. Which is not terribly good, is it?

Mr ALLEN — No, it is terrible.

Ms MUNT — I was wondering if you had any thoughts on how to change that?

Mr PERTON — Get them to visit in the city as well.

Mr BROWN — I guess the Yarrawonga and Ararat projects highlighted, as raised on page 11 of our written submission, the concept of a brokering role seemed to be fairly critical for the success of taking 8 or 10 students into a placement arrangement, ensuring that the support mechanism was there, but it also brokered that relationship between the school and those students and the organisation or the institution. That is something worth considering as a model, although how you get it into place I am not sure, certainly the experience we have had is that fieldworks supervisors do not get out to the bush and supervise — it would be through a phone call or a conversation with the mentor in the school. The other benefit that John was talking about in Yarrawonga was the fact that if you actually placed that number of students, the Yarrawonga staff were then able to undertake professional development of their own. So it had that added bonus that staff who were already in the school had the time to look at PD programs for themselves, but I think from reading the report the concept of having somebody acting as intermediary, setting the process up, supporting the mechanism, getting the arrangement to happen, was extremely valuable. Then you could talk about the assessment process and whatever needed to happen as a result of that.

Ms MUNT — Who has borne the cost of that up until now?

Mr STAFFORD — We got special project funding to support and facilitate that — small dollars in terms of the overall program, but we found in talking to universities that there was some discouragement of young people taking placements further out because of their limited capacity to visit and support, and to some extent limited networks in the schools to call upon for placements. What we did was work with the university to try to get some additional funding to support that as a special program. It is based on what is called the ‘doofer experience’ in the United States of America where basically a university took its training students out into the school, the students replaced the teachers, the teachers who were then replaced out of the classroom did some PD with the university lecturers who were there in two roles, one to support their students but also to provide PD programs for the teaching staff who were released. That is where we came into the difficulty with the following year’s students where they were not able to take full control of the classroom and there had to be a level of direct supervision provided.

Ms MUNT — That brings me around to another point we have been hearing, that the students themselves would like to go out into the schools a lot earlier in their course and have a lot more time in the schools. Your point about having to be at a stage where they do not need that teacher supervision, allowing the teachers to go and do PDs — at what point do you think that would become applicable?

Mr STAFFORD — I suppose we were doing that with this program because it was based on the doofer experience, where we wanted more experienced trainees so that they could teach more independently in the classroom to support that particular program which is also a professional development program for the school. Similarly we had the same experience of young people saying they wanted to get out into the school earlier. We would be encouraging them to get out into rural schools and not just have their teaching experience limited to metropolitan schools, because of the level of convenience. The convenience has to be in terms of what industry needs and our industry needs young people who are positive about the rural teaching experience. At some stage during their four-year training they should be required to do some rural teaching experience, the same as they should be required to do some teaching in other cultural settings. We are not suggesting we are the only special interest group, but there has got to be a way of monitoring those students’ experiences so that they take account of different teaching situations; otherwise it can be four years of the same teaching experience, and they might only be very good in a particular setting.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I would like to go back to one of Peter’s questions about the support for trainee teachers. We have heard from other witnesses about the cost of placements and that is one of the prohibiting factors — the cost of paying supervising teachers, the cost of paying the lecturer to go out and supervise the teacher, the cost of travel to get them there and all the rest of it. We have also heard some people suggest that supervising and taking training teachers ought to be the responsibility of the profession. I think one of the principals’ organisations put that to us quite strongly. It believes it was part of the deal that you supported and

brought along the next generation. Leaving all the industrial stuff aside about payment and all of that — if we could fix that, would that free up some money to enable some of the sorts of things you are talking about, to support the teachers who are supervising trainees in other ways? I was interested when Mr Allen said it was not about money, it is about workload and time. If the money that is currently going to paying a teacher to take a trainee could go to the school to pay for some relief teaching or make life easier in some other way, would that work?

Mr ALLEN — Unless there is something wrong — I have been out of the system now for three years — I thought that money did go to the school. It has changed again, has it? Oh, sorry.

Mr MILNER — The money goes to the supervising teacher and that teacher in the school that notionally is in charge of supervising the supervisor.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I believe the same thing should apply to the supervising lecturer. They might need some money to get to where they are going, some extra insurance in case they wrap themselves round a tree or something, but it would seem to me that part of the teacher's role is also part of the lecturer's role.

Mr MILNER — The amount of money the teacher gets paid to take the student teacher in the overall scheme of things is trivial. We did have a stage where it was written in as the requirement for leading teachers and then the lecturer class when it was created. That was part of their responsibility. It is still there if you choose to read the agreement in those terms.

The cost for the school to get the graduates there is really the issue. By doing a check across the state we could probably find a whole range of doing it. The previous school I was at took the view there was no point in bringing one graduate up because they would be like a shag on a rock in a country town. It would be three weeks lost unless they could fit into the half forward line of the local footy team for three weeks. So we always tried to get four or five students, we rented cabins at the local caravan park, accommodated them there and they would have a ball. They went away with the experience that teaching in a rural centre was fantastic. The same thing happened, making sure when they came in that there was some sort of function, they were introduced, that sort of thing. The school bore the cost of that. I saw that as a reasonable thing. The \$3000–\$4000 it might cost for that three-week block was an investment in the future teachers in the school. If there was some way by which that sort of recognition could get back to the schools I think that would be fantastic.

Mr STAFFORD — In the Yarrawonga experience — I am not sure whether they were able to achieve this — the staff agreed that the money go back to the school as a contribution toward the overall program. So the school contributes some money and the teachers forgo their individual amounts as part of the project.

Ms ECKSTEIN — What about the other end, in terms of the supervising lecturers. Were you able to get any out there?

Mr MILNER — In seven years as a principal I have had one and that was only because his brother taught in my school.

Ms ECKSTEIN — That seems to me to be a bit of a worry

Mr STAFFORD — Again in the Ararat experience what we did because we had a celebration at the start and the end, representatives of, in that case, Ballarat University came to both those functions. So they were there at the final celebrations where the kids were saying good-bye to the schools and joined in those conversations.

Ms ECKSTEIN — But they did not actually see the kids teach?

Mr STAFFORD — I am not quite sure.

Ms ECKSTEIN — One last thing, just to follow up on that, what about the use of the new information technologies — for instance, if they cannot get the lecturer out there, what about some video conferencing or something like that so it can be done over a distance?

Mr MILNER — We would need to do a check — there are not that many schools that have video conferencing.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Some schools have it.

Mr PERTON — We need some broadband at Corryong.

Ms ECKSTEIN — They have all got satellite dishes thanks to your mob.

Mr STAFFORD — It also calls into question the role of the device. I think a lot of that supervision and support can be undertaken by the school. I suppose if that supervision is about the institution wanting to validate their assessment, then that is a different issue. In terms of providing support, there are other ways of doing it.

Mr ALLEN — There is no substitute for the supervisor being there and seeing the person teach.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I agree.

Mr ALLEN — Absolutely no substitute, and they should be doing it.

The CHAIR — Whether this is just a country problem or across the board is for us to find out.

Mr PERTON — I just have one question. The expert group on teacher supply and demand found a desperate shortage of teachers in almost all of the good areas in Toowong shire which, of course, covers Corryong, Swan Hill Rural City, West Wimmera and then almost all of those Murray shires and the western shires have got the problem. Now a lot of things we are talking about here are almost medium-term solutions. If you were the minister, what would you do immediately to try to alleviate some of those really desperate teacher shortages?

Mr STAFFORD — A principal's dream!

Mr PERTON — Every school I go to, particularly the primary schools, is having trouble getting teachers of language other than English; in the secondary schools I was shocked to find that they are having trouble getting specialist English teachers. So what can we do in the short term to try to relieve that sort of problem.

Mr MILNER — Immediately, today — things such as the scholarship program when they were brought in were meant to be targeting the hard-to-staff areas. I still have had no-one explain to me how the Shire of Cardinia suddenly became a hard-to-staff area. I would be putting some sorts of restrictions — no scholarships within 150 kilometres of Melbourne, to just pick a figure out of the air; no scholarships to a rural centre of a population of more than 10 000 people. Does that seem fair coverage?

As a principal of an isolated school, and now as a principal of a rural not-as-isolated school, it is enormously frustrating when you go through all the stages of recruiting someone, offering a position, or even being in a position to offer them a scholarship and they call back four weeks later to say they have got a job at Pakenham. I am quoting that because it has happened to me before. I cannot understand how a school such as Pakenham is considered to be hard to staff compared to a school at Maffra or Corryong or somewhere like that. Now if you are asking for something to do this afternoon, that would be one thing if I were given the power for an hour, I would say the incentives are for the hard-to-staff schools. Maybe some parts of the working suburbs come into that category as well, but certainly not the south-eastern suburbs. I just cannot see that. Do I get to sign off on that.

Mr PERTON — There is an article in yesterday's *New York Times* where they are talking about offering a 25 per cent salary incentive to teach at what they call their 200 hardest-to-staff schools, which I think is a tougher school. They are seeing that as a possible short-term solution.

Mr STAFFORD — Rural experience used to be seen as a stepping stone for promotion to leadership, now it is seen as a disadvantage. People feel if you have not had city experience or you are a principal in a two-tiered school you have not had experience and that is crazy too. But I agree there has to be a financial incentive to attract teachers.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Can I ask as a follow-up: suppose you attract the students to go to country schools, how do you keep them there? How do you keep them there for more than a year or two? Once they gain experience they will then apply for a city school, as was the case many years ago when I did my Dip.Ed.; we put all the city regions first and the country regions last in case we missed out, thinking that we would go into the country for one or two years and then come back into the city. So how would you keep them there?

Mr PERTON — Is that how you ended up in North Coburg?

Mr ALLEN — I think it is then up to the communities to support those people who are there and if they have a good experience they are more likely to stay. If they do not have a good experience they are going to leave. I think then the responsibility in my view is for the local community to support them and try to keep them there.

Mr HALL — Is that the experience though? My experience is that once people come and live in the country they usually like the lifestyle pretty much and they tend to stay.

Mr BROWN — They tend to move from rural community to rural community.

Mr HALL — I think there is more stability in some of the schools you have.

Mr STAFFORD — Again with Ararat a number of those young people were surveyed at the start to see how many were interested in a rural teaching agreement, but there were only one or two who were. By the end they all admitted they would rethink their position. Again, they have other commitments that they need to take on board, but we have found that if they have had that positive experience, had that strong connection into the community and not just a teaching experience in a particular rural location, then they are more likely to see value in continuing their career in rural areas. I think it depends on whether they start to see whether their career can be appropriately advanced through staying in rural settings and often they need to go to a regional or urban setting to continue to develop their careers.

Mr ALLEN — I also believe in terms of the courses we should be helping people with the leadership role that they are going to take in small communities because often they go out without any understanding of what that is going to be. The school previously was part of the community or the village. Now the school is the village, it is the community, and so the teacher often will have to take on a lot of administrative roles within that community and they are not prepared for it and it can be a real shock. I think we have got to better prepare those people going out into those communities.

The CHAIR — That goes back to what we said, more about specific units and that sort of thing. Our time is up so I might have one last question myself. We have heard a lot about the school versus lecture theatre, and whether you have mentoring. It seems from what you are saying that the argument comes down to a TAFE-style, competency-based, teacher-trade experience where you have mentors, on-the-job experience, an open learning system where there is a lot more flexibility in terms of how the trainee teacher learns, versus what the university teacher training institutions say is a theory-based system — that is, the theories of education, of development, mental development, psychology et cetera. Somewhere along the line you have a different view about what makes a good teacher. Do you need three years or four years of theory, or do you need competency-based assessment in terms of what the outcome is? Where should the balance be?

Mr ALLEN — Often the truth lies in the middle, and I think we need a combination of both of those things.

The CHAIR — Would you say less theory or more. If you were structuring a three or four-year course for a primary school teacher how would you actually structure it?

Mr STAFFORD — I would be saying the theory is better once you have had some practical experience to give some frame of reference to consider a lot of that theory. I understand that some theory and training may be required up front, but it is not just a matter of balance, it is when the balance happens. You were saying that they want to get out earlier, and I can imagine there is nothing more frustrating when you have been through high school, made a career choice and cannot get off the lead for 12 or 18 months. I do not think that is the way people want to learn. I think if they choose teaching they want to get out there and have some experience early on. Then there is theory that packs around them.

The CHAIR — Okay, so it is different to what we have here.

Mr BROWN — The comment I would make is if I go skiing at Mount Buller, if I want to ski down that slope I do not want to spend half of my day listening to an instructor about how to do it, but when I fall down on that first hill I want somebody to tell me what I did wrong — that sort of mix in terms of saying, 'I do want to get out there and have a go because that is what I am here for, but I also know that I am not all that skilled to do it'. So it is that sort of balance and that would be different for each case. I think the other challenge for us is that kids'

expectations of their pathways is totally different to when I grew up and it might be that they only teach for five years and then they might look at going overseas — —

The CHAIR — Wander and get a job overseas.

Mr BROWN — I think we have got to start playing around with those sorts of concepts as well to attract them back again. It is a bit like that argument we get in rural communities all the time. We have to hold on to our young people. I know John says this often, that is not the argument; the argument is about making sure that young people leave this community with a positive image and I think that is the sort of argument and discussion we should get into. We need to give them positive experiences in teaching whether that is for 2 or 25 years; whatever they do in the interim, we hope at some point they will return, especially the good ones.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much.

Witnesses withdrew.

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into impact of the high levels of unmet demand for places in higher education institutions on Victoria

Melbourne – 10 May 2004

Members

Ms H. E. Buckingham	Mr N. Kotsiras
Ms A. L. Eckstein	Ms J. R. Munt
Mr P. R. Hall	Mr V. J. Perton
Mr S. R. Herbert	Mr J. Scheffer

Chair: Mr S. R. Herbert

Deputy Chair: Mr N. Kotsiras

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms K. Ellingford

Research Officer: Dr N. Fischer and Dr G. Berman

Witnesses

Mr T. O'Connell, chair, National Excellence in Teaching Awards Foundation, and managing director, Australian Scholarships Group;

Ms H. Leary, teacher, Benalla Primary School, and Lindsay Thompson Fellowship recipient; and

Mr B. Bamford, principal, Benalla Primary School.

The CHAIR — The Committee welcomes the National Excellence in Teaching Awards Foundation executive and members and very much looks forward to your input. We have a lot of questions about how the awards work and what makes a good teacher, but if you would like to start off perhaps with a statement or comment on the terms of reference, or background about your organisation.

Mr O'CONNELL — My name is Terry O'Connell, I am the chairman of the foundation, Brian Bamford who is the principal of Benalla Primary School and Heather Leary is the vice-principal at Benalla and also she has been recognised through the foundation.

I suppose the focus of this submission is on the terms of reference point 3, skills and knowledge required of teachers, and therefore teacher training courses and on the first year of a beginning teacher. Just to give you some background to the foundation itself, it was started 10 years ago called the NeiTA foundation, to promote excellence in teaching, to build the status of the teaching profession and to encourage quality entrants into teaching. The foundation has nearly 800 teachers who have been nationally recognised for their excellence in teaching. Late last year the foundation conducted a research project within its 800 teacher membership and part of this research focused on beginning teachers and the mentoring of these teachers and we have the results for you here with the papers.

They showed interestingly that over two-thirds of the teachers surveyed believed teachers spending their first year in the classroom being mentored by a senior teacher would improve the system and ensure that teachers were entering the teaching profession to teach on their own with far more capabilities. Nearly 80 per cent of them thought that mentoring was vital for beginning teachers and that mentoring in a more focused way than the, at times, ad hoc mentoring that is undertaken today. Most importantly, 96 per cent of them were happy to act as mentors themselves which we thought was very important. There are a whole lot of issues around that about how you reward teachers who are going to be mentors, how you select those teachers, et cetera, but that is an area which is not really part of our submission.

The foundation's submission focuses on the last year of teacher training and the role of mentoring around the study we did, together with the importance of capability building for teachers during their training. We have outlined the research that supports our submission to this committee, the issues as we see it and basically the graduates go to schools and then they are taught to be teachers and I think that is an issue that needs to be addressed. The recommendation of the foundation is that the final year of teacher training should be school based with beginning teachers serving an apprenticeship similar to an internship, but with a qualified teacher mentor, suitably rewarded for the task very much similar to the Western Australia model of advanced skills teacher status; and also Victoria needs to take a more holistic approach to teacher training to ensure personal capabilities are developed and taught formally as part of teacher education programs.

On this point we were so pleased that Brian and Heather were able to join me today from the foundation's point of view because they are practitioners and they wanted to focus on point of view of practitioners in the schools. So maybe I will ask Heather or Brian to talk to you on that.

Mr BAMFORD — I will go first. Inside your package there is a model which I will talk to and which I would like you to have a look at. Heather and I as leaders in our school have over the last five years run into a problem where we find a lot of young graduate teachers appear to — not only appear to, but do — lack many professional and personal capabilities we think all beginning teachers ought to have. We have spent a lot of time in our school training those people. I know it is a responsibility with schools to ensure that young teachers get the best possible start that they can get in their new career. However, we believe they lack certain things that the training institutions ought to be providing for those young people so that they start off in the best possible way. We do not believe they are getting that opportunity at the moment.

One of the things that we have done at our school and how we arrived at this was that we spent a lot of time — to set this in context without spending too much time on it — teaching social emotional capabilities to our students and with a great deal of success. We have noticed an enormous change in student outcomes and a cultural change in the school. In doing that one of the things we noticed was that our teachers did not appear to have the same capabilities that some of our kids were starting to learn through this explicit teaching. The more we went down this track the more we noticed that certain teachers especially lacked a number of internal capabilities that our kids appeared to have — the professional ones perhaps not quite so pronounced but a lot of internal ones. Some of those

were confidence or resilience, which were two of the things that teachers just did not seem to have, especially our younger teachers.

On that model we have attended to social, emotional stuff with our children down here and we believe with great success. A number of schools in our region, across Victoria and interstate, are doing the same thing and teaching the same stuff. The author of this particular model I am presenting today is Dr Michael Bernard, who is an American who worked at Melbourne University for some 20 years, and some of you will have heard of him. This capability-building model addresses not only the children's internal capabilities, but also focuses on the external capabilities and things which affect kids learning. One of the things he has been able to do is not only to provide us with some explicit teaching program for their social, emotional commonsense, but also he has pointed out a whole lot of good practices that ought to happen in the community, the home and the school.

The thing we want to focus on today are the good school practices that we believe all teachers ought to have and the internal capabilities that we believe all young teachers ought to have and they are listed under school good practices — there are eight listed — and on the other side under adult capabilities, the internal capabilities which we believe teachers ought to have. We see, even amongst some of our more senior teachers, that some of those things are just not present. We have spent a lot of time in our school and in our district focusing on those. In the Benalla area our cluster has come together now as what I would consider to be a very strong effective group and we have had a number of special training days now where we have just focused on those things to great effect.

Heather will go into that in a bit more detail, but I think some of the feedback we have received from practising teachers indicates that current practising teachers are looking for this sort of assistance to help them become better at their jobs and be better practitioners. Our teacher training institutions at the moment are not providing that in an explicit systematic way and we think that ought to become a generic part of teacher training for all students in their first couple of years. That has set the ground and we have tried to put it into some context. It is important that you understand that model sits inside a greater systemic approach to capability building.

Ms LEARY — What we are strongly recommending through our submission is that there needs to be a dual focus of training for our pre-service teachers. We are finding that increasingly the graduates are coming into the schools lacking the professional capabilities that they need to have in order to be effective teachers and they are also lacking the internal characteristics that will support them to be as effective as possible in the classroom. We are looking at excellence in teaching and graduates are coming out ill-prepared. We are finding that it depends on what teacher training institution they go to, and it seems to be an ad hoc, hit-and-miss approach that depends on the lecturers available or whatever it is that is currently popular which they seem to have been swept up in, but there is not that deep-seated understanding of what professional capabilities they need to have, recognising what they are and also the internal capabilities that are going to be the most effective in the classroom.

So we are recommending that you look closely at that teacher capability built-in framework of Bernard's that identifies research-based five internal characteristics that people need to have in place in order for them to be as effective as possible. Those characteristics are the ability to be organised, persistent and confident; to be an emotionally resilient; and to be able to get along with others — their life skills that these graduates and our practising teachers need to have in place and need to be developing — alongside the more traditional understanding that they have to have professional capabilities in place as well. Bernard has identified eight best practices that effective teachers need to have in place. We are carefully picking through those with our staff and graduates coming through our school, and we are working on those, but at the same time we are looking at the flip side of the coin — that is, how effective people are as human beings — how are they able to manage their time, how are they able to set goals for themselves to get along with difficult parents, difficult children and difficult staff members. All this impacts on staff stress levels, staff morale and job satisfaction.

We are saying that there needs to be a dual focus. We are looking at that at the pre-service training level. As a mother of two teacher graduates, and as an employer of graduates who come into our school, we find that the kids have not got in place the basic capabilities that one would expect they would have on the first day of teaching in order to start teaching. They are not there. From personal experience of having my own children go through two different teacher training institutes, one was completely different from the other — one a little bit better than the other — but both of them needed to have lots of catch-up staff for them to walk into the classroom and be effective classroom teachers because that is what we hire them for. We understand that they will have to have a year of mentoring and extra support, and maybe two or three years, but we expect what we will have in place are basic professional capabilities of how to run testing programs, how to organise a timetable, and how to use the

curriculum and standards framework as a teaching and planning tool. Those sorts of things seem to be swept over in their pre-service teacher training, and we are left to do the teaching of the kids to be teachers. We know they are capable of it. They are enthusiastic, they are bright and raring to go, but they do not have the tools in their hands. We are finding that we have to increasingly do that more and more.

We made a number of recommendations in our submission, particularly the dual focus — that the development and personal and professional capabilities need to be identified and essential for these graduates to become effective and successful teachers. We also find in managing a staff of 25 that these capabilities need to be ongoing. We need to be addressing them as part of our professional development, that it not only focuses on curriculum content but also on the development of the internal capabilities. We were looking at an overarching framework that all pre-service teacher training institutions had as a blueprint, a guide or a map, because it seems to be very ad hoc and hit and miss. We felt these characteristics and capabilities need to be an essential part of all teacher training, be it for preschools, primary schools or secondary schools. We also felt that our teachers needed to be trained similarly for the first one, two or even three years before they decided where they would like to specialise. We find that there is a vast gulf between our primary school teachers who generally have more of a focus on teaching children, and our secondary teachers who have a focus on teaching curriculum, and never the twain shall meet, but we actually set them up to be so polarised by the way we train them because we train them totally differently. The elements of good teaching are transferable from 5-year-olds to 15-year-olds to 25-year-olds — they are the same elements, and it is not until the graduates are in their final year that perhaps they perhaps would specialise in an area of expertise.

Michael Bernard's capability building model looks at those five internal characteristics that I mentioned before and the eight professional characteristics and I will go through them one by one and then I will come back to tell you how it has invigorated our ageing staff because the average of teachers is rapidly approaching retirement age and as employers we are always looking for ways to reinvigorate and re-enthuse our teachers, but we are also finding that our young teachers are grabbing these sorts of professional development modules and asking why they did not hear about them at uni; it is the sort of stuff they needed to hear.

How do we establish and develop positive teacher-student relationships, the importance of holding high expectations for our students, ensuring that the interests of students are accommodated in classes and activities, involving students in decision making, cultural and gender sensitivity; providing for safety of our students; teaching values and social emotional competencies — and Brian talked about that in a little more detail before — and explicit academic standards providing multiple opportunities for students success. They are the eight characteristics or best practices and we now have that very much as part of our annual teacher review program where we go through each of those capabilities and develop them with our staff. Alongside that we are looking at the internal capabilities of our teachers and developing those as well: how confident they are, how persistent they can be, organised, how able to get along with others and how emotionally resilient.

We had a workshop some two months ago with over 100 teachers in our Benalla cluster and the focus was on building internal capabilities of our teachers. We looked at those five characteristics and we had some fantastic feedback because when we look at our staff opinion survey and we see high stress levels or we see low teacher morale at the end of the day it is the internal capabilities of each individual that determines how happy they are, how successful they are as classroom teachers, how much job satisfaction they get out of what they are doing. We believe this needs to be a part of pre-teacher service training so that our young kids have got this very firmly in their mind when they come out and begin as teachers, that there is a continuum of learning that will be ongoing, having started at university, so that we are looking at developing those dual competencies in our teachers as part of their professional development.

In essence that is what we were talking about and that is what we have been working with for some six years in Goulburn north-east Victoria, and Peter knows that since he has visited our school and can probably speak first hand at our student capability building program which we have implemented and are having great success with. Now we have taken it one step further and we are looking at building the capabilities of our teachers — internal capabilities as well as their professional capabilities. It is very exciting. It is not rocket science; it is very easy to overlay whatever teacher training institute would be looking at reinvigorating their training program. It is something that gives us a framework and something to pin additional training to, but it is the skeleton, the structure that needs to be in place before the kids come out and start their careers.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. I might ask members to keep to a couple of questions each at this stage.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I found your presentation very interesting and very stimulating. It seems to me as a primary teacher myself that what you are outlining fits very well into a model of primary teacher training where you have integrated education, subject knowledge, academic knowledge, and school experience. I wonder how it fits into a degree plus Dip.Ed. model. We have had evidence from secondary principals who very strongly advocated for that model of training. They wanted people who knew their subject area as opposed to the integrated secondary model. I am wondering how structurally you would do it, given if you only have a Dip.Ed. year how do you have a school-based mentoring year? If all you have is a Dip.Ed. year, and if primary is different to secondary, what does that do for our middle years strategy where we are actually trying to break down some of those traditional barriers?

MS LEARY — That is a loaded question, but I will try my best. I think it is understanding that effective teaching is about a great deal more than presenting a curriculum or content area because if you have a number of students in your classroom who are off-task, off-side, who are misbehaving et cetera, then there is no time spent on actually presenting this wonderfully understood curriculum. Effective teachers, whether they are teaching 15-year-olds or 5-year-olds need to have in place an understanding of how to get the best out of every one of their students for each of their students to reach their potential. They need to have an understanding of those personal capabilities because quite often the teachers internal characteristics will determine whether or not the class is successful. It is the way they deal with these kids.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Absolutely. How do you do it?

Ms LEARY — How do we do it? We need to deconstruct each of these — —

Ms ECKSTEIN — How do you do it in a degree plus Dip.Ed. structure?

Ms LEARY — The process needs to be begun before they graduate, even if it is only touching base and going over the model and looking at each in a very succinct way, but setting them on a path that they can continue on learning over the period of their professional development for the next five or so years. I think it is critically important. This is the sort of approach that understands that our kids are coming into our classrooms with a whole raft of needs beyond being taught the content of that class. Teachers need to be effective and to be excellent, which we are aspiring to; they need to understand that. The feedback we got from teachers when we did our personal capability building workshop illustrates this beautifully.

Mr BAMFORD — Many of these were secondary teachers.

Ms LEARY — These were secondary school teachers. We talked about — —

Ms ECKSTEIN — I do not disagree that they need it.

Ms LEARY — Here is one:

I was emotionally resilient when a child was behaving inappropriately. I stopped, took a break, calmly pointed out the inappropriate behaviour ...

It goes on:

Self-talk. What am I trying to demonstrate here — how to deal with inappropriate behaviour — example setting. Patience. I could destroy class!

It was her/his choice. It comes back to how good she/he is at being resilient and being able to deal with this. Some of our teachers can come out with just the right amount of pedagogy and understanding of the curriculum, but such a confrontational approach with kids that they are offside, and they are learning nothing. It has to be begun when they are at university, whether it be in that 12-month diploma at the end of their degree or as part of their ongoing primary-secondary teacher training.

Mr BAMFORD — Are you saying you do not believe there is enough time in that 12-month period?

Ms ECKSTEIN — I am wondering what you think? Because the secondary principals said to us very strongly they believed the degree plus Dip.Ed. was the way to go. They wanted people who knew their subject stuff and they would take care of this other stuff later.

Ms LEARY — That is the way it is always put up.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I am putting that to you and saying, ‘What do you think about that?’.

Mr O’CONNELL — You are talking about the structural problem. I do not think we are addressing how you actually put this into a structure. What we are saying is what is needed. I think that is for others to say how to put it into a structure.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Sure, but you have to take account of it. You can say what is needed, but if you cannot enact it then where are you? You have got to look at both.

Mr O’CONNELL — You do.

Ms LEARY — I think that is where we have tripped up in the past. Our paradigm has been that a teacher presents content-curriculum to kids and when kids do not fit into the square peg or the round hole, whatever that concept is, then we run into strife because these kids are not ready to learn. We have now had a shift in paradigm so that we understand that in order to get the best out of our kids and to be excellent teachers we need to have a dual focus. It needs to be what we present and how we present it. Yes, there are professional capabilities that need to be taken into account, but we also need to be developing our own internal capabilities so that we can best deal with the challenges of teaching our kids today.

Mr O’CONNELL — I think what we are looking at is what we believe is needed from research aimed at the practice; how that is achieved is beyond us to actually decide.

Mr KOTSIRAS — As a follow-up to what you have said, student teachers or teachers first year out, the first priority is to survive in a classroom. They turn up on the first day and have prepared the lessons; they have not got time to organise a drama club or to do something extra which you are saying makes a good teacher, and many of their students will continue the same way as they started off in their first year. So what do our teaching institutions have to do to prepare students to look beyond just the lesson plan and try to survive the first year at school, because students are different. They walk into a classroom and they say, ‘Gee I have survived the day, I haven’t got time to sit down and talk to them on a one-to-one basis to find out what the problems are, what the issues are, what form of soccer club or football club — —

Ms LEARY — This is not in addition to, it is a part of what is happening in the classroom. It is not something outside, like a soccer club or something special, it is integrated into the delivery of — —

Mr KOTSIRAS — But you are saying in your presentation that a good teacher is one that looks beyond the classroom, someone who assists with drama, or with plays, coming into close contact with the students — —

Ms LEARY — Sorry if I gave you that impression.

Mr KOTSIRAS — No, it is in the presentation.

Ms LEARY — I am talking about — —

Mr O’CONNELL — That can actually demonstrate the capability, it is not what the capability is. What you are looking at is teachers developing these capabilities or being taught these capabilities — —

Mr KOTSIRAS — Later on, in a few years — later, early — —

Mr O’CONNELL — No, early in their training. Not when they get into school and realise then that to survive in school they need these capabilities and if they are lucky enough to come across a program or a school that supports that professional development for teachers, that is fine, but if not then they are going to be lost.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Is it out there? Is it happening in our institutions, are students being trained?

Mr BAMFORD — No, that is what we are saying. They need this to be the best classroom teachers; to answer your question directly, to be the best possible classroom practitioners that they can be we are saying they need to have this explicit teaching in this stuff while they are in teachers training college or university, not while

they are being trained. Both professionally and personally they need to develop that side of their work as well — to be the best practitioners in the classroom.

Ms LEARY — They cannot even name them quite often. They cannot identify what they are. They do not know what they are. We are saying in order for our kids to be the best that they can be, to hit the ground running when they walk into a classroom, they need to have had this as part of their training. It needs to be a part of their mind-set.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Which then goes to what Anne said: is it a three-year degree course plus a Dip.Ed., or four-year course where students go out in the first year teaching and experience what it is like in the classroom and then perhaps gain those skills you mention?

Ms LEARY — One of the models that we had in mind was that pre-service teacher training is the same for the first, second and perhaps even third year for primary and secondary school teachers — and during that time they go and look at each of those settings and in the final year make a decision.

Ms ECKSTEIN — But most secondary school teachers do not do that — that is my point. How do you do it in a Dip.Ed.?

Ms LEARY — It needs to be begun because excellent teachers are a continuum. They do not come out as excellent teachers; they come out wanting to be excellent teachers, aspiring to excellence and that is something that needs to continue on down the track.

Mr BAMFORD — Can I make a comment here? I do not think we should not do something if we believe that is what is needed because of the constraints of time or courses —

Ms ECKSTEIN — No, I just want to find out how you do it.

Mr BAMFORD — That is the challenge, isn't it?

Mr O'CONNELL — You only ignore it because it does not fit into the structure — change your structure to accommodate it.

Mr HALL — I have enjoyed reliving the passion. It was a bit under two years ago since I visited Benalla Primary School and learnt about the student capabilities program. It is excellent and I am pleased to say that it is spreading with great success. The first thing I wanted to ask is whether the view that you are expressing here today has been put to some of the teacher training institutions? If so, what has their response been?

Ms LEARY — We have not, Peter.

Mr BAMFORD — I have at a local level — to La Trobe in Shepparton. I have expressed this view very strongly to the head of the education faculty, with mixed reception. Maybe I was a little too passionate. I should have treaded a little carefully. I think some of their concerns are similar to the ones that Anne is pointing out, that the way we are organised currently provides too big a challenge for us. I am not sure that ought to be the right response.

Mr HALL — Do you think the teacher training institutions are capable of thinking and delivering in the manner that you are proposing to us today? One of the CEP people before put forward the proposition that in England there is a program whereby some schools become brokers on behalf of the training institution and actually deliver the last couple of years of the teacher training program within the school. I have doubts about whether teacher training institutions might be capable of doing what you would like them to do and therefore at a school level you might have a better chance of more broadly spreading this training to teachers as you propose.

Ms LEARY — I think the teacher institutes are quite capable of doing it, but they do not seem to have an overarching framework that is systemic. It seems to be ad hoc and hit and miss and it depends upon lots of other things apart from what makes a good pre-service training module that is determining what our kids are being taught.

Mr O'CONNELL — I do not think they see it as part of their charter to do so. If you look at the foundation, it invites most of these institutes to the awards to listen to excellent teachers because they make their

own submissions on their teaching pracs, et cetera. Few and far between, if any, bother to attend, which says that they really do not believe that is part of their process. Their process is to teach pedagogy and not how to be a teacher. I think that is the issue and is demonstrated from the way that we experience it from the foundation's point of view.

The CHAIR — I wonder if the difference is that despite the fact that you are able to teach them you are free from any — —

We have parliamentary privilege here. We had a fair bit of difficulty actually identifying which university or institutions people think are doing a good job according to their own philosophy and which are poor. It is very difficult for us as a committee because people do not like to say it. I wonder whether you could perhaps enlighten us on what you think are some of the better ones for us to go and have a look at in terms of the campuses that you have seen.

Mr PERTON — Chair, they need to have an ongoing relationship with these institutes. I just wonder whether you might make the offer that this answer is in camera evidence.

The CHAIR — Yes, I will have to do that.

Mr PERTON — That means that it shall only be recorded for the purposes of the committee and will not be published.

The CHAIR — Yes, that would be useful.

Mr PERTON — So if you make that declaration, if that would be suitable.

The CHAIR — Would we now go in camera in terms of the committee hearing for 5 minutes. You can have a brief discussion about your experience.

Proceedings in camera follow.

Open hearing resumed.

Ms MUNT — I have a very quick question. Do you have a definition of the difference between an excellent teacher and an experienced teacher?

Ms LEARY — An excellent teacher and an experienced teacher?

Mr O'CONNELL — From the foundation's point of view — and we have received submissions from some 18 000 teachers in this area — an experienced teacher is a teacher who has done their time in the school. An excellent teacher is one who actually reaches the children and helps them to learn in the way that they wish to learn. We can talk about experience and passion, but the kind of joy of teaching is something that comes across very much in that way. Even though many teachers complain about the amount of time — the number of hours — they spend, the amount of work they have to do, the excellent teachers are doing more, because they have a great joy in teaching. They have a great belief they are making a difference.

One of the things we looked at in the research was part of the capability-building framework that we are talking about here. The excellent teachers we have seen all demonstrated those five characteristics. We asked what is in common with those teachers right across Australia? Why do they stand out from other teachers? Why do the parents and students believe these are excellent teachers? In every way you look at it characteristics stood out. They were organised, and so on. These characteristics are important. We need to look at, look for and train those characteristics, because they are trainable; they are not just something you are born with.

Ms MUNT — They are also a great resource for mentoring.

Mr O'CONNELL — They are.

Ms LEARY — An excellent teacher touches the student's heart and mind. An experienced teacher, who has been there for a long time, maybe is not doing that. Maybe they are just going through the motions.

Mr O'CONNELL — Mentoring at the moment in some schools is done extremely well, in others it is not. A number of teachers are used in their prac time relief teaching so they are not getting mentoring where they need it. The actual mentors who are there for beginning teachers are not working alongside that teacher full time, and that is a really important thing. This is a profession, and other professions do that. The teaching profession does not.

Ms MUNT — Yes, but they do it as part of their professional responsibility, which is also interesting, because then cost does not come into it either.

Mr O'CONNELL — That is right.

Mr SCHEFFER — When I look at the capabilities framework I hear what you are saying and I think I understand, but I am not clear on something. These are five dispositions — the internal ones — with some subsets, and you talked about workshops. How is a disposition actually communicated practically to a teacher? I know there can be a huge answer, but what do you do in a workshop?

Ms LEARY — These dispositions have been deconstructed, so that the teachers address each of those substrands and how they can develop. All of us have not got all of those characteristics in place by virtue of our personalities and so forth, but they are capabilities that can be learnt.

Mr SCHEFFER — I understand that, but how do people learn? Do you do it through dramatic workshops, do you do it through questions and answers, do you do it through role models? How do you do this?

Ms LEARY — The workshop we ran for over 100 teachers had a lot of workshopping in it — a lot of discussion across primary and secondary schoolteachers; rural and town schoolteachers —

Mr BAMFORD — Normal professional development is the answer.

Ms LEARY — It was formally addressed. There was a lecture component, the intellectual processes and then translating those to how they work in the practical day-to-day running of the classroom. There was discussion

with colleagues about how to build those capabilities — that is, if I am not naturally a confident person, how do I go about fielding that capability within myself in order make me more effective as a classroom teacher?

Mr SCHEFFER — Right, and then the mentoring that you opened with, that underpins that?

Ms LEARY — Yes.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. It is good to hear some passion about teaching and what makes good teaching. We have the Victorian teaching awards coming up in the next month, is that right?

Mr O'CONNELL — That is right.

The CHAIR — Have you got any heads up for us — the Lindsay Thompson award?

Mr O'CONNELL — No, they are obviously state awards. We would like to thank the committee for this opportunity.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. We have a few other research questions that we might put in. Is it okay if we have some contact with you about technical questions?

Ms LEARY — Sure.

The CHAIR — Through you, Terry?

Mr O'CONNELL — Through myself or directly with either Heather or Brian.

Witnesses withdrew.

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne – 10 May 2004

Members

Ms H. E. Buckingham	Mr N. Kotsiras
Ms A. L. Eckstein	Ms J. R. Munt
Mr P. R. Hall	Mr V. J. Perton
Mr S. R. Herbert	Mr J. E. Scheffer

Chair: Mr S. R. Herbert
Deputy Chair: Mr N. Kotsiras

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms K. Ellingford
Research Officers: Dr N. Fischer and Dr G. Berman

Witnesses

Ms A. Taylor, deputy president, Victorian branch; and
Mr J. Graham, research officer, Australian Education Union.

The CHAIR — I welcome the Australian Education Union.

Ms TAYLOR — Mary Bluett sends her apologies. John has written the actual submission so it seems to make sense if he speaks to the major points within it, and then we are both open to questions.

Mr GRAHAM — We would first of all just like to say we welcome the opportunity to appear before you and present our submission. It intrigues us, of course, that there are three separate reviews at the moment. Hopefully the outcomes will be consistent and there will be some very positive link between them.

We believe there should be national guidelines for pre-service education because of the fact that teaching is a national profession. We believe those guidelines should be developed as part of a partnership with all the major stakeholders involved. In terms of some of the important issues in relation to pre-service, we have the notion of professional studies as part of the teacher education courses. There is an ideal, which we support, which is that there should be two years of professional studies. However, because of the funding situation of higher education, and because of the teacher supply position at the moment, we would see that being introduced over time. So at the moment we do support the one-year diploma of education. We know that is a fairly contentious issue in the educational faculties around the country.

The point that we would make about that is again pre-service education should be linked to what happens once a teacher actually enters a teaching service, so you have the VIT induction program and it should also be linked to properly funded professional development. Rather than front loading everything into a single year pre-service course, we believe that it should be an integrated process which links the employment of teachers with their pre-service courses. That requires close relationships and working partnerships between universities and schools. There are many good examples at the moment and I am sure you would have heard of some of them, but it is clearly something by which the profession is able to have a positive effect back into the universities, and the universities are able to be more relevant to schools. One of the really important parts of that is the school-based practicum. In many respects that is where you have the profession and the academics meeting. We believe that pre-service education is fundamentally the responsibility of the universities but that the practicum is the way in which the university course, and the theory in the university course, is given some sort of grounding in the professional knowledge of teachers.

There are some concerns at the moment in relation to the funding of universities. Whereas in the past academics would visit schools and be part of a partnership with the supervising teachers, this is happening less and less now. Again we get feedback from our members that they find this does not enhance the notion of the partnership. So something really needs to occur in relation to funding universities. Our friends in the higher education sector emphasise that matter as well.

Another major issue for the practicum is the shortage of student teacher placements in schools. We work with a committee which includes the VIEU, the independent union, plus representatives of all the universities, and on their behalf we did a survey in 2002 to find out exactly what the problem was in terms of providing placements for student teachers in schools. That was very illuminating. The issues were fairly clear from the school sector in that the major reason for people saying, 'Yes, we would take more student teachers', would be if the payment for teacher supervisors was increased, and also the other main issue was teacher workload.

There were also some issues in terms of the universities better organising the way they do the practicum, but so far none of those things have really been addressed. So the situation again presented to us by the universities this year is that this is one of the worst years yet in terms of being able to place the students in schools. Their comment is that they may get to the point where there will be some students who will have completed their academic course and be unable to teach because they have not done the full practicum.

We believe it is important that graduate outcomes are identified and articulated. The graduate outcomes should then be the standards that influence what happens in the pre-service courses. Pre-service standards would then be used in terms of the content of the courses, the assessment of teacher education students and the evaluation and accreditation of those courses. We understand that the Victorian Institute of Teaching is developing those standards at the moment. We list here a number of particular graduate outcomes, which we have a great interest in. Item 5.4 refers to the needs of indigenous students. Our national policy, which we support, is that all undergraduate teacher education programs within an agreed time frame should build in significant and accessible mandatory indigenous

studies units. At the moment I believe some progress has been made both in Queensland and New South Wales in that regard.

Looking at 5.6, we believe a graduate should have a knowledge of the curriculum in Victorian schools. While that sounds pretty straightforward, we have found that a lot of new teachers and graduates report back that they had done little of that in the course, which is of some concern. I know the university argument is that they are looking at things more broadly and generally and they have international students et cetera. However, our position would be that you learn about the general in the particular and that it is extraordinarily important that graduates come into our schools with a good understanding of the curriculum..

Over to the key stages of schooling, the issues there are making sure that primary pre-service graduates are able to teach the P–6 curriculum and that secondary graduates are able to teach the 7–12 curriculum. At various times there have been attempts to have people come out of courses who are able to teach, say, P–3 or only 7–10. That creates major employment difficulties for those people and staffing problems for schools. At the same time we would say that the middle years, post-compulsory and early years should be covered in the courses but you should not graduate as just a middle-years person.

The other point we would make is in relation to secondary teacher qualifications. We have found through our statewide surveys that there is an increasing move to have people teaching outside their qualification areas and that represents the fact that there are shortages in specific subjects. That was documented, and I think we provided information to the last inquiry by this committee. There is a mismatch between the actual specialist studies or the methodologies that people are taking in pre-service and the demand for the specialities in schools. We would see that as a university selection process problem.

Just finally, we have said something about mature age entrants. We see that as very important, both in terms of being able to meet the needs of the teacher supply problem and from the information available that the move by mature age people making a career change is already there, because university statistics show that the average age of students is about 30. We definitely support the government's latest move to have 30 non-teaching professionals undertaking a teacher education course in 2004–05 while being employed as a trainee teacher. We see that as a very commendable step in this direction.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Are there any questions?

Ms MUNT — I have a few. First, your submission states:

The AEU does not support the school-based 'apprenticeship' models operating in the UK and New Zealand.

We heard from a country school principal and a deputy principal who strongly supported that model. Is there any particular reason that you do not support the model?

Mr GRAHAM — Certainly the evidence we have received from our colleagues in the unions in those places is that it tends to undercut the professional qualification that teachers have. It is breaking teaching down to classroom techniques rather than the whole range of graduate outcomes that we expect people to have. We would be adamantly opposed to that. If anything, we were looking at possibly even the notion of a five-year course, which could have an extended practicum — you could have an internship for a term where people would be in schools — but the notion of them spending all their time in schools and learning how to teach is unacceptable.

Ms TAYLOR — If I can just add to that, I can understand why country principals and deputy principals would be saying that, and I think we have addressed it in here. It is difficult often for country schools to get teachers after they are qualified — they think if they can get people into their communities during their training they are likely to stay — but there are other ways of doing that without undercutting the professionalism, and that is by providing support for people to do some of their practicum in the country. There are also issues around hard-to-staff country schools and allowances, support for higher subdivisions on which jobs can be allocated. A range of other options can do that which keep people within their community.

Ms MUNT — They were not specifically talking about keeping graduates in the community but using people already in the community to retrain as teachers and stay in the community, which is a slightly different focus.

Mr GRAHAM — So they are retraining teachers who are already qualified?

Ms MUNT — No, retraining people in the community who might have another career and who wish to retrain as teachers — doing it within the school and keeping them within the community.

Mr GRAHAM — Right.

Ms TAYLOR — We would still believe that you have to have the professional study that goes with that, which you could not do in that way. There may be a way in those sorts of areas of some sort of a partnership which retains a strong professional focus, but also allows them to do their practicum and spend a lot of time back there, or the year being changed slightly, as for a lot of people who do distance education, so they can spend a bit more time in their community. But there still has to be that professional study focus.

Ms MUNT — The other thing they highlighted quite strongly is that they get students to do their practicum in their schools. There are no representatives coming from the educational institutions to check up that things are going well, so they have a lot of hurdles to jump across to get themselves a teacher.

Ms TAYLOR — That is not just a country thing, and I think we have referred to that. Our counsellors and the student teachers whom we work closely with in our new educators network all expressed the same concern: university funding levels are so tight that the cost of having supervisors go out to schools, even if it is the one just down the road from the university, seems to be difficult to find.

I can think of only one university that consistently does that now, and teachers and students really miss out. I agree, they need them in their schools.

Mr GRAHAM — The Attorney-General's report into supply and demand about two years ago recommended there should be some funding available to universities to ensure that the supervision takes place in those country locations, but nothing has been done in that regard yet.

Ms MUNT — Once again, they had a slightly different solution, which I had not heard before, where the student teachers basically taught the class while the supervising teachers liaised with the teaching training organisation to learn how to do that supervisory role.

Mr GRAHAM — So the untrained person would be taking the class. That is a very interesting perception of what it means to actually teach then, because that would mean that anyone could come off the street and presumably teach.

Ms MUNT — Well, perhaps a fourth-year student.

Ms TAYLOR — I know that, for instance, Melbourne university with its internship has a little bit of that in the fifth year, but there is always the acceptance that the base training, the base education has to be there and the base ability to teach with a base qualification before that is possible. I would be concerned about it in terms of the type of education that the student teacher would be getting in terms of becoming a teacher. I would be concerned for the children in the classroom in terms of the lack of a qualified teacher, and there are probably even a range of legal liability issues if something went wrong.

Mr GRAHAM — Yes, there is a really important legal question too, so I think Parliament would have to change the teaching act or something if you were going to do that because of the duty of care. If a child were hurt in those circumstances where you had a totally unqualified teacher, there would be all sorts of problems. You would have to change the Victorian Institute of Teaching Act too, I think, because that also says that you must have the following qualifications.

Mr KOTSIRAS — In your submission you said you have not got a preference for a three-by-one or four-year course. Have you any evidence which indicates which of those two prepares teachers more for a classroom? Have you done any studies over the years to show whether someone who has done a four-year course or a three-plus-one course is better equipped, or are they equally as good or equally as bad?

Mr GRAHAM — I have seen overseas research, and that talks about the longer the preparation time the more likely people will stay in teaching. Just anecdotally here, the one-year diploma of education is seen as not a fantastic preparation to be a teacher because you are doing so many things at the one time in terms of working out what it is that you have got yourself into, because you have your three-year degree and when you are doing the three-year degree you have not necessarily decided that you are going to be a teacher. So you are finding out what

teaching is all about plus you are doing the academic study. Then the following year you are out teaching, so you are also preparing all your method work so that you can be a subject teacher. But that is anecdotal; we do not have any research.

Mr KOTSIRAS — And what is your preference: should the supervising teacher get paid or should the school get paid?

Mr GRAHAM — The award states that the supervising teacher gets paid unless there is a prior agreement which the supervising teacher is part of. We would say that the award should be implemented, yes.

Ms TAYLOR — And we know that teachers see it as a way of valuing what they do. Often in some schools they agree to put it, for instance, into shared professional development across the school, but that is their choice and they have been given that choice as part of being valued in that role. That seems to work in many schools. It is just the amount that is a bit low.

Mr KOTSIRAS — If the amount, as you are saying, is a bit low, do you think that has to increase to encourage more teachers to take on the role of supervising teachers because there is a shortage of teachers who are willing to take on student teachers?

Mr GRAHAM — Certainly the survey revealed that, and I think I have provided survey results to the committee — to Nick Fischer. In fact that showed that the single most compelling change that you could make to get more teachers to take students would be to increase that supervision payment. It has been 12 years now since it was increased, and it is a national thing so that we cannot arbitrarily increase it in Victoria. My understanding is that right around the country our branches have reported to us that they are now having the same problem, which is that there are not enough people in the secondary area to take the students who are in pre-service courses.

Mr HALL — First of all, thanks John and Ann for the presentation and submission. I was interested in section 5 of the submission you have given us on graduate outcomes, specifically the graduates outcomes, for example, that teachers should be adequately equipped to meet the needs of indigenous students — these are the ones John highlighted — they should have a sound knowledge of the curriculum being implemented in Victorian schools, be competent and confident and creative users of information technology. Did you mention those because you believe there is deficiency in the teacher training courses in those particular areas?

Ms TAYLOR — Not specifically in every case, but certainly one of the areas in which I think there is a deficiency is the issue of indigenous education. The reports we get back from either Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Koori members is often they go into classrooms where their needs are not understood, but also because we have many, many schools where teachers are teaching Koori kids without any background or specific expertise. Lionel Bamblett from the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) at a conference recently pointed out that in Victoria the majority of Aboriginal children are in schools where there are one, two, three, four or five of them. Once upon a time you would be able to concentrate your education and professional development and in-service in specific areas; now we think there is a desperate need for some basic work. We are working with the universities to have discussions around what can happen at the moment. But certainly that would be one area where I think the universities, or most of them would admit they are not on top of. Are there other areas?

Mr GRAHAM — I suppose what we were highlighting were our priorities, and in terms of each one of our graduate outcomes we nominated, there would be some issues in terms of the degree to which universities are doing what we are saying are important graduate outcomes. It would be good, for instance, to have some sort of study. Again, I have seen the overseas stuff but I have not seen any studies here of the relationship between the training in terms of information technology that students get in their pre-service courses, and then what the situation is like out in schools in terms of the huge changes which have occurred over the last couple of years. Certainly the overseas studies tend to say that the pre-service courses are starting to lag behind because of the fact that the school systems are sort of upgrading and updating their IT infrastructure, and the universities are not catching up with that.

Mr HALL — Curriculum knowledge is even more fundamental, is it not? I notice you have said that some teachers have mentioned they felt there were some deficiencies in the training programs in respect of curriculum knowledge, which is fundamental. With regard to that, as these issues arise does the AEU have any formal arrangement with the teacher training institutions to actually sit down and say, 'Look, we believe this component of the course needs to be updated by better emphasising or including or excluding whatever'?

Mr GRAHAM — We are on several of the course advisory committees for universities. Let me just say that these matters are very sensitive, as you would understand. Our relationship with the universities is fairly good, but one has to be rather cautious about being too critical.

Mr HALL — Whose role should it be then, in your opinion, to help change and restructure teacher training courses so they better reflect the needs of students today?

Ms TAYLOR — I think what is happening here now is a really good part of it because governments should certainly be responsible for all levels of education, certainly within our government schools which we are speaking on behalf of, and part of the quality of that education is the quality of the training of the teachers. I certainly think government has a strong part to play. We do have discussions. John and I meet, as he said, once a term with a group of people from each of the universities, and we work very well together on a number of things. As he said, some issues are sensitive and some things you work through more slowly than others.

Mr GRAHAM — My understanding is also that the institute of teaching has a role under legislation to look at outcomes, and I understand that their present work is developing some standards for pre-service education courses.

Ms TAYLOR — And that is important if they are going to be registering teachers as being appropriately qualified; they have to look at the courses too.

Mr GRAHAM — Because the standards should be consistent with the beginning teacher standards, which we have already in place — the provisional registration. If another set of standards came out for graduates which were not consistent with those, then you would have a problem.

Mr SCHEFFER — When we discussed teacher placements you talked about the payment of supervising teachers, but you also mentioned the pressure on teacher workloads — that is mentoring teachers. Can you talk a bit more about that and how that might be alleviated or improved, and whether universities are supporting that in any way?

Mr GRAHAM — The message that we get from teachers in terms of the reasons they find it difficult to take student teachers is that the amount of work they have to do is such that this is one thing on top of that. The point I was making earlier, which I think you are alluding to, is that if the universities are not visiting the schools, then the burden falls entirely on the teacher to make that assessment without a professional discussion with the university person. We have also had some anecdotal evidence this year that the introduction of mentoring for beginning teachers, which is required now, has also — —

Ms TAYLOR — By the institute.

Mr GRAHAM — Yes, by the institute of teaching, has also added an extra burden on people who may have taken student teachers in the past. In terms of the workload — do you want to say something about the agreement, Ann?

Ms TAYLOR — As anyone around here would know, we have just been involved in negotiating a certified agreement which is going through a ratification process now with our members and, assuming that goes through certification, will lay the groundwork for consultative processes within schools where issues around workload should be dealt with and discussed at school level. Clearly the sorts of things we would be wanting to put out as advice to schools, assuming all this goes through, is that when they are discussing workload student teachers should be part of that discussion within the school, so that if somebody is taking student teachers, while they are taking them perhaps other work can be taken off their shoulders so they can put their time and energy into that.

Mr SCHEFFER — But are supervising or mentoring teachers moderated in the way they are doing their work as well? Besides the discussions that occur with the university representative from time to time, how do the mentoring teachers orient themselves towards the job they have to do?

Mr GRAHAM — The only example I can think of at the moment is the mentoring teachers for beginning teachers get two days of professional development activity run by the department and the institute of teaching. For supervising teachers, I think RMIT has a day which it provides. It is my understanding that at most of the other universities there is nothing which is organised and consistent.

Ms TAYLOR — Just from my own personal experience of not too many years ago, the university we had students from would hold after-school meetings, but that just adds to your workload and you find a lot of schools do not participate, but yes, I agree.

Mr GRAHAM — And it is a quality assurance thing too.

The CHAIR — You spoke about national guidelines for teaching courses. You said guidelines, but what is your view on national accreditation requirements for a teacher training course? Some professions have professional requirements to get in. Whether we have guidelines or accreditations or something else, we hear that there is great diversity in terms of outcomes and what is actually taught in our teacher training institutes. Guidelines do not necessarily create consistency between the institutions or get curriculum taught. Do you think some sort of accreditation is needed, or is that overkill?

Mr GRAHAM — I think the problem is the one you mentioned, which is the diversity within the system. I referred to a report which was put out by the deans of education in 1998 called *Preparing a Profession*. All the deans of education around the country agreed to that. The reference group involved the unions and the departments, but the problem was, so far as I understand it, it went to MCEETYA and then it sort of went nowhere. At that point there seemed to be a reasonable willingness to actually get a set of guidelines rather than mandatory accreditation processes. I do not know whether things have changed since then. I am aware, as you would be, of the MCEETYA task force, and the fact that Brendan Nelson has also set up a national institute. Where all that is going is a bit unclear.

Ms TAYLOR — I think it is like schools. Schools and their communities are going to do slightly different things. I do not know that a national accreditation would be needed, but I agree there would need to be guidelines — but there has to be the will to have them implemented too.

The CHAIR — Ann, you spoke about the need to keep a professional focus in the institutions. Professional in terms of teacher training institutions can be anything from teaching the curriculum, teaching the sorts of outcomes we want the students to have, teaching about how you teach boys, how you do VCAL, how you do literacy and numeracy, or it can have a theoretical basis — the theory of learning or the theory of teaching. There seems to be a great debate here about what is important in terms of teachers, whether it is a three-year course of theory or whether it is teaching skill and curriculum knowledge. Of course, there is a blend, but I would like to know how you use the term ‘professional’.

Ms TAYLOR — I think I was talking about the necessity to have that blend. It is not just a list of skills that you are learning. You are also trying to develop personally and professionally so that you can add so much more to your teaching and so that you have a whole range of things to reflect back on and build on, rather than, as I said, learning technical skills. You are right, it is a blend and balance, and it is about getting that right. Certainly some of our members think with the one-year courses there is not enough time in schools and in front of students. While we certainly would not want to go to a position where, as we have said, that is all that is done, there has to be that base in the universities. At the very least we need the mandated days we have now, which I know some of the universities do not think we need, and partially that is a resource issue for them which I understand, but we certainly need to keep that. You have to keep the development of professionals who can think and question the way they want to teach their students.

Mr GRAHAM — And I think that balance is in terms of the amount of time that people spend in schools on the practicum compared to the theory. The position that we have, which we have put in the submission, is that the practicum should ground the theory. There is again a perception that what happens is that the students go out and do their practical experience in schools, then they are back to the theory, and the two things are not necessarily linked together. In other words, you are in the school, you have had some lectures on adolescent psychology, and that should be coming through what is happening in your school experience. Your school experience should then be brought back to the university. That sort of thing has been a problem for pre-service courses for a long time, and in talking to graduates recently it still seems to be a problem.

Ms TAYLOR — And that is where the contact between the university and the schools is really important. In many cases the student supervision by the university is not happening; it is often just not there. With people not being able to get to the occasional after-school professional development, or whatever, there is often no real close

contact between the supervising teacher who is trying to teach something important and the university that is teaching something important. It is not being brought together.

The CHAIR — We might have the last question, John, but just a quick one.

Mr SCHEFFER — You describe doing something in psychology, going to the school and going back to the university. You describe that as a problem. Why is that not just a necessary dynamic in the nature of the beast — it has always been that way, you live through that, and that is how you learn?

Mr GRAHAM — The university has to orientate itself to doing it, and I do not know whether it does do that. I suppose the point that I was making was that there tends to be one track, which is your professional study that is supervised back at the university by people whose responsibility is to look after the practicum part, and then you have your lecturer in psychology who is — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Seen as a disconnection.

Mr GRAHAM — Yes, doing their part. To do that you would have to reconceptualise your course. So it is probably a fairly radical change, and I am not sure whether people would do that.

The CHAIR — The committee thanks you both for attending. We wish you well.

Ms TAYLOR — We wish you well and look forward to the outcomes.

Witnesses withdrew.

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne – 10 May 2004

Members

Ms H. E. Buckingham	Mr N. Kotsiras
Ms A. L. Eckstein	Ms J. R. Munt
Mr P. R. Hall	Mr V. J. Perton
Mr S. R. Herbert	Mr J. E. Scheffer

Chair: Mr S. R. Herbert
Deputy Chair: Mr N. Kotsiras

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms K. Ellingford
Research Officers: Dr N. Fischer and Dr G. Berman

Witnesses

Ms K. Knopp, director, strategic relations;
Mr A. Ross, board member; and
Ms R. Howard, public relations officer, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria.

The CHAIR — Welcome to the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria.

Mr ROSS — Alan Ross is my name, principal of Billanook College and a board member of the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria. I am pleased to present the AISV's response to this inquiry. The report, which is being passed around to members, highlights our focus on mid-career professionals considering a move to teaching, which is of particular interest to us and very important. We have been making recommendations which relate to that to try to make it easier for people coming from other areas of industry and professions to move into teaching — I would add too perhaps even moving out from teaching — and the movement between education and other industries being made flexible. Some other recommendations we put in relate to pre-service education, and they speak for themselves. I am not sure if you want me to go through the presentation as it is there.

The CHAIR — Summarise.

Mr ROSS — Yes, summarise. We are keen to ensure that people move into the profession from outside, because if we look just at those people who are at university level we feel that the current shortage of teaching is going to not provide a sufficient number of well qualified and well experienced professionals in the future. So that is the focus of our presentation. We are trying to provide a balance, so that the relationship between the teacher trainer, the school and the universities that are delivering those courses — those three groups — have got good connection and good communication between them. I am not sure that that would be the case at the moment, but we would be wanting to encourage that.

Especially in the independent sector there is a great variety of schools, as there is in the state sector as well. We would be keen for people who are beginning their teacher training get an opportunity to see a range of different school types and to look at children with special needs, an increasing number of whom are going to independent schools. The evidence would show that there are few teachers in training who have an interest or training in children with special needs. We see that that is an important area to develop.

As I said, in order to develop real experiences in a school for teacher trainers it is important that they spend a block of time in schools over a period of time. Teaching is much about the craft of teaching. Obviously information technology, and having access to the tools of the trade, is important too, but it is important that teachers learn what it is really like in a school to develop relationships with children and how they learn in the hurly-burly of a full teaching day where you teach every period, have yard duty at lunch time, have a meeting after school and a bunch of correction afterwards. Without sufficient time in schools, perhaps in a block, training teachers do not get that real-life experience of what it is like in a school.

As I said, it is important that technology is used in pre-service training. More and more young people coming through and professionals from other areas of industry coming into education are well versed in information and communications technology and using that as a tool for trade rather than an end in itself. As time goes on that is certainly a benefit that education is having, whereas perhaps 5 or 10 years ago that was not the case, the kids were ahead of the teachers. Now more and more as people are going through training they have those skills.

Mr PERTON — Have you found a teacher ahead of the student yet?

Mr ROSS — Yes, some of the new teachers who are coming into the schools are, but I take the point. Certainly the older ones of us struggle to keep up with kids. In some of the clever schools we are using children as part of the professional development in that area. I think we need to be attracting mid-career professionals into education, and we need to look at ways we might do that to minimise financial disincentives. At the moment it is a difficult task for mid-career professionals to move into education financially, time wise — to give up a career and an income for perhaps 12 months — to gain a graduate diploma. Perhaps looking at internships and ways in which trainee teachers may come into schools, perhaps have evening or vocation training times which show flexible education in teacher training, would be an advantage. I think I will leave it at that at this stage, unless Kerri wants to make any additional comments. I am happy to answer any questions and pick up any points that we have made in the submission.

The CHAIR — I do not think your colleagues have introduced themselves to the committee.

Ms KNOPP — My name is Kerri Knopp and I work for the association in the position of director of strategic relations, which covers the workplace relations area. In terms of what Alan Ross has put to you today, that is pretty much the position. We focused fairly strictly on your terms of reference and focused on a couple of areas

rather than going very broadly. We are happy to report on experiences. Obviously with independent schools being as diverse as they are, there are a range of views out in schools. If there are any issues the committee is looking at or anything that we have raised, we can probably add to it knowing your specific interests.

Ms HOWARD — I am Rachel Howard, the public affairs officer.

Mr HALL — Thank you for your presentation and submission. I have not had time to read it all so forgive me if I am asking questions whose answers may be contained within that. In terms of their taking of student teachers, do independent schools take a lot of student teachers for their work placements?

Mr ROSS — Yes, they do. It depends on the nature of the school and what each individual school's philosophy is. Certainly the vast majority would take in student teachers each year. My school is prep to 12 and we would take it probably 2 to 3 primary trainees each year and about 9 or 10 in the secondary area, so about 12 trainee teachers each year. We take them from a range of different universities and institutes. Smaller schools would probably take fewer. It depends on the resources that individual schools have, because it is a bit of an issue for schools taking trainee teachers. Some trainee teachers are excellent and it is a very positive experience for both sides. Sometimes it is not.

Mr HALL — How do some of your country school members go? Do they also have that opportunity to take student teachers, given the fact that many of them may not be close to the training providers?

Mr ROSS — Yes, they do. Prior to being at Billanook I was at Ballarat, and the University of Ballarat had a teacher education facility there and we were pleased to take trainee teachers. Many country schools like to take trainee teachers because it brings in some fresh ideas that are being used in universities and teacher training institutions, so it is an opportunity for teachers in the school to perhaps get ideas as well. It is a form of professional development for those teachers in the school. But accommodation is sometimes an issue for the more distant schools from universities. There is a commitment in the independent sector towards teacher training. We regard it as a professional responsibility to give back.

Mr HALL — I note there was a comment about a special school that struggled to get a trainee teacher at the school despite frequent requests. That is alarming, is it not?

Mr ROSS — Yes, it is. The situation with children with special needs in Victoria is a real concern and providing teacher training for those teachers working in those areas is critical. In my own school we have a considerable number of children with special needs. Providing professional development for our teachers to ensure that they are able to cope with those children is an issue which we have to face up to.

Mr HALL — Does the association have any regular meetings with teacher training providers to comment on the courses and the outcomes for student teachers and teachers you may be employing in the future?

Mr ROSS — No, not specifically, but the association was asked to have a member representative on the Deakin University faculty of education advisory board. I have been to one of those meetings, along with former presenters.

Mr HALL — Is that the only university?

Mr ROSS — That is the only one that I am aware of.

Ms KNOPP — Historically there has not been any contact in terms of seeking any input from the sector as a whole. There may well be individuals from various schools involved in bodies associated with universities that are looking at teacher courses, but from a representative perspective, no, there has not been over quite a considerable period of time.

Mr PERTON — Can we get the research officer to actually check that? Sorry to interrupt, but one of the things that is puzzling us is that the state is the biggest user of graduates and does not seem to have a huge influence. You are the third biggest user of graduates out of our system, and you are obviously not being consulted either.

Ms KNOPP — Not from a sector approach. There may well be principals or other people from the independent school sector who have been approached individually and may contribute, but from a sector perspective, no, the only one is the one Alan has just referred to with Deakin University, which is quite recent.

Mr PERTON — So how do we find that out?

Ms KNOPP — The only people who I think would have that information are probably the universities in terms of how they go about having their courses reviewed or from whom they seek input.

Mr HALL — It probably goes without saying, but do you see it as desirable to have some form of representation on those advisory committees?

Mr ROSS — Yes, I think it would be.

Ms KNOPP — Yes.

Mr ROSS — There are universities that seek out and consult with local professionals, both in the state, Catholic and independent sectors. In Ballarat, for example, there was often discussion, but it was informal discussion rather than consultation in a formal sense or representation on faculty boards.

Ms MUNT — You were saying that with the recent graduates you have employed, some work out very well and some do not work out quite so well. Have you noticed any factors that influence that? Is it personality type? Is it the sort of training they are getting? Is it the teacher training institute they are coming from? Have you noticed any common threads of what produces a good new teacher and a not so good new teacher?

Mr ROSS — It is difficult to answer that. I do not think there is any one answer to that. All the points you mentioned have a role to play. Certainly the personal qualities of the trainee are of the utmost importance. Trying to get that balance between the academic training and the theory, and the ability of the person to develop relationships in a school setting, how you develop that is the nub of it as I see it, because teaching, as well as being a craft, is also a profession of relationships. Some people move very easily into those relationships, easier than others. Whether it is a graduate diploma of education at the end of a first degree, or whether it is a teaching qualification with an academic qualification, some people respond to that better than others. My own personal view is, and this is not necessarily an association view, that the longer time in teacher training that you have an opportunity to be exposed to schools the better it is.

Ms MUNT — So those training courses that have the major effect on outcomes have as a component more practicum rather than less?

Mr ROSS — I think they have the potential for having the biggest impact. There needs to be a block of time available for people who are training to go into a school and to learn what it is really like to be in a school over a period of time and to develop a relationship with their trainer teacher, rather than just a three-week block which I think can sometimes be too short a time. If the practicum is not going well, three weeks is probably long enough. By and large, the longer period of time you have, the better.

Ms MUNT — Do you have a view about whether that should be throughout the course or just in the latter part of the course?

Mr ROSS — Having the option for individuals to be able to choose one or the other would be a good move. Some respond really well by being in a school, for example, 1 day a week for 30 weeks of the year, or whatever it might be. Others would like to have a 5-week block. Because the independent sector schools are so different — I guess they are in all sectors — but to go to one school to experience what that was like and then to another one perhaps that specialises in special needs, then another one which may be single sex rather than coeducational, that might be a worthwhile experience for them too. So I think you have to take into consideration the interest and perhaps the vocational aspirations of the individual trainee teacher. I do not think it is a one-size-fits-all model.

Mr SCHEFFER — Previous witnesses have spoken about the difficulties posed by the level of payment made to supervising teachers and also to the issues workload. To what extent is that an obstacle to teacher training, you know, taking in teachers from universities for training teachers?

Mr ROSS — Most independent schools, I think, would see the taking of student teachers as being one of professional responsibility to give back to the profession. Most schools would take the number of trainee teachers that they could cope with so that the classes of the children that were being taught by the student teachers were not too many in one particular year and at one particular time. We try to minimise any impact on the learning for the children so we would spread the student-teacher load throughout the year and across disciplines and at different year levels whilst trying to give the student teachers who come into the school a range of experiences which would make it worthwhile for them.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Could I just follow up, if I may? Do the teachers get paid or do the schools get paid?

Mr ROSS — Well, it would vary from school to school. Most independent schools would split it. For example, in my school the money goes towards professional development in part and also to the faculties that take the students, because when a student teacher comes into the school they deal with the principal, the deputy principal, the library people, the IT people, they deal with the timetabler, so everybody has a bit of an input to that person's professional development while they are there. Certainly the supervising teachers carry the greatest burden in the independent sector. The teachers are asked if they would like to participate in that, and then they are invited to take this teacher or that teacher as the names come forward, then the money goes towards the faculty where other members of the faculty are having observation lessons as well.

Mr SCHEFFER — And to what extent do you think the role of the supervising teacher is, if you like, a different professional skill that needs its own kind of training and support?

Mr ROSS — It certainly needs support, and we would support the teachers by not making the task too often and too onerous. It may be a matter of relieving them of some duties and responsibilities while they have that student-in-training. Personally I do not see it as something that requires professional payment. Each of the teachers that is taking a student teacher at some stage had that experience themselves.

Mr SCHEFFER — I was thinking more like quality assurance — how you make sure that the supervising teachers are working in the best possible way with the student teacher and how you get consistency both across time and across different teachers working with these students?

Mr ROSS — Most schools would give student teachers to those teachers who are at the top of the classification who had shown over a period of time that they were experienced and very professional members of staff. Student teachers would not go to those teachers who had less experience or who had not been in the school for some time.

Mr PERTON — Picking up your comments on mature-age entrants, and those from other professions, the state government has brought in the scholarship system for 30 teachers in the state system, and as I understand it from the union submission they go straight into a school under the supervision of an experienced teacher and they undertake part-time studies. How do you think that could be accommodated in the independent sector?

Mr ROSS — Yes, I can see that that could be a benefit to independent schools, particularly in those subjects where there may well be shortages of teachers. It depends on the level of support that people would have to be given in order to undertake that mentoring in the scholarship year.

Mr PERTON — You see, for instance, I went out to Brauer College which is a state secondary in Warrnambool, and their last principal actually used a large number of non-teaching staff — for instance, in sports and the like — and I understand that the new principal has a different practice, but certainly it seems that in both the state and independent sectors there has been an attempt to get professionals who are not qualified in teaching in to do some specialist tasks. Take maths, for instance, where there seems to be a shortage in all three systems, Catholic, independent and state. I mean, what sort of professionals would you look for and how would you want to accommodate them in making a transition from say anything from accounting to science in teaching?

Mr ROSS — If you assume that they would have sufficient academic ability to be able to teach a curriculum — or perhaps you could not even do that. An accountant coming into a school may well be very adept at accounting practice in a commercial firm but actually teaching the VCE accounting curriculum would be a different skill. In imparting that knowledge to the students and teaching would be something which you would not pick up all that easily as an intern.

Mr PERTON — But, for instance, let us assume that the average partner in an accounting practice would be earning something between \$100 000 and \$200 000 a year but they are committed to moving to teaching. A whole year out is a burden that most people probably cannot take and the state system is certainly offering scholarships for people to make that jump. Your submission certainly indicates that you are supportive of people making a mid-career jump, so what I am really asking is how would AISV accommodate that in the independent sector?

Mr ROSS — If the teacher was given financial support to undertake training in an institute as well as in the school, then within 12 months it is highly likely that they would be able to make the transition in that period of time if they are mid-career professionals. So we would be supportive.

The CHAIR — You would still expect a Dip.Ed for trade schools?

Mr ROSS — Sure. For instance, I met a guy at a party the other day who had been a banker. He found the burden — it was a terrific burden, at age 42, to undertake the dip. ed. studies, all the classes of which seemed to be during the day and his part-time job in the bank ended up with the bank accommodating him to some extent to allow him to do some evening work, but it was difficult. He has gone on now, he has just moved into teaching this year, but it is a big burden to move from a professional salary into a teaching one. Obviously we have to find the best way of doing it. As I said, the state is experimenting with these 30 scholarships. I was just wondering whether the independent sector has actually gone beyond the submission that says ‘We support it’ to ‘How do we do it?’.

Mr ROSS — The independent school sector is not systemic, like the state government or the Catholic sector, so the AISV is not recommending that the independent sector provide scholarships. It would be up to the individual teacher and the individual schools to encourage people whom they may wish to take on. I think what we would like to see is the teacher-training institution being able to provide courses at flexible times so that they are in the evening or they are by correspondence on-line, which can be done perhaps with some residential times during the weekends. But it is not something which the sector is wanting to establish and does not have the capacity to establish scholarships like that.

Mr PERTON — The director of Open Learning Australia said to me that he was investigating either a bachelor of arts or a bachelor of education through one of the universities that offered them through open learning. Obviously one of the issues is placements for the students. I mean, with the independent sector I would be interested in working with Open Learning to ensure that those sorts of students were getting placements.

Mr ROSS — Yes, absolutely. Those sorts of flexibilities are an advantage to providing good quality teachers, particularly mid-career professionals. They are people who have made, as you say, a huge commitment financially to change from their own career — in your case in accounting — in which their earnings are considerably higher than being a teacher would, particularly in their first years. One of the things we would encourage is the possibility of people coming in as mid-career professionals having their prior learning recognised so they would not come in at the lower end of the salary scales but would have their prior learning recognised.

Mr PERTON — The country project that we heard from earlier shared that view very strongly.

Ms KNOPP — Can I just add something? The incremental salary structure still exists in the majority of systems and schools is a major disincentive to mid-career professionals coming into teaching. Perhaps it would be possible to look at recognising that people who are changing career are probably committed to teaching fairly easily. In their other lives they have dealt with other people, they have developed different ways of maintaining relationships and so on, and would probably adapt quite well to teaching. That may not be true of everyone, but that is a possibility.

I just wonder perhaps whether or not we need to have the registration requirements in Victoria changed to allow people who are mid-career professionals, who are engaged in studying in whatever form — whether it is open learning access, a correspondence course, or something similar — being able to teach under general supervision rather than the very specific supervision required of student teachers currently, so that they are able to be paid an income by the school and continue their study, but in order to be able to do that we would require some legislative changes to the Victorian Institute of Teaching Act.

The CHAIR — Okay. I dare say it will end up as a vexatious industrial issue, but a good point.

Ms KNOPP — Maybe legislative rather than industrial, but it depends who takes it up.

The CHAIR — In recommendations 4 and 5 you say that pre-service training needs to take on a new focus and there need to be more streamlined and workable arrangements. I wonder if you could provide examples or clarify those recommendations?

Mr ROSS — Innovation in education is something which is becoming more and more important as the years go on. There is a need for teachers who are coming into schools now to be focusing on creativity and innovation. A lot of changes are taking place in the curriculum, and that has been the case for many years in the top end — in years 11 and 12 — and a lot of work has been done in the earlier years. Recent research is looking at the middle years. Vocational education and training has also been highlighted. We talked earlier about information and communications technology, and that is something that is showing great and rapid change. We need people in the profession who are not only able to see the changes but adapt to and lead those changes. How you create that in a pre-service training is a challenge that we need to look at seriously.

One of the things that I think would be good to do is to have a connection between the institutions that train teachers and the schools themselves. Perhaps some form of secondment for the people who are in the universities teaching teachers to spend time in schools. Maybe it would be that every three years they would have to spend a term or a month in a school, see what is going on and see the changes taking place. I think that would be a very useful thing. They would be able to deliver model lessons, provide professional development for the teachers in the schools as well as get the feedback and remember what it is like to have one of those full-on days or weeks in a school.

Mr HALL — Do you think they could do that?

Mr ROSS — I am sure they could, because most of those people are very able teachers, and that is why they have gone into the teacher training.

The CHAIR — Do the graduates have those skills? Are our teacher training courses doing middle years, are they doing boys education, are they familiar with curriculum habits at schools? New approaches to literacy and numeracy in the state system involve interviews. Are our graduates being taught about those changes, or do they have to wait until they are in the school environment?

Mr ROSS — It is only anecdotal, but what you hear about the crowded curriculum in schools is certainly the same issue for teacher training institutions. Trying to cater for all of those things that go on in schools in a teacher training course is very difficult. I would have to say that most of those issues you would learn in some sort of theoretical way, but it would not be systematic. Sometimes it would depend on the electives that you would take in teacher training. Those sorts of things are quite often picked up in professional development courses and programs in schools. Maybe there are experiences and professional life skills that you acquire over a period of time. I am not sure how possible it is over a one-year graduate diploma course to do that.

The CHAIR — You would expect to have a good understanding of the curriculum?

Mr ROSS — Yes, but I do not see the curriculum as being a really major issue. I think most institutions provide that trainee teachers have done usually three years of a degree. Covering the curriculum is not so much of an issue as are some of the other educational professional responsibilities that they undertake such as learning individual differences and all the different intelligences. The research is going extremely well into a lot of that work. It is terrific research at the moment, which is practically applied in schools. Sometimes with two years teacher training you would be better equipped than with one.

The CHAIR — There are no further questions. Thank you for coming. We will have a good read of your submission and we might come back with some more questions.

Mr ROSS — Right.

The CHAIR — I declare this hearing closed.

Committee adjourned.