

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into effective strategies for teacher professional learning

Ballarat — 13 August 2007

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Dr A. Ford, director, staff development, Ballarat Grammar;

Mr B. Maher, principal, Emmaus Catholic Primary School, under development;

Mr J. Richards, Head of Junior School, St Patricks College, Ballarat;

Mr A. McKinnon, principal, Linton Primary School;

Mr B. Davern, principal, Mount Clear Secondary College;

Ms K. Simpkin, assistant deputy principal/PD coordinator, Damascus College;

Ms L. Devlin, principal, Mount Blowhard Primary School;

Mr B. Heywood, principal, Miners Rest Primary School;

Ms Howden-Clarnette, school improvement officer, Grampians region, Highlands network;

Ms S. Deans, acting principal, Buninyong Primary School;

Ms W. Baker, principal, Pleasant Street Primary School;

Mr G. Porter, assistant principal, Sebastopol College;

Mr P. Tacey, principal, Creswick North Primary School, and small school representative, Highlands network;

Mr G. Palmer, assistant principal, Ballarat High School;

Mr P. Rose, principal, Ballarat Secondary College;

Mr I. Clarkson, principal, Rainbow Primary School;

Mr W. Morgan, principal, and

Mr R. Sawyer, assistant principal, Mount Clear Primary School; and

Mr P. Clifton, principal, Magpie Primary School.

The CHAIR — It is nice to be in Ballarat with the Education and Training Committee and to see so many familiar faces here. As is the rest of the committee, I am certainly looking forward to the discussions here this morning on our recently commenced reference on professional development for teachers. Many of you would have received letters or information about the inquiry into school uniforms that we have undertaken. We have completed most of the inquiries into that matter, although we will have a day, 6 September, when we will have both primary and secondary students coming into Parliament House for the day to debate the issue and discuss it in more detail and share their views about school uniforms.

I think it is fair to say we have used the schools uniforms inquiry as an opportunity to link in pretty broadly with the education community. Although you might call that a lightweight issue, it has been a good one to bring in many submissions and lots of interaction with school communities. The issue of professional development is obviously something that is vital to the learning outcomes of students in schools, so we are very pleased to have input from a broad range of groups in regard to that. We have already had just over 60 written responses on professional development. We have held some inquiries in Melbourne, but this is the first of the inquiries that we have taken to regional Victoria. We are very glad to have you here to provide your views.

The aim of this morning's session is to be fairly informal, for you to share your views with us and for us as a committee to be able to ask questions. We have Hansard reporters recording the exchanges that take place this morning. Since this is a formal parliamentary inquiry, things that are said before the inquiry in a room such as this are covered by parliamentary privilege. I am not sure whether that is relevant to what you might wish to say, but you may take some comfort from that. However, the warning is that that does not apply to anything that is said outside here. I was reading last week that if we as parliamentarians have used parliamentary privilege inside the house, we cannot say when we are outside that we stand by the words we said inside the house, as it would be taken as if we had repeated those words outside. So we do have to be a bit careful with the way parliamentary privilege is used.

It is great to see so many of you here. I presume you have seen the details of the terms of reference of the inquiry into effective strategies for teacher professional learning. I am happy to declare the hearing open. I do not know who wants to speak first to share their views, but we are happy to work around that to ensure that you all have an opportunity to share your views and that any of the ideas you want to put to us will be able to be shared this morning. We might start with John and work our way around.

Mr BURT — John Burt, Ballarat Specialist School. Perhaps if I put forward where I am coming from with respect to professional development with respect to teachers and the education fraternity: from my position as principal of Ballarat Specialist School, obviously I have a bent towards special education, where that fits into our community and the importance of that area with respect to students with disabilities. My school has a total population of about 240 now. We are expecting to go to about 270 next year. We have a staff of 92. That staff is made up of teachers, therapists, teacher assistants and people in the administration area. A lot of what concerns us most of all revolves around behavioural issues and being able to manage the students that we have from 5 years to 18 years in the appropriate manner. The history of our place has been that 80 to 90 per cent of the time we spend on professional development has been around behaviour management. That is a whole broad issue in itself and something that I would like to put on the table as being very, very important. Is that fair enough to start with?

The CHAIR — That is a good starting point. Do you want to add on and give a different perspective, Alan?

Mr FORD — Alan Ford. Another perspective and another dot point relates to the VIT. I think a lot of us around the room share quite some concerns about where the VIT is going. I have one particular point relating to professional development or professional learning. I support the idea that teachers should be doing professional learning regularly. It is one of the last professions to take this up as a necessity, but one of the points there is that half of it must be from an external source. Now there are a couple of issues there. Firstly, that means if you are sending people away for PD, there is an extra expense, and secondly, all the research suggests — and I am now beginning to believe it myself — is that most of that external professional development is a waste of time in terms of changing student outcomes. It needs to be very carefully managed to actually do some good. Most of the professional learning, if you have got a large enough school, should be in-house, done with each other — collegiate interaction — or experts of one area helping people in the other area.

Just to add to that, as director of staff development it is my role to document this professional development and professional learning, and I am wondering whether I should give up the position. With one hundred and something staff to look after, the paperwork, if it is going to have to be evidenced, is going to be enormous. Or is the onus going to be put back on the teacher just to say, 'I have done it' and sign off?

The CHAIR — That is really something we will really have to see as VIT work through that issue. We have certainly met with VIT briefly, but they have not made a formal presentation to us yet. That certainly is going to be an interesting issue.

Mr MAHER — Brendan Maher and I am principal of the new Emmaus Catholic Primary School in Mount Clear. My observation would be that the vast bulk of teachers are actually very keen and engaged in looking at their own professional growth and development. However, I suspect in recent times there has been a real challenge to their own professional growth put to them because they have been foisted into a situation where they are expected to move, sometimes on the whims and/or hidden agendas, whether they be of politicians or other people in the educational community, to jump into issues and matters that distract them from the purpose of their core business of teaching, and thus the capacity to professionally develop themselves.

I would suspect that a simple and yet extremely relevant and recent example is the reporting protocols and mechanisms that have been introduced into schools. That was done with very little consultation of teachers, and yet the implications for teachers as they have tried to implement new reporting mechanisms, et cetera, have been enormous, and there is no question that it has probably forced many teachers to take their eyes off the ball a little bit and come away from their core business of teaching, so that they can jump through a bureaucratic hoop. And I suspect that happens a lot to our teachers.

The CHAIR — I will certainly be interested to get more input on how VELs has been taken up and the challenges associated with that.

Mr RICHARDS — John Richards, I am Head of Junior School, St Patrick's College, Ballarat. We are a slightly unique institution in Ballarat and I guess throughout Victoria in that we are the only boarding school for boys outside of the metropolitan area, so I guess we have some particularly unique areas — for example, a lot of the work that is being done into the education of boys. We have had a large focus on PD-ing staff in terms of teaching boys effectively and interacting with them, and I see that as a real positive, not just for our own students but for society as a whole. I guess from a PD point of view that has been an area of focus for us.

I suppose another challenge from our perspective is that our school is growing fairly dramatically. Only a few years ago we had an enrolment of 800 students, now we have topped the 1100 mark, and this has brought a range of challenges for our staff in terms of professional development, particularly in providing PD and to skill staff to deal with a wide range of student abilities within the average classroom. So that has been a real challenge. I guess a positive that may be coming out of recent changes or recent proposals from the VIT, particularly with regard to the PD of staff, is that we have a good number of staff who have been in the college for a long period of time, and I guess this has given them some imposed necessity to pursue relevant PD, so I see that as in some way positive.

Mr McKINNON — Alan McKinnon from Linton Primary School. My concerns really are those of a small school which is a reasonable distance from Ballarat, which is that the cost impacts fairly heavily on small schools. We just do not have the budget to cover good professional development. The other side of it is that if the PD is in Ballarat, it usually starts at 4.15 p.m. which is before most of my staff can get out of school; it is a 30-minute drive into Ballarat. The other thing is that not a day goes past when we do not get 1, 2, 3 or 4 emails from some provider selling their wares at the extraordinarily low cost of \$190 per person, or \$150 per person, or whatever. If you add that onto your \$200 cost for a staff member for the CRT cover, it just becomes beyond the reach of small schools. The other one I mentioned is distance.

The CHAIR — We will get more on the small rural schools and their challenges in a moment.

Mr DAVERN — Bernie Davern from Mount Clear Secondary College. I would like to support Brendan. Over recent years I think the department and the general populous have moved away from the core business in schools to a plethora of add-ons in the curriculum, and I think that has distracted teachers from the purpose of their professional development and their professional learning activities. I think the VIT initiative in requiring teachers to undergo PD is fine, but the mechanism there — I think they are requiring us to adjudicate on that — is slightly cumbersome currently and will create a paper war of its own magnitude.

To pick up on Alan's point, the cost in a rural area — and I am not talking about places like Mildura — of professional development is extravagant and exorbitant. We are subsidised maybe \$70 per head, but the minimum cost of going anywhere is \$300 or \$400 a head, and that comes out of the general revenue that the school has to implement its own school curriculum. I think the department, the Catholic Education Office and independent schools really need to focus back on what is the core business in schools, and what are the key learning areas and that should be the main purpose of professional development. The extraneous PD that we are asked to go on, and are required to go on these days because of other factors impinging on schools, should be made non-mandatory.

Ms SIMPKIN — Karen Simpkin from Damascus College. I would like to support just about everything that people have said so far. There are incredible pressures on schools at the moment to financially manage the best professional development for their staff. From my perspective I believe internal professional learning is best. I do not think it is particularly cost effective to send off one or two people. It is costly but I do not think schools in the main get the rewards or the returns they need. Bringing people in and doing things with the staff is far more effective, but it requires school closure days to do that, and we are only allowed to have so many. You have to deal with the bureaucratic stuff all the time.

The other thing I find incredibly frustrating in a city the size of Ballarat is that schools are all doing their own different things with professional learning, and that is simply not cost effective. If we are all required to implement VELs, then why has there not been something that actually brings schools together so we are all doing the same thing? We are all hearing the same story at the same time about what we are required to do. Surely that is going to be more cost effective. It just seems to me that every school is then trying to organise its own thing. You get different versions of what ought to be happening. The implementation of VELs has also been an incredible pressure on all teachers no matter where they are teaching. We were required to do it last year in Catholic schools, and there was absolutely no framework for us to do it within. It was an incredible burden. I think there is a lot that we can actually do on a regional basis which would make things far more effective for schools and ultimately for quality teaching and quality learning because as Bernie said, that is our core business, which I think we tend to forget at times.

Ms DEVLIN — Lynne Devlin from Mount Blowhard Primary School. I would like to say that teachers are incredible with the amount of professional development they already attend after school and that type of thing. We ask an awful lot of them — asking them to do it in their own time — and I think we need to play up what they already do. I think there are a great many barriers to what they do.

One of the things is that there is no recognition for the professional development that people attend. I do not know about you but I have attended an awful lot of courses and they are all on the same unit because I am working towards my Masters. You can do an incredible number of things, and there is really no professional recognition for what you do. I think schools should be given a base amount of money for professional development, not a per teacher amount, and then a per teacher amount to fund it. I remember Professor Peter Hill telling us about going out to do professional development. The change in teachers' behaviour in the classroom was 20 per cent or whatever. If you get someone in to work with teachers in the classroom and things like that you have to add in a 60 per cent to 70 per cent change in teacher behaviour. If what we are after is the most effective professional development we need to look at what the teachers are telling us there.

Mr HEYWOOD — Barry Heywood from Miners Rest Primary School, a growing school of around 145 students. One of the huge dilemmas for us is that we have talked about an effective model for the professional development and of bringing people in to work with your staff on site. One of the frustrations that I have, and I can really feel for the smaller schools, is that we do not have the capacity that larger schools have to identify those people and bring them in for extended periods to work with staff on a developmental project over time. It is really difficult for the smaller schools. I have talked to my staff about coming along today, and one of the frustrations they have is looking in around Ballarat sometimes where there is an ability to tag in with what clusters of schools and individual schools have done when they have brought people in. Although we have the teacher education network operating in Ballarat, I have some graduate teachers who have really torn their hair out this year trying to access good quality professional development in what would be one of their core areas of mathematics. We have all looked and really have not been able to access anything locally to support those people.

Coming back to the issue of the VIT's requirements and replacement, the people we need in schools to manage PD in order to get people out are casual replacement teachers, and I know from talking to those people that they have real concerns about their ability to access some of this quality professional development so we do not have a group

of professionals out there that all our schools use who are falling further and further behind in knowledge about VELs, about assessment and reporting. In schools we are trying to look after our own staff, but as a system I think we need to look at that big body of people too that the system really requires to function effectively.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — Karen Howden-Clarnette, I am a school improvement officer for the Grampians region, and in particular I work with the Highlands network. Our network is providing just over 100 professional development programs for 2007. We have 1500 registrations from primary and secondary teachers for those professional developments between March and November this year. The professional developments that we provide are normally held between 4.30 and 6.30 and sometimes all day on a Friday. So I would support Lynne in saying that the commitment that teachers show to professional development is absolutely incredible. We provide the teacher Education Network professional development on the basis that schools join by paying \$2.30 per student in membership. However, for small schools the membership is \$99. Teachers from each of those schools are able to access as much professional development as they possibly can but, as we have noted already, the demands on teachers are absolutely incredible.

One of the things that we are doing at the network at the moment is really rethinking the manner in which we are providing professional development because, as has been stated already, research certainly tells us that the most effective professional development is not professional development that is one-off by nature but professional development that is provided within a school and is sustained. I think there are really ramifications for that as we rethink how the region will offer professional development in future. We do have some casual relief teachers who access professional development through our network. However, they do that really as a result of conversations with a principal to whom they might be speaking. I would agree that we do not have any sustained professional development for casual relief teachers, and that is certainly an issue.

Ms DEANS — Sue Deans, and I am the acting principal at Buninyong Primary School. I think one of the key issues that we have had is that when we do have new initiatives like VELs and the reporting system — we are a large school and we do put our hand up to try all these things — there has not really been the support and the degree of professionalism that we would expect. For instance, in trying the new reporting system we were also involved in feedback as to how that was going but we did not feel that that feedback was acted upon. I think it is really important, when you have new directives like this and you ask schools to put up their hand to do these sorts of things, that we are supported in doing them.

The other issue, as everybody else has mentioned, is to do with the CRTs and the professional development, especially that expectation of our teachers going outside and clocking up the hours that they require, when large schools in particular can offer an extraordinary platform of professional development for all our teachers. I think this should be considered as well.

Ms BAKER — Wendy Baker, I am the principal at Pleasant Street Primary School. I agree with everything that everybody has said. Probably the one thing that I guess I am really just considering at the moment is the pressure on the graduate teachers. I guess I am questioning myself about the sense in sending out graduates to do a whole lot of professional development in their first if not their second year.

From some work in America that I have looked at, I know that in their first year they do no professional development. They actually are expected to be in the school, part of the school, learn their job, learn their craft and become a member of the team. They are not allowed to do any extra professional development. I like it as a model because I think that the learning curve for our young teachers when they come in is absolutely ginormous. They struggle and we struggle to support them. If there is an expectation on them to have a whole 50 hours of extra PD on top of what we are doing, I just think that is overwhelming, and I really do not believe that it has value to them. That would probably be an additional thing we need to consider as well as the things people have discussed.

The other thing I suppose that we grapple with is just the time — how much time is available to provide the sort of learning that we want to provide for our teachers. One of the things that I am I guess pursuing is the idea of some sort of flexibility in our hours because I am not sure that PD from 4.30 to 6.30 is the optimum time, when teachers have been working all day. So I think other considerations need to be given to how we might release teachers to do PD in daylight hours, almost.

Mr PORTER — George Porter, Sebastopol College. I am assistant principal there and in charge of PD. From our experience, I would say that quality teaching and learning improvement takes time, that it cannot happen

in a 2-hour session in front of even the best presenters. Some issues that we have are that if we are trying to improve teaching and learning and we have to draw teachers out of the classrooms and they need to then prepare the work for the class and then go back and mark the work and so on, it actually disrupts the teaching and learning of those students while they are out. It seems like there is a small gain, but there are also a lot of losses there. So drawing teachers out for a day or half day we do not find very cost effective. It costs a lot in terms of monetary expenses, but also in terms of the quality of the education that is going on at the school at the time.

We find it very difficult, as we are a quite large college, to cater for the multiple demands that other people have raised here today. It is very difficult to get a whole-school approach to professional development when there are so many different initiatives going on that we are expected to train people up in and be on top of the ball. Things that have worked for us include that we have had a really good experience with the mentoring, the educator, the coaching process that happened through innovation and excellence. That was a good experience for us. Certainly we have had much more success with small professional learning teams of teachers within the college working on a simple task over a longer period of time.

Mr TACEY — Pat Tacey, principal, Creswick North Primary School. Most of the things I have jotted down here have already been covered. Looking at it from a small school's perspective, one area is trying to have everybody an expert in everything, whereas in larger schools you can share responsibilities around. Another area, that Karen mentioned, is just the mixed agendas that are coming around, where nobody is really working together. We are having initiatives coming from the centre, one on top of the other. Really there has not been a lot of planning as to when they have been rolled out, meaning that we are trying to upskill staff in a number of areas. VELs and reporting are two that come very much to mind. There is a lack of incentive for teachers to give up a lot of their time to gain more qualifications. I do not believe the VIT requirements are really being considered by teachers as an incentive to go out and take on more.

Mr PALMER — Gary Palmer, assistant principal, Ballarat High School. I think as a school we have been focusing a lot on the professional development and learning inside our school, which is a point that Alan clearly raised. For us, I think that has shown to be of greater value. The issue with CRTs and the VIT and actually accessing casual relief teachers is a significant concern for schools in Ballarat anyway, so if you suddenly want to send four or five people away as a team you cannot do it because you cannot find the people to cover that. So that is a concern. All that has been mentioned about the VIT I think is quite relevant. As a leadership group, we have been focusing together on some professional learning on a book by Warner. He talks about how a doctor from 100 years ago would cope in today's society and the fact that they would not, yet a teacher from a 100 years ago could probably walk into our school and be able to manage to a degree what is going on.

I think the challenge for us as a school is about bringing our school forward into the knowledge era and developing the capacity of the large number of teachers from the industrial era. What that means — and you talk about the resourcing of professional development that is needed for that — is the resourcing of the school as well. We have 100-year-old buildings that we are saying we want our teachers to teach this way in, yet as a school what you actually see does not encourage that at all. I think that is a real clash in terms of achieving what we are out to achieve. I think yes, there is the resourcing of it, but I think also, picking up on Bernie's point too, the demands on schools and trying to be everything for everyone is making life a lot more difficult for staff. I think there are a lot of challenges ahead in terms of professional learning, inside and outside schools.

Mr ROSE — Paul Rose, principal of Ballarat Secondary College. Like Gary's school, we are a big school and we have a range of needs. Professional development is absolutely central to the work that we do. I think sometimes we take a very narrow view of what professional development is. It was good to hear, for example, that Gary in his leadership team is engaged in the process of professional reading, which is an important element. We do the same with our whole staff so that there is a professional reading program operating this year that is taking all of our staff to a place, hopefully, where we have some common understandings and some common language.

I appreciate the points that have been made about buildings and building futures and the value of having appropriate space for teaching, but if you do not have quality teachers who are able to engage students for the purposes of learning outcomes, then it does not matter what buildings you are in at all. We have seen examples from other places around the world where you can teach effectively sitting under the shade of a tree, without a computer in sight, if you can bring it to that.

There are a number elements of professional learning for teachers and school leaders that we need to consider. We have a lot of programs, particularly in the secondary end of things, that are designed to look at the content requirements that teachers have, to keep them abreast of the content that they need — the stuff they need to be able to work with young people with. However, I do not think we actually focus nearly enough time on the pedagogy that is required within the schools to meet the modern needs of young people. Until we get that balance right then we are not going to get the high-quality teachers that we need.

Pedagogical change does not happen by going off and listening to someone; it happens because you have a close working relationship with another teacher or teachers, where you can visit their classrooms and they can visit your classrooms and you can undertake structural observation and discussion of those observations for the benefit of improving teaching and learning. That takes time, energy and money. In the SGB structure that we used to work in government schools there was a clear allocation of funds for professional learning of all staff — teachers and support staff — based on the number of students that you had. In the current model, whilst that funding still exists, it has been subsumed within the big bucket. And when things get tight, it is too easy to take that money and spend it somewhere else. That is a concern I have with the current funding structure.

The other thing I think we need to remember is that we also need professional development for career development of our teachers and school leaders. This is an area that has an interesting and mixed track record over the last few years. The Department of Education, I think, finally has developed a couple of programs in conjunction with Deakin University and RMIT, where they have found a model for developing school leaders that works. The difficulty is that most schools find it hard to release the staff to engage in that program, because the programs are expensive and time and replacement staff — that is a key issue. We know that we face a dearth of school leaders. With people applying for leadership positions, assistant principal, principal-class positions, the numbers are very small. We are not doing nearly enough to increase those numbers by providing people with the appropriate learning so that they can develop their career into those directions if they so choose.

We have a number of programs that fund professional learning in the workplace. Some of these are state government programs for government schools. I am thinking particularly of the Leading Schools fund and the Innovation and Excellence program, which have a focus on improving the work of teachers in the classroom. They have been, in the main, effective. The Leading Schools program will come to a conclusion in about another two years. The I and E educator program will finish at the end of this year and those people will be moved off into other roles. I think that is a problem, because that was professional learning undertaken by groups of schools working together, teachers working with teachers. For that not to continue, not to have the coordination and role there, is a real issue.

The other major programs of course that we work through in terms of funding school-based local professional learning of teachers and school leavers are the programs funded through the AGQTP. I sit on the state coordinating committee for that program and the bureaucratic nonsense that goes on in terms of paperwork — finding reports and managing reports from the Catholic Education Office, the independent schools and the Department of Education for the purposes of Canberra — is an absolute farce.

The money is used well almost invariably. In the last three years there has only been one program where people have had some concerns about how the money was spent. Teachers and school leaders are professionals, but if you tie us down with red tape and bureaucratic rubbish then the money will not be well spent in the longer term, and the incentive to actually engage in productive professional learning — to plan that, to monitor that and to undertake it — will disappear. I am concerned that the VIT process will take the same process. The model we are seeing already in terms of managing the bureaucracy is not good and the VIT requirements for large schools and for small schools are going to become a nightmare if they continue in the current structure.

The CHAIR — Ian Clarkson has come from Rainbow this morning, so he must have left when it was dark. Thanks for coming down. You are able to add to this inquiry information about a more remote school and some of the challenges up Rainbow way.

Mr CLARKSON — I am principal of Rainbow Primary School. I support all of what has been said already. The two things that I would like to mention, as Paul said earlier, were basically the I and E clusters. I think they have been shanghaied. Our cluster up in the Wimmera Mallee was working on sharing teacher pedagogy. It was a fantastic model where the PD plans that our teacher had put in place were being met. Boys in education was a particular one. We were able to have a group day where all of the schools were closed for that day and the

teachers met at Hopetoun Secondary College. We had a terrific presenter come in. The model of getting all of our teachers there challenges those teachers' ideas that may not necessarily meet with the ones that would normally be going along to that sort of PD. I tend to find that we get people going along to PDs who basically agree with the things they are going along to, so it is not actually changing or challenging their behaviours.

The second thing is the cost — for example, we do not pay 60 cents, or whatever it is, a kilometre, we pay a fuel rebate; we cannot afford to pay any more than that. Also, if we were coming down to a day's PD at Ballarat, we have overnight accommodation to factor in. That makes it doubly expensive. Add onto that the impossibility of getting a CRT for that day as a relief, again makes it doubly difficult. Primary schools do not see the need of the maths-science bent on the new I and E clusters; secondary schools might. Primaries see that part of it as being a shanghaiing of that process. That is another issue.

The CHAIR — We will come back to some of those issues as we go along.

Mr MORGAN — Wayne Morgan, principal of Mount Clair Primary School. By the time we have gone around, most of the things have been said that I would like to say. I am just going to keep reiterating them anyway so that hopefully there is quality in numbers. I too am very worried about the expectation of this externally provided PD. We keep saying it, but all the evidence that we have seen over the years is that the best and most successful or the biggest improvement in student outcomes happens when PD is done in teams, when it is done for a purpose and when it is imbedded in the core practices of the school.

And yet there seems to be a push now that, as we have said, you go out. I do not think we are supporting PD or the system is supporting PD well enough, in that it is not just about providing supposed gurus who come in and you get the teachers sitting down and listening to someone and supposedly taking that back. We need to support it with more time. We are hamstrung somewhat in the number of pupil-free days that we have. We basically have four, and one of those is the first day of school, when we are told that will be it.

I would like to pick up on Wendy Baker's point about the flexibility of timing. We know as teachers that usually the best teaching times and things like that are when the children are alert; when they are awake they are in the prime learning situation. And yet in the majority of cases we expect teachers to go and complete a day's work in one of the most demanding occupations there is and then go and attend PD afterwards. Then we wonder why perhaps they come back and say, 'I missed that' or 'I haven't picked that up'. It is not about getting them extra time; it is about giving them the best time to do PD.

The last point I want to make is about just general consultation, and not just about PD. I had worries about the consultation processes. We have had quite a few over the last few years. We have had VELS consultation, we have had the new reporting system consultation, we have had the code of conduct consultation recently, and the VIT stuff and things like that. In my opinion if you want true consultation the process has to be changed. It has to be facilitated at a much more local level because if it is an optional thing you have to consider that teachers have that much on their plate already and things like that. Yes, it comes out and we can provide information. We are told that if we would like to provide feedback on, for example, the VIT process we should hand it back to the VIT or someone by a certain date. I do not think that will work. The process needs to be facilitated more locally. In other words, maybe we should have people coming out, maybe we should dedicate a meeting to it, or whatever, but something needs to be done at a much more local level to provide true feedback on these consultation processes.

The CHAIR — I invite Ron Sawyer to make a statement.

Mr SAWYER — I am assistant principal at Mount Clear Primary School. I guess on the issue of time and money, what is most difficult is that we have to decide on what is relevant, and what is relevant needs to be done. So if we take into account the personal needs, the team needs and the school needs, and then we have government initiatives, regional initiatives or cluster initiatives, we then have try to put all that together and come up with a way of meeting all those things; but we are just not going to be able to do that. Sure, we all develop our own strategic plan to have a focus towards whatever, and I guess then it comes back to the fact that you really have to have some givens in your own school as to what will work. People have already mentioned the fact that teams are essential, whether it be a whole staff or a learning team, and they have to be ongoing. So if you send a team out and they go to a PD, they come back and discuss it, change the way they do things, and that becomes an ongoing situation.

We need to focus. If you have all those competing needs you have to sit down and say, 'Right, it has to have an impact on student learning or teacher practice'. That is an essential part of it. Also from an accountability point of

view, I mention the VIT from a school perspective. If you have a focus area you have to be able to show within those school records that you are getting there. I think most schools have an accounting package in which they somehow keep records. I know in our school we would have a mean 30 hours of professional development for staff in the first half of the year. That is just a mean for staff, and that is on top of their own workload. So teachers are certainly doing quite a lot already. I am not convinced that VIT will have a significant impact on what is asked of teachers.

The CHAIR — I invite Peter Clifton to address the committee.

Mr CLIFTON — I am principal of Magpie Primary School. I think in terms of professional learning, cost is one of the greatest issues for small schools. There is an equity issue here, where we do not seem to have the funding capabilities of larger schools. If I can follow up on a point made earlier, there is also a cost when teachers are out of their classrooms. There is a cost to the learning program that they have instituted that is valuable. Putting it in place is valuable, and yet it is ultimately not there.

Wendy Baker also had a point when talking about the university graduate teachers turning up in our schools and then requiring further professional development in their first few years. What is actually happening in our universities? Surely they should come to us with enough training to last the first few years of their teaching career. I would want to know what is happening in the universities in that area.

I am concerned about the departments, the education department and perhaps even the Catholic Education Office. As the two largest organisations within the state that deal with teaching and learning, they largely outsource the provision of professional development to the marketplace. I think there is a cost in it. It is disappointing from my point of view. I think there are some efficiencies to be gained if they could return to the market and actually become the leaders of professional training again. Perhaps the greatest cost that the government needs to be cognisant of is the cost to families of teachers. The teachers already do a great deal within their classrooms and schools, and yet they give up an enormous amount of their own private time, for little recognition, for the professional development that they actually participate in.

The CHAIR — Thank you for those views. There are a number of recurring themes coming through there. I do not know whether Mr Elasmar wants to ask any questions, and then I will, too.

Mr ELASMAR — Good morning everyone, and thanks for coming. The Chair said to me, ‘I will leave the questions to you’, so he gave me an easy job. Every point that has been made this morning is important, but I have a few questions, and I will go through them, although not necessarily in order. The first question is to John Burt. You started talking about behaviour management, and that is really important. How can we go through that, and how can we fix that behaviour management? I know there are costs are involved in everything, of course.

Mr BURT — I think it comes back to a lot of points that have been made here with respect to the department supporting the individual schools to be able to do what they see their work practices are and where we need to improve. So I guess it comes back to having the resources to be able to do that efficiently and effectively. I would reiterate the point that we are the people who know what we need. We have identified that as a school staff, and we need the resources to be able to do that. I think that is the same in regular schools as well with respect to the professional learning of their own staff. We just should not take the view that it is just all teachers; there are many elements that make up schools, and the work that our teacher assistants do — and we have over 70 of them — is very important. The value of those people needs to be recognised as well within the department. The work that the therapists do in assisting our school and other schools needs to be recognised, and their professional growth needs to be recognised also.

The CHAIR — Can I just follow up there too, John? In terms of resourcing, can you specify the sorts of resourcing that are the key things?

Mr BURT — I guess it is money.

Ms BAKER — And time.

Mr CLARKSON — Can I interject quickly?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr CLARKSON — A couple of years ago when the early years first got together, the department, or the early years section, had a saying that, ‘All children can learn given the appropriate time, support and resources’. Now it has since dropped that time, support and resources qualification off that. But I would see that all schools can do the types of things that we expect of them given the appropriate time, support and resources. They are really important. We will do the same sorts of things, given the same inputs. If we do not change something, nothing will change.

Mr HEYWOOD — And early years was a good example of a professional development approach by the department, where it actually brought in an initiative which it had some research to show was effective. Schools identified key people that they trained; they provided ongoing support and training to those people to come back and bring that expertise back into the schools; and they provided those people within the schools with time and release to work with the other staff. It was a model that seemed to be effective at the time. When early years numeracy came along I know it was a really hard one because there was no support for training, there was no support for coordinators, and it did not have that impact in schools.

Ms DEVLIN — One of the best things with early years was that it released a person in the schools to a certain time fraction to actually work with teachers in their classrooms, so that you were working with different teachers at their point of need, as we were saying the most effective way of working with children is. You could have someone working in your room with you and then have the professional dialogue that you needed to move your understandings of pedagogy and things like that along. We do not have that now.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — The early years model was followed by middle years training teachers. The disappointment with middle years — the middle years being years 5 to 9 — is that whilst all the training was done for teachers in both numeracy and literacy, there was no additional funding in schools for resources. There were substantial resources in early years, and then no resources at all. I am talking in terms of sorts of texts that teachers needed to run programs; I am also talking about the people in a school who required additional staff to support other teachers. So middle years really fell over due to lack of support. There was a lot of work put in, and then it folded. That was hugely disappointing for both teachers in years 5 and 6, and certainly in the secondary schools.

Mr ELASMAR — Barry, what were the local implications of the new VIT requirements for teachers who had achieved 100 hours of professional learning over five years?

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — Sorry, are you asking me?

Mr ELASMAR — No, Barry can talk about this.

Mr HEYWOOD — We are all grappling with this requirement, and I suppose our experienced teachers are looking at it now. There were two issues. I suppose I have the issue of the teacher, and Alan said as a professional development coordinator in a large school, there is an administrative nightmare of doing that well and looking for verification of what people have done. My concern is that people will just rack up the hours — ‘I’ve got 100 hours to tick off; I’ll get 100 hours’ — but 100 hours ticked off to get reaccreditation for the VIT is worth nothing if it does not embed in what they are doing as teachers. I think setting out an arbitrary limit like that is very difficult.

The other thing I raised about that were the casual replacement teachers, and we have talked about the issues of schools getting hold of those people. One person brought it to my attention, that it is exceedingly difficult for them, first of all, to find out about what is around and get access to things. Because at least it is in schools; our teachers have the capacity to pick up some of their hours and requirements through internal programs. Now CRTs do not even have that opportunity, unless they are closely linked with a school.

Ms DEVLIN — Add to that the people returning to teaching after family leave and things like that. How were they accessing the professional development before they returned to teaching?

Mr ELASMAR — Another question for Wayne. What funding models do local schools currently use for teacher professional learning, and who should fund the PD?

Mr MORGAN — At the moment we would use a degree from our school budgets to fund professional learning for our teachers. I do not know, I think there is probably a variety across all schools. Our model is that we

allow X amount of dollars in the budget for individual PD in certain areas. We also allow X amount of dollars in our budget for our teams to have two PD days per year. So each of our professional learning teams can take two PD days a year where, as a team, they can either meet in the school or they can travel to another school to observe best practice, or whatever. Each school obviously would decide out of its budget how it would fund it. I guess we are saying with PD what we are being asked or what seems to be coming in is the push to see teachers go out to external providers. It has been mentioned around before that there are a whole lot of providers out there.

I do not know whether it is just our state or whether it is Australia or whether we do not think that we in ourselves provide good enough people in our own organisations — we seem to have this want to bring in supposed gurus or other people from outside to go and do PD. Our staff — and I am sure every other school does this too — try to use as much of our staff meeting time and our own meeting times to conduct our in-house PD, where our teams and our staff learn together, and they enjoy each other's company. Then we have improved student outcomes as a result of the fact that they are working together, and they all know what each of them is doing.

If a staff member goes out to an external PD, that is fantastic, but even if it is the absolute best PD that there is and it is a fantastic presenter, there are two things that need to happen from that PD for there to be a change in teaching practice or a change in student outcomes back at your school level, which should be the aim of every PD. One is that the teacher needs to be able to come back and have time to implement any practices in their classroom. The other thing is that in order to have a larger-scale improvement, that person needs to have time to be able to then come back and meet with or be able to spread that news or those activities or that PD amongst the rest of the staff or other staff in the team. That is another time component and another issue. Whereas a team can be working together; the whole team is there for the time being. The team PD just seems to be working very well for us. We have very few individual PD sessions at our school now. It is either an in-house team PD, or it is teams and groups of people going to an external PD, or the PD is run by the TEN (teacher education network) program in our local network.

Mr ELASMAR — Through you, Chair; my question is probably directed to only some people, but we can all participate in the answer. Ron, is 100 hours professional learning in five years sufficient? Or is more needed? And how much help do you think it should be?

Mr SAWYER — I take on board what Peter has said. It is about making sure you have quality. Now people will rack up 100 hours easily. But it is about making sure of quality, and I do not know that we will be able to find a way around those few people who will want to just rack up their 100 hours. The main people, the teachers I work with, are going to want to do quality PD. There is no doubt that we, and all the schools here, would easily do that amount of hours. It is about directing the professional learning into the groups that are doing it to make sure it has an impact on the things you want at the school — not just the learning, of course, which is your main area, but which particular area of student learning you are trying to develop.

I have no doubt that we would certainly rack up 100 hours. Quite honestly, I think that would have happened every two and a half years; I think we would do double the amount of hours. And the good teachers will always find good quality professional learning to be involved in, and from my experience there are not too many teachers who are not good teachers. They are all out there trying. They do not want to waste their time, they are not going out there just to say, 'I'll do this 2 hours'. My experience is that they go out there to find the most relevant professional learning for themselves.

The CHAIR — Would it generally be the feeling that that 100 hours as such is not an issue, and that in fact you would be expecting staff to do more than 100 hours?

Ms DEVLIN — It is not an issue in the amount of time if the staff are doing it; to me it is an issue that you are asking people to do 100 hours without any check on the quality or whatever. It is setting an arbitrary figure and saying, 'You do 100 hours'. I can sit through something and do my knitting and still rack up my X amount of hours. It is a Mickey Mouse approach to professional development. You are saying it is the amount of professional development you do rather than the quality of the professional development you do. I think that is an enormous issue with the VIT. I do not think they have considered it properly.

The CHAIR — My view would have been that VIT is more or less saying that professional development is important; and as part of your registration, it is important. I would have thought, in terms of following up on the

quality, that that might be up to schools to do in terms of their discussions with their staff and working through that, in terms of the quality. It will be interesting to see what VIT actually then requires in terms of justification.

Mr CLARKSON — Geoff, even without schools there is a pretty tight cost with the budget. We have managed to average as a school more than 500 hours each year for the last five years. There are six teachers, 0.5 administration and throw in a couple of SSOs for integration over the time. The time is not the factor. We have managed to save a lot of money because we have decided to go to the teams. We are doing our own PD. We are sending a person out to go somewhere, and they come back; it is a train-the-trainer model. That is not even the most effective. We like to go out as a school or even stay in school and get one of our own teachers. They are all in the expert range. We value their expertise. The time is not the problem. I agree with what you are saying, Lynne. It is having something like VIT say we have to do 100 hours. It is nearly like a punitive measure, and you have to do half of those with an external PD provider.

Ms BAKER — And I reckon that external part is a real sticking point for two reasons. One is whether it is the best model. We are generally saying it is not necessarily. The second thing — and I particularly think of the smaller schools — is that it really does make it very difficult for a small school to be able to afford to send people out to external PD, and also there is the time and being able to replace them. The 100 hours does not worry me at all; 100 hours is fine, but I guess what I want is a redefinition of what internal PD is and what external PD is and recognition of the fact that what we can provide is high quality and valuable.

The CHAIR — I am interested to get a sense from schools in terms of your overall planning. At the beginning of the year, or at a particular time of the year, are you able to have a team that looks at what professional development targets you might set for a year, or a plan, or whether it even goes beyond? I am certainly aware and I have heard those comments about the things that come in on top of you that might throw out those plans or might have to be incorporated. I am interested to get a sense of how you are able to plan your own professional development; that is the first question. Then I want to follow on with some other tags. Does somebody want to respond to whether your schools are able to feel confident that they can plan a direction each year.

Mr CLARKSON — In our case, we have our school charter. We have not gone to the strategic plan just yet, but we action-planned the charter and determined the needs based on that. Then the individual teachers also put in their own plan as to how they want to continue their own careers. I have been pretty lucky. I have not had to say no to anyone's requests for PD.

Mr BURT — Geoff, one of the comments I would like to make is that through all of the procedures you said sometimes were imposed on us, there seems to be a bit of a lack of trust in what we in the schools are doing. Correct me if I am wrong, but I think if we are given the responsibility of providing professional learning that is required for our own people and ourselves, schools will come up with the goods. We have never let you down before, and we will never let you down in the future. That is what schools are about, and that is what our business is. Each of our teachers has their own individual professional learning goals, and they have two or three of them every year while they are working. What I am saying is: we have got this in hand; we are quite capable of doing it, give us the means to do it, and we will come up with the goods, and our students will benefit from it.

Mr ELASMAR — What priorities should professional learning focus on, do you believe?

Dr FORD — The priorities in Ballarat? I think it has basically been said here in terms of the professional learning. It must be team based, but it must be targeted PD, not ad hoc stuff. I think all of us are in the wrong job here. I think we should be the ones providing the PD, because the amount of money these guys make is enormous. A lot of it can be done in-house. We could develop small networks where it can be done together to make it more efficient. From my probably more selfish point of view — what sort of accountability is the VIT going to require for this in terms of how many hours? I mean, I see that as a nightmare. I think the staff member says how many hours, and then there is provision for an audit or something. What does an audit mean? How do we satisfy the requirements?

The CHAIR — That is right. I presume that will be worked through over this coming year, and we will get a sense of what is required. But, yes, they are sort of saying essentially teacher self-assessment and what they would be required to show in an audit.

Mr BURT — What would be the consequences if we say, ‘No, we are not doing it. No, you can make all the demands you like, but we are not going to do the paperwork’? What is the consequence to us? I think it is about time we started to do some of those things and just say it is not on.

Mr MORGAN — Can I pick up on John’s point. It does not only smack of a lack of trust, it smacks of a lack of recognition; a recognition that in our system we have some absolutely brilliant people who can conduct, teach and help fellow teachers improve our teaching and learning practices in our schools. What this is saying is, ‘No, you have to do 50 per cent of it, but we need to provide you with some outside people because you are not doing it well enough’.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — I agree with you, Wayne. In terms of the teacher education network, which, as I said before, provides over 100 different professional development activities throughout the year, we use a very large percentage of teachers as presenters, some of whom are paid and some of whom are unpaid. Some are unpaid because we simply do not have the resources, because the resources are coming directly out of the schools, as I said before, at the rate of \$2.30 per student. There is absolutely no doubt that teachers are well able to rack up the 100 hours over five years. There is no issue with that whatsoever, but we do need to acknowledge the fact that we have extremely talented teachers and leaders in our school community who need to be encouraged. It would be great if we could encourage them to give of their time and perhaps be rewarded and acknowledged for that. So while we are talking about teachers undertaking professional development, what about those teachers who are the providers of professional development? We certainly have some of those people in this room.

The CHAIR — Yes, I would accept that. So in terms of VIT I hope there will be an opportunity for you to have some more direct discussions with some representatives of VIT to get that feedback. I am sure in one way or another feedback will be provided. Obviously we cannot speak for VIT today and, by way of our inquiry, hope those concerns you have will get through to VIT a long way ahead of our putting out a report. But we will have obviously some feedback to VIT. Certainly we have already had some of those discussions with VIT, and no doubt through this inquiry we will have more.

Mr DAVERN — Chair, can I raise the issue of time? I have been around for a fair while now.

Ms BAKER — How long?

Mr DAVERN — Long enough to know you, Wendy!

You have got the situation in Victoria where you have got three systems basically operating. You have got the independent school system, the Catholic school system and the government school system. Each of them are running professional development for their staff but all keep different hours of work. It seems ludicrous to me that this is allowed to happen — that the government system is allowed four school closure days a year to conduct professional development activities, the school charter, strategic planning days or whatever initiatives out there, and yet the non-government system, including the independents and Catholics, have extra time, because their school year is not the same school year as the government school teachers have to keep.

I think that is an issue; it has been broached with previous ministers, and there has been this blank wall about it. If that were relaxed somewhat to enable professional development activities and team building stuff to occur later in the year — maybe not through the year but later in the year; independent schools often finish one or two weeks prior to government schools — the government school teachers would find that a great relief and a great amount of stress would be taken from the burden of professional development activities for school staff. We would really enjoy and relish the time that we could actually work together as a group of people without having kids around, parents around, report writing and all that sort of thing. I think that we are being asked to implement exactly the same programs but with different time scales, and in terms of the principle of the matter it just simply does not compute, it just does not make sense.

The CHAIR — We were wanting to get some feedback from you in regard to that. So state schools have four student-free days at the moment. I am hearing that you generally feel that one way of ensuring you have better professional development is to have more student-free days — that is more or less what you are saying — and looking at the line of what happens in the non-government sector.

Mr MAHER — As do Catholic primaries, might I add. They comply with state school primary regulations.

Mr DAVERN — Catholic primaries and the government school system are mostly the same. It is very stressful.

The CHAIR — Is that generally what people would think — that you would really welcome extra student-free days?

Mr CLARKSON — The first day of the year is an absolute waste of time in terms of PD in a lot of cases. That first day of the year has been traditional forever.

Mr HEYWOOD — So you are allowing teachers three days and in many schools one of those days is probably taken up in reporting throughout the year. I suppose it is worth raising here — because if we do not, somebody will — the notion of, ‘If teachers need more time for professional development, why don’t they do it during school holidays?’. I am sure it has got to come out somewhere in this inquiry, because it has been suggested in the past by governments and different organisations. I suppose my feeling there is if you say, ‘Teachers need more time for professional development so we will take a week of the September holidays’, one of the dilemmas there is if you are trying to access things, if you have schools all trying to do things at that time — as Bernie suggested, maybe finishing earlier at the end of the year does allow the opportunity for cooperation between groups of schools across networks, if there is a unified time. The current three days that we have, which can be set by schools, can be used for school priorities in professional development but I think that given the workload of teachers — and I have got a lot of feedback from people that I have talked to — it would not be something that would go down very well if you were to say, ‘Here is more time but we will take a week out of your holidays’.

Ms DEVLIN — I think people are starting to stop calling them holidays; really they are time in lieu, because for what staff do in their own time — the meetings that they attend and all of those sorts of things — there is absolutely no recognition given. There is no time in lieu. I remember sitting in a meeting and realising that there was only one person there from regional office who was actually getting time to be at that meeting, everyone else was giving their time to do it. I think you need to be very careful with that because we ask an awful lot of teachers during the term in what they do, and they give voluntarily and things like that. It is really rostered days off or time in lieu, as far as I am concerned.

Ms DEANS — And we already have teachers meeting in the holidays simply to plan and to support each other, and they do that quite freely, but if you try and emphasise that in terms of taking their holidays away from them, I think we will see less and less of that goodwill.

Ms DEVLIN — If people start to work to rule, then schools will not operate.

The CHAIR — So are there any other solutions you might want to put in terms of that time issue — the flexibility that Wendy talked about — what are the opportunities for getting extra flexibility into that?

Mr BURT — One of the things that I would like to put on the table is that the school year officially for students starts three days later. Staff start three days before the kids do, to set up the year, and at the end of the year we have three or four days to finish and plan for the next year. I think it would be a great help to us in setting up for the following year.

Dr FORD — Can I just extend what Bernie was saying there before about government schools working that extra week or two at the end of the year — how much actual student learning occurs in there? They are mandated days for schools but is there much of a student learning outcome, and therefore is it a waste of time saying, ‘Be there and look after the kids until off they go’?

Mr BURT — We are babysitters — — .

Dr FORD — So could it be a time then?

Mr PALMER — I would just like to add in terms of this point too that Mindarie senior secondary in Western Australia runs an 8 to 6 program on four days a week and their fifth day is professional learning day for their staff. Now one of the biggest problems with Ballarat is the notion of school buses and taking them out and how inflexible that makes it in terms of the delivery of your programs. That is something that needs to be looked at. I know that the notion of the VET cluster has stretched that a little, but as a school if you were going to look at

flexible delivery of your programs and therefore look at that extra time for staff, it is very difficult within our community at the moment.

The CHAIR — I just noticed too as we were talking that WIN Television has arrived. They have had discussions with us ahead of time and we felt that just before the luncheon break — and time is getting away pretty quickly — that they might like to do some filming, and it may be that at the end of the session they want to talk to some of the participants here, so I trust you are comfortable with that. But there will be sort of follow-ups after we re-form. Are there any other issues with time that people wanted to raise?

Mr CLIFTON — I do not really think the question asked earlier as to who pays has been really deliberately answered, and I think the government, through the education department, pays, and I think they have to accept the responsibility to provide the resources. There is nothing in our student resource package that is prescribed funding for PD. I think some of the secondary colleges do some of the middle years stuff but in primary school there is nothing that says I have to spend anything on PD. If the department wants quality training of their teachers, then they have to provide the money for it.

The CHAIR — There was another question I wanted to follow up in regard to that, because you have talked about your global budgets and how you allocate certain amounts in your global budgets towards professional learning but then there are other programs that are offered to schools. You talked about the Early Years program when it was running but there are other programs that have been drawn to our attention that offer funding associated with a program that provides professional learning. I am interested to know how many of you take up some of those opportunities, and how you feel about those when the funding is often targeted with a theme to a program — whether it is boys in education — there are a range of different issues there? Any comments about that?

Ms BAKER — The innovation and excellence (I and E) program is probably one that certainly every government school would have been involved in, and I guess the strength of that program was that it was certainly an infusion of funds, but it was an infusion of funds with a highly able person who was able to have influence across a number of schools and provide some links, and I think the beauty of it was that while it had a middle years focus, it really was up to each group of schools to decide the specific focus of their group — so for some it might have been boys in education, for some it might have been literacy, for some it might have been student wellbeing. I thought the I and E program was a very successful program, and it disappointed me greatly to see that it is changing face, I suppose. I guess I get a little worried about that because it really was successful. It may not have given the literacy and numeracy outcomes that were wanted but the program has not been running long enough. You cannot change literacy and numeracy outcomes in two or three years; that is going to be a long-term process. I think sometimes we are short-sighted, and I think sometimes governments want a quick fix and a quick answer, and that is not always necessarily the most effective model. But it has been a very effective, useful model that we have all been involved in.

Mr MAHER — It seems to me that the common denominator between all of the programs is that they have relationships between teacher and student as the absolute cornerstone upon which the program is built, so that those relationships are paramount for student learning and indeed for teacher learning. Having said that, so much of the pressure that is being applied on teachers in regards to their professional development actually disempowers those relationships in their workplace, and as a consequence I just do not think it is working — those programs actually in a bizarre sort of way can then work counter to the development of strong working relationships in classrooms. It is a bizarre system that sometimes we shoot ourselves in the foot with.

Ms DEVLIN — One of the other problems with the programs is that you have got to apply for a lot of them, and it is a competitive situation and you might or might not get boys in education funding or whatever. With Innovation and Excellence every school was guaranteed over a three-year period or whatever that they would come into that program. What happens if you have a problem with boys in education but your submission did not get up? You do not get funding; therefore you cannot put the professional development in place. If it is good professional development and it brings the results to the school and to student achievement, then every school should, over a certain number of years, get access to it.

Mr HEYWOOD — I think there are two different aspects to professional development. Innovation and Excellence was about groups of schools identifying their priorities based on their context and their clientele. As schools we all look at our own data, our own context, our own needs and develop our professional development

needs for teachers around those. But the other aspect is that where there are imposed requirements that we have talked about today — the implementation of VELs, the introduction of a new statewide reporting system — they are imposed on us. There were some very small amounts of funding for the implementation of VELs to come along with that, but there was very little recognition or support from the system for the amount of work that our teachers have done to try and understand, unpack and embed VELs in their teaching practice and also to distil, I think, unpacking and understanding what the implications of the new reporting requirements are. That is the system asking teachers to do that with very little recognition of the support provided by the amount of work they have done.

The CHAIR — With regard to VELs and some of the other programs that have come in, Karen was raising the point before, and others have said, there does not seem to be a lot of networking going on across the schools to share expertise or to have somebody come in and speak about it even if they were able to, to share and work across that. I would have thought Ballarat had a great opportunity to do more networking. Has that been a problem, and how do you overcome that?

Mr CLARKSON — We actually came down to a school in Ballarat — and I will not name the school — because it had a particularly good thinking curriculum going on, and the ladies there were showing us some of the stuff they had done with VELs. We asked if we could get a copy. Our staff in terms of comparative sizes is about one-tenth of their size, and they were very reluctant to even share. I see that as being a huge issue. We should be sharing as much as we have got.

Ms SIMPKIN — One of the problems in Ballarat is it is very competitive. We are very competitive for students. It does not matter whether you are a government school or a private school, it is very competitive, and that seems to me a bit of a disaster for our students. All students should have the same value and be valued, but because we are so competitive, we are organising our own professional learning — and we are all trying to get that edge and put ourselves out there. That is a bit of a disaster educationally for students, but it is the nature of Ballarat.

The CHAIR — Is that getting better? I was hoping it might be better, given the election of our government, and that there had been a bit of breaking down of some of those barriers.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — That is not always our experience, whilst understanding what Karen is saying. Certainly as part of the Teacher Education Network we see an incredible amount of sharing amongst primary and secondary schools, teachers being welcomed into schools which are not their home schools. We see a lot of sharing of programs. We see a huge amount of that. So it must have been very disappointing.

Mr CLARKSON — We were disappointed.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — But certainly from my perspective I see a huge amount of sharing across the Teacher Education Network, which is inclusive of independent and Catholic schools.

Dr FORD — It also takes time, energy and effort and probably the initiative of one or two people to get these things up and going and then to keep them running. I have been a member of two subject networks in Ballarat that have been very successful, but I probably have not been part of it for the last three or four years; it has just died a natural death because it takes a lot of time and effort to keep going and to organise.

Mr MORGAN — Geoff, you asked a question about VELs; the I and E coordinators in clusters basically developed, as I think was mentioned earlier— the term ‘shanghaied’ was used. They have actually developed now into what appears to us — whether it is right or wrong, the perception at the schools is that the role of the I and E coordinator, as the cluster educator now, is directing, giving information and influencing the latest initiatives of the department. At the very least what could have happened in that set-up — I am sure in a lot of schools the educators were playing a huge role in exactly what you are talking about, in the sharing of information as to how VELs was being implemented across the cluster schools. That was a great role that those people were playing and are playing, but if that is now coming to an end and we believe that is another person or another role, that is going to defeat or play against that purpose, that aim.

The CHAIR — One of the issues that we are interested to get a feeling from you on is: what are the types of issues you would like to pursue and what would be your priorities in professional development? We certainly have got the message about time, money and the ability to find time to do effective professional development, but what might be your priority areas? Is somebody able to indicate that?

Dr FORD — I think it has to be pedagogy, really. As has been mentioned before by someone, contents and all these sorts of things — yes, but what changes student outcome is really the ability of the staff, the teacher, to engage and enthuse kids. Therefore we need to be training but also, as someone mentioned, to get an ethos of going in and watching other people do things and getting ideas. It takes time. It is a concept I am trying to introduce and reinforce: where you regularly visit someone else's classroom to get ideas or maybe even give feedback.

Ms DEANS — It is all focused on developing our teachers' capacity to deal with the teaching and learning that they need to, and to do that the program, as you have mentioned, of getting the coaching and mentoring happening within the schools, is paramount.

Ms DEVLIN — It is the realisation that children learn in many ways and that you have to be able to reflect that in your teaching. It is not a factory model that you put this in here, you have this here and you will get this outcome. You can put in exactly the same to two different children and get two different outcomes, but if you, at the input stage, are looking at what it is that that child needs and how they learn, and you meet their needs, then you will get the same outcomes at the end.

Mr SAWYER — One of the things I know a number of schools are grappling with is student welfare and making sure kids are happy and safe in their schools for a start. How to approach that as a whole area is becoming bigger, and it is one of the things that we have to get right before we can get into some of the academic areas.

The CHAIR — For some of that you would also need external support for, but staff, teachers, certainly have a significant role in that.

Mr SAWYER — In student welfare we are not just talking your code of conduct and things like that; we are talking about some of the procedural things that would occur in there, whether it be mandatory reporting and stuff like that. But we are talking about just having that safe environment and being able to achieve that safe environment for kids to be able to come in and parents to be able to operate freely and having that school setting. We talk about wanting to achieve goals in English and maths or whatever target you might be setting, but unless you have got those first fundamentals of a safe environment for people to be in, you are not going to get there. I guess we all know that we are losing a number of kids through the cracks already, and we are getting them into special circumstances schools, but that number is probably increasing and it is something I think education generally has got to grapple with, the changing society.

The CHAIR — Other priorities you want to put forward?

Mr CLARKSON — I would agree with Alan: teacher pedagogy certainly in primary schools as well as secondary.

The CHAIR — The last issue that I was interested in is the link with education into the outside community and whether in terms of professional development there ought to be, or there is, and to what extent there is, opportunity to link with outside industry or the environment outside the school. I am interested to get some feedback on where that fits into professional development and what needs to be done there.

Mr HEYWOOD — Provision of professional development for schools is an enormous industry. There are a lot of people who are making a lot of money, charging a lot of money, and sometimes they are high-quality presenters, and sometimes it may be dubious — they are providing nice feel-good activities. I think that one of the questions — I know it is not directly in line with what you are asking, but one of the things — is do we look outside the system to find people to bring in to professional development, or do we look within the system to identify the expertise we already have, and utilise that?

Mr DAVERN — There is a range of people at different schools that works. We have a relationship with the Church of Christ, which is different for a government school, and we have got a very ongoing relationship with Australian Catholic University; they do all the PD for our staff. Is that the sort of thing you are looking at; or are you looking at industry as such?

The CHAIR — Yes, we are interested to see whether there are links with industry which I suppose we think of as more in the secondary area, but also in the primary area, that there would be other outside groups that you might be looking to link in with, and whether that has a role in professional learning or not. I do not know.

Mr PALMER — I did the TRIP program in 1998 and from that program I still have industry links back to our school. I think it was your government that took TRIP right out of the process, so whether it was in that same format as it was back then, or some other format, I think it is something that you need to consider, because that is very much a way of getting that industry experience and local link back to schools. Probably one of the best things I have done was that year of professional development.

Mr MORGAN — There are certainly opportunities for that personal teacher development, perhaps not so much in having a link, but I remember a number of years ago we had the manager from Haymes Paint who actually took our staff through presenting and how to present to them, whether it be in applying for positions or presenting for interviews, or things like that. That was a really good link. He spent a fair bit of time in the school and he felt that he was actually able to gain things to take back to his workplace and his staff, that he saw teachers doing. I think we need to get smarter and better at using those relationships for development.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — We have quite a successful program called Principal for a Day, and that is an opportunity for people from industry to work in the school environment, albeit for a day, with the principal. They follow the principal and learn what a day in the life of a principal looks like. But that often develops into something much greater. Certainly in my experience that has developed into links, for me, with Apex, and at that level that certainly develops associations with industry. Perhaps a development of that sort of program is to Teacher for a Day. What does it look like? Does industry understand the work of our teachers? Do they still believe we work from 9.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.? It would be extremely interesting for people in industry to experience a day in the life of a teacher, as much as it is the other way.

Mr DAVERN — I have got the manager of Selkirks coming in as Principal for a Day. I have had to ask him to get a working with children permit, because otherwise I cannot have him in the school. He is really impressed about that — really impressed! It cost him \$81.

Dr FORD — It is not on the track of why we are here today, but some of the best staff we have are our staff who have come into teaching after being in industry. I think we should support and make it as easy as possible for industry people to come into teaching if they want to later on in their career. I think we should have a look at if there is a shortened pathway where instead of doing a three-year degree or whatever it is, some shortened pathway where we can get people who would like to be teachers, who have been doing something else, trained in the classroom, because that would be very valuable.

Mr PALMER — So, picking up on that point, we asked them to train, then we put them in at the base level of the pay scale, not recognising any prior experience in terms of what skills and expertise they bring. I have seen two technology teachers go back out again because they cannot sustain their family commitments, because we just say, 'You are a graduate at the bottom end'. That is something that needs to be considered as well. If we do value them from industry, let us recognise their prior skills accordingly.

Mr DAVERN — The department does have a program supporting that. I think 40 or 60 teachers a year can come in, but they do come in at the graduate level. If you have been a middle manager in any sort of business, with your earnings, it is just nonsense.

The CHAIR — There is obviously a whole range of other issues that come out of that part of the discussion in terms of retention of teachers that are in the workforce, and how you challenge them, providing them with opportunities that make them feel valued in the classroom, and that they have a valuable future. We have hit 12.30 p.m. and I know that you are all very busy. I certainly thank you for giving up this time this morning, given that we have talked about the problems of time in professional development. There will be opportunities for your feedback to me, and to the committee more broadly, if you have other suggestions you want to make. You would be aware that this afternoon — I am not sure if some of you are still coming and talking to us this afternoon — we are meeting with other representatives from the department regional office, the Catholic Education Office, the University of Ballarat and so on. We are getting a picture of what they see as being provided in the region too and how they want to work in with skills. Thank you for your attendance this morning. It has been very valuable indeed.

Witnesses withdrew.

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into effective strategies for teacher professional learning

Ballarat — 13 August 2007

Members

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Mr B. Finn
Mr P. R. Hall
Dr A. Harkness

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Mr G. Howard
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Staff

Executive Officer: Ms K. Ellingford
Research Officer: Ms J. Hope
Committee Administrative Officer: Ms N. Tyler

Witnesses

Mr P. Mould, coordinator, ASISTM program, Buninyong Primary School;

Ms K. Howden-Clarnette, school improvement officer, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Grampians region);

Mr J. Delaney, primary education consultant,

Mr T. Brandenburg, executive officer, and

Mr L. Mitchell, head of educational services, Catholic Education Office (Diocese of Ballarat);

Ms V. Fenelon, acting director of professional and organisational learning,

Ms A. Chappell, senior policy advisor to the deputy vice-chancellor,

Mr G. Jakob, director, planning, quality and review, and

Ms S. Goodbourn, acting head, TAFE development unit, TAFE, University of Ballarat;

Professor L. Angus, head,

Associate Professor M. Cooper, school of education,

Ms V. Fenelon, acting director, professional and organisational learning,
University of Ballarat;

Associate Professor S. McNamara, and

Ms K. McLean, school of education, Australian Catholic University;

Mr P. Hoban, education officer, Sovereign Hill Education;

Mr B. Allan, Eureka Centre;

Ms P. Doran, Ballarat Fine Arts Gallery;

Ms R. Waghorne, assistant director, vocational training policy, Minerals Education Victoria;

Mr B. Wright, chief executive officer, Highlands Local Learning Education Network; and

Ms J. Downey, strengthening generations project officer, community planning and development, and

Ms M. Rigby, youth services officer, City of Ballarat.

The CHAIR — There seems to be an expectation that we can get under way very soon. A few others are expected to come and join us this afternoon, but we will start in their absence and hopefully they will be able to come along and contribute. I welcome you all here this afternoon. I am very pleased that the Education and Training Committee has been able to come out into the region from Melbourne, and I am especially pleased we have come to Ballarat as a first port of call for the committee in this term of Parliament. You will be aware that we are carrying out an inquiry into effective strategies for teacher professional learning. This morning we heard from representatives within the school sector in Ballarat: principals and assistant principals and so on from the three sectors, primary and secondary, government, non-government and Catholic schools. It was interesting to hear their views on professional learning. This afternoon we will be very interested to hear another perspective, and we look forward to the contribution that you will be making.

You will be aware that microphones have been placed around the room, and Hansard will be recording everything you share with us this afternoon. For the benefit of Hansard I ask you to mention your names and where you are from before you address us. We also have your name cards so that also helps them. I also advise that things that are said during the hearings of this committee are covered by parliamentary privilege. I do not know whether it relates to any of the issues you might want to share with us, but feel free. Of course it does not cover comments made outside the chamber, and that is something I should point out. We have 2 hours for you to share information with us, and we might be able to have an informal discussion afterwards over a cup of coffee, but if you wish to leave and grab a cuppa during the proceedings — and I know many of you have taken advantage of that — feel free to do so.

We do not have a particular order for hearing from you. In fact we might go around the room and hear from you, which is an opportunity to ensure that everybody can make some opening comments and share some of the views from their particular area, unless you want to do it as a team from a particular organisation. We will then come back with questions and have a two-way dialogue with you as a follow-up to some of the issues you have raised with us. If you are comfortable with that we will get under way. Perhaps we will start with Maxine and work our way around that way.

Assoc. Prof. COOPER — You want more than just an introduction? You want —

The CHAIR — A contribution. It would be good to have a brief contribution from you first as to how your organisation fits in and what you see are the key issues that we ought to know about to put into our report.

Assoc. Prof. COOPER — My name is Maxine Cooper. I am from the University of Ballarat. I am very interested in teacher professional learning. I am the coordinator of the bachelor of education program, which is the largest teacher education program at the University of Ballarat. For me it is a very important transition between teacher education students and moving into the workforce. It seems to me that teachers need quite an amount of support and encouragement as beginning teachers in the workforce. Professional learning should be built in right through from their teacher education programs as to lifelong learning.

I recently moved to the University of Ballarat from Queensland and was quite involved with beginning teachers in Queensland, and the support — or lack of support — they had within their employment systems. I think it is important that we work with young teachers to value the contributions they make, but to make sure they have professional learning to maintain themselves within the system because there are a number who leave teaching within the first few years.

The other role I have is as president of the Australian Teacher Education Association which is very interested in teachers' lifelong learning. My particular interests are in rural models for teacher education and getting teachers through their school experience in undergraduate programs to apply for positions in rural settings. That is where I am coming from.

Prof. ANGUS — My name is Lawrie Angus. I am professor of education and head of the school of education at the University of Ballarat. I am also a member of the Victorian Institute of Teaching's professional standards committee — I think that what it is called — which over time has been developing a paper on the requirements of teachers to seek professional development. It has attempted to quantify the amount of professional development that is required in order to be reregistered as a teacher.

One of the areas I am interested in is promoting the concept of professional development and the professionalism associated with professional development throughout our teaching profession. I guess I am also concerned with the

profession accepting that the traditional models of professional development that we have worked with have not worked and have generally been very poor models of professional development. I am also particularly interested in the kind of partnership arrangements that are possible for professional development that leads to teachers building on the expertise they already have in conjunction with other people who have complementary, but somewhat different, expertise that can be brought together to deal with current professional problems.

Mr ALLAN — I am Bob Allan, and I am the education coordinator at the Eureka Centre. I have a background in education over a long period, particularly at the University of Ballarat. I have been at the Eureka Centre for just over four years now. I work with primary, secondary and tertiary students who come to the centre, and I provide resources. The Eureka Centre is fairly much focused on the issues, events and outcomes associated with the Eureka rebellion, but I am certainly much more interested in the broader picture and use of the centre. About three years ago we established a partnership with the School of Education through Dr Robbie Johnston to have her students come to the centre each year and access the resources and also to look at the potential for developing new units of study from the resources that are available. In fact about 110 of those students are coming on Wednesday or Thursday of this week to utilise the centre.

Part of my position at the Eureka Centre is funded through the Strategic Partnerships Program. I think one of the issues that is raised quite a lot on that advisory board when we have our meetings is how we integrate the work of organisations like the Eureka Centre, Sovereign Hill and the art gallery in this area into the schools to make them more accessible to teachers. We ran a program at the Eureka Centre last year where history teachers could come to the centre and actually do some work experience or some professional practice development. That is the sort of development that I would like to see happen in the future.

Finally, the frustrations we have are how we can work more through the regional office in each centre and how we can work perhaps more closely through cluster groups. I would like to look at the way we can make that link. Thank you.

Ms McLEAN — I am Karen McLean, and I am a lecturer in education at the Australian Catholic University at Aquinas. I am also course adviser for the bachelor of education students, so I have a particular interest in the professional learning of teachers, especially beginning teachers. In particular two of the key issues for me are access and sustainability. Particularly in the rural areas one of the ongoing concerns is actually access to sustainable professional development for teachers. Perhaps one of the key areas of interest that I have — along with partnerships, because that is something that I have been exploring in the past — would be technology and the possibility of using different forms of technology for professional learning for teachers, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Ms McNAMARA — I am Sue McNamara, and I am the head of education for the Australian Catholic University for Victoria, so I look after both the Melbourne and the Ballarat campuses. I think Karen has put very clearly the things that we look at. In particular in relation to rural and regional education we actually come from a social justice perspective, so we are very interested in teacher professional development in a lifelong learning context, which is one of our larger areas of education.

One of the particular issues from my point of view is the nature of change in generational learning. I think the nature of teaching for the future as well as teaching for the present is one of the things we would be looking for in models of development for professional learning.

Ms WAGHORNE — I am Rosemary Waghorne, and I am the assistant director, vocational training policy, for the Minerals Council of Australia — which is a very big mouthful. I might say that the Victorian division is a fully integrated part of the minerals council, so I am perhaps representing that division in this discussion. We are a peak industry body representing members within the minerals industry. Clearly our interest in this is in having a skilled workforce available to actually work within our industry. That is the underlying thing. Within the Victorian division we have a number of initiatives where we work with schools in actually doing some training and some introductory sessions in regard to aspects of science, mathematics and geoscience. We also do quite a degree of teacher professional development, and we provide a lot of materials to assist with that. We also work with some of the teacher training areas to work with teachers who are coming into the profession so that they are also familiar with the requirements of our industry.

From my own personal point of view, I am particularly interested in the training of vocational education teachers. We have all heard about the skills shortage. That is one of the particular concerns for our industry, and the fact that we would like to see perhaps a little closer relationship between not just VET teachers but all teachers and our industry so that they are familiar with our requirements and can advocate to some degree on our behalf as well as delivering the courses. We also do quite a degree of work with careers teachers. That is a very broad picture there.

Ms FENELON — I am Virginia Fenelon, and I am currently acting director of professional organisational learning at the University of Ballarat, which is really a design role at this point, looking at planning for a new institute for professional organisational learning which will be for all university staff, including the academic and teaching staff. I have other colleagues here today who are actively involved in supporting our academic and teaching staff and their own teacher education, as opposed to providing students with teacher education.

What I would like to say briefly is that in terms of our own staff one of the significant things we are constantly addressing is that a significant proportion of our academic and teaching staff come into their roles without any formal teacher education. We need a range of strategies which starts right at the very beginning with a very quick induction to teaching and then early career teaching programs which are currently run by both higher education and TAFE divisions, and then we need some ongoing higher level skill development in teacher education, which also currently exists.

As well as that, someone mentioned lifelong learning. It is a lifelong process, I think, where we need to provide ongoing formal opportunities for ongoing teacher education — for example, to address new technologies or to address developments in disciplines or industries that the teachers are teaching in.

We also need to support them for their critical reflection and evaluation of their own teaching at the same time as they are considering within that process contemporary issues in education, learning and teaching. I might leave it at that, and other colleagues might add to what we are doing.

Ms CHAPPELL — I am Annette Chappell. I am senior policy adviser for the deputy vice-chancellor, academic and research. My involvement in that portfolio is to do with the professionalisation, I guess you would say, of our academic teachers. To that end I am involved with an early career teacher program and the graduate certificate of tertiary education. We draw very heavily on our academic staff who have primary, secondary and VET teacher qualifications for the professional development of our academic teachers, and we are currently involved in projects which are looking at a more national approach to professional development and qualification of university teachers.

Mr MITCHELL — Thank you for the opportunity. I am Leigh Mitchell. I am the head of educational services at the Catholic Education Office in Ballarat. Basically that means we are responsible for Catholic schools from Mildura all the way through to Portland down in the south, and every small place in between. The reality with our professional development over the years has been that we have continually run a model whereby we drag people in, bring them into a central place, and watch the learning disappear as they travel down the highway.

Next year we are setting up a model where we will set up priority schools for support and basically take the learning on site, where the schools can actually focus on their needs, their students, their data and their information. The focus is to improve teacher capacity and sustainability, so we plan to do that over a fairly intensive program in a number of our schools. The limit to that is that our capacity to get more schools with the staff that we have. That is basically the way we are undertaking professional development.

Mr BRANDENBURG — My name is Tony Brandenburg. I also work for the Catholic Education Office. Where Leigh has talked from an educational perspective, my role today is more to talk from an administrative perspective. For us we would like to open a conversation of attracting teachers to our school. We did a great deal of work with the University of New England last year and the year before on what they identified as their SIMMER project, which looked at rural and remote teachers and attracting teachers. In doing that, the example I would like to use would be that we have many teachers in our schools, especially in our secondary schools, who would be teaching IT, but that would not necessarily be their specific discipline. They would be teachers of mathematics or teachers of history or teachers of anything else, but because in schools they also need to teach IT, they need to have an IT teacher, so it is that cross-discipline. I think that is a conversation that we should have and we could contribute to that discussion.

The other thing that is also part of this program is to recognise partnerships, and partnerships are really important for the Catholic Education Office in this diocese. Our partnerships with the department and the work that we do in shared professional development, also with the Australian Catholic University and the University of Ballarat, and the work we do help us complement our own professional development programs. I would like to recognise that as well, as the development of those partnerships is very important.

Mr HOBAN — My name is Peter Hoban. I am an education officer at Sovereign Hill. I am actually a Catholic Education Commission of Victoria placed teacher at Sovereign Hill, and I am also on the Museums Australia Education Special Interest Group Committee. We at Sovereign Hill have a couple of areas that we are particularly interested in in terms of teacher learning. One is the pedagogy of learning outside the classroom, which we think to some extent is sadly lacking for a lot of teachers. I would ask you how many of you would refer to an excursion or a camp or something or other as one of the best learning experiences you have ever had, and then how many of you have actually been on a camp or an excursion which related in no way to what was being done in the classroom. We feel we have a lot to offer teachers in terms of that sort of pedagogy and that form of learning.

The second area that we are really interested in is teachers' knowledge of Australian history. I think this was pointed out with Tony Taylor's *Future of the Past* document, which was a commonwealth inquiry into the teaching of history in which he highlighted a lot of properties that teachers lack in actual knowledge of history in general and Australian history in particular. We have set up a local history circle here in Ballarat with teachers. The whole idea of it was designed to promote good history teaching in schools and to provide links between schools and teachers and practising historians. We have had some difficulty getting it going, although it is going now. Our biggest problem is that teachers are incredibly time poor and we have great trouble getting teachers to come to any of the free professional development sessions we offer in both of these areas because they just cannot get away. We also find that their interests are taken by other things that are not necessarily learning and teaching, and we think that is quite sad at times. We would prefer that there was a greater conversation in professional learning for teachers that is exactly about that — learning and teaching.

Ms DORAN — My name is Pauline Doran, and I am a Catholic education officer at the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery. We have approximately 10 000 students a year that we work with face to face from early years through to university. We have developed partnerships with Aquinas and with the University of Ballarat education department and with their teacher training students as they come through. We also have a visual arts network, secondary and primary, that we work with. We have the same problem as Sovereign Hill in that the teachers are time poor when it comes to actually coming and doing some sort of professional development — even the free activities that we have. When we get the teachers to come in they are enthused; the schools are perhaps less supportive. Most of the professional development days we offer are with practising artists. They are programs that they will not get anywhere else, and the only way to run them is in short bursts and at a very limited time because we have to get the artists in place. As Bob was saying, one of our problems is working with the cluster groups, getting contacts and getting communication happening between the gallery and the department in particular, although I do tend to work with these two. That is about it at the moment.

Mr JAKOB — Greg Jakob, I am the director of planning quality and review at the University of Ballarat. My interest in this is more from an organisational management perspective. We are looking at it from probably two dimensions. One is being practitioners in the field of education directly into the sector, but also looking at it from an organisational perspective who is now responsible for teaching students from effectively now years 10 and 11 right through to postgraduate research, so we have a number of challenges.

One of the organisational challenges we have, which I think is being said around here too, is enabling time for professional development within our organisation. I think we suffer that as much as any other institution of the time poor scenario. Probably even within that is the need for our organisation, because we are multi-sector, some of the boundaries that used to be between TAFE, higher education and now vocational and learning are going to have to be looked at and modified to some degree to enable flexibility for people to follow pathways through, so that will have some challenges for the deployment of skills and how that would work across those frameworks.

The other element that is probably challenging us as an organisation as well from an education perspective is that we have a large international student cohort, both on campus, nationally and internationally, and the demand for our education programs for international is growing at a rapid rate, probably more rapidly than domestically, and there is a range of challenges there as we deploy ourselves into different cultural markets, both onshore and offshore. So what was a traditional form of learning on campus is becoming perhaps a lesser part of our business as

we go forward. I think from our perspective, and particularly for the academics who are delivering those programs, there will be some important professional developments and support in that regard.

Ms GOODBOURN — I am Sue Goodbourn. I am from the TAFE development unit at the University of Ballarat. The TAFE development unit facilitates staff development for TAFE staff — TAFE teachers generally. We also do desktop research into new technologies and pedagogies. I guess like every other industry we are looking at just in time, just enough, just-for-me-type learning, but at the same time still trying to have some deep and authentic learning associated with it, so our role is to be looking at how we can provide quick, but meaningful staff development, given that people are time poor and we do have skill shortages in almost every area.

Mr WRIGHT — Barry Wright from the Highlands local learning and employment network. I come from a fairly strong industry background. We are very interested in building partnerships amongst all the stakeholders. We work across all sectors. We are really interested in this from a general perspective because we work trying to promote education, training and employment and looking at the transition points. We are very keen on trying to broaden tradition and expose young people to a broader range of vocational options.

So we are very interested in the VET and VCAL areas. We also work closely with a number of partners in out-of-school re-engagement programs and I think that is really interesting because they have to be positive learning environments. There has been a shift in a lot of people's value sets and we just need to set up partnerships. We have a very strong one with the university at the moment, with the graduate student teachers doing a lot of work with a couple of external school programs. I think that it is really good to expose those prospective teachers coming into the marketplace and show them that not everyone values education. They need to be exposed to that, otherwise when they get into the classroom they may not expect that sort of thing. I just think that we have a general interest in the professional development of teachers so that at the end of the day we can keep young people engaged.

The CHAIR — Okay, good point.

Mr MOULD — Peter Mould. I am a primary school teacher at a local primary school, Buninyong. I do not think I have anything to add at this moment.

Ms DOWNEY — I am Jodie Downey from the Strengthening Generations program of the City of Ballarat. The Strengthening Generations project identified the key things that put young people at risk and that protect them, through long research in an evidence-based process, working with the whole of the community — schools, government, and health and welfare sectors as well as the youth sector and young people. The key things we identified were family conflict, binge drinking and substance use, and depression. So we have developed some projects around those things.

I guess the thing I would like to contribute at this point is to say that I think that there is a lot of scope for development within the community sector for teachers to be involved in community projects of the nature we are working on, in terms of prevention of risk factors for young people and to get some sort of crosspollination between the skills that teachers have and the work that we are doing with young people. I think a model for teacher professional learning that looks at involvement in community projects and strengthening partnerships with local government sectors and the youth, health and welfare sectors could be a really dynamic and useful one for practical skills and could work both ways for the benefit of the community and young people.

Ms RIGBY — I am Mary-Jane Rigby. I am the acting coordinator with the City of Ballarat Youth Services, so I work very closely with Jodie and partner with Barry's programs in a number of elements. I guess we are also coming from a very strong community development background in the way that we work with young people. My interest also is quite general, around the engagement of young people in schools, education and training, and I guess particularly in alternative education programs. We work with around 70 volunteers per annum in a whole range of different activities driven by young people. Advocacy to local and state government and welfare sectors on behalf of those who are 12 to 25 is our prime goal.

I guess, backing Jodie, there is role within the teacher profession for working closely with LGAs and also community development-based projects, where we are finding that a lot of the information we are receiving directly from young people is that sometimes the skills they are getting from extracurricular activities outside school are outweighing some of the skills that they are getting within the sector. I think there is not duplication but

that there are opportunities for that, to work more closely in partnership rather than some classroom activities duplicating what some young people might be doing externally. How that works I am not sure.

I think youth advocacy in schools and teachers being able to perhaps foster some of that is very important to young people. On the numbers that we are getting through, we run our youth information resource centre in central Ballarat and now we are getting anywhere between 600 and 700 young people a month through that centre. We have been operating since 2004. Prior to that we had access to about 50 young people, so I think it has generated a need there.

We do offer a lot of skills development. It would be great to perhaps have more teachers having the capacity, with the restrictions they have with time, to bring some young people through centres such as ours, the Ballarat Learning Exchange and different welfare agencies around Ballarat to act as a preventive approach to the disengagement that some young people do end up with by dropping out of the school system. I think having teachers able to have some further professional development about how to engage with young people and also other youth workers could perhaps aid with some of those transitional problems.

The CHAIR — Thanks, Mary-Jane. Karen has come back. She was here with us this morning. I do not know whether you have anything to add?

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — The whole audience is different. I am the a school improvement officer with the Grampians regional office of the Department of Education. One of my responsibilities is to run professional development for the highlands network. That professional development program is made up of just over 100 professional development sessions to be held between March and November this year. We have 1500 registrants for those programs for teachers and they run between 4.30 and 6.30 — after school, obviously — and sometimes all day Friday.

Whilst most of those professional development programs are that one-off-type PD program, we are certainly beginning to rethink that model. Research certainly tells us that that one-off model is not really the sustainable model and that perhaps we need to be working in schools. We are trialling that program at the moment. I am actually working in a school two days a week to trial that mode of professional development, being in there working very, very closely with the staff. It has been very interesting listening to the perspectives of what people are saying. There is no doubt teachers are so time poor that they are difficult to work with, because I do not know just how much more they can take. Certainly at the department we are trying to work much more closely with their needs, rather than sort of working at them.

The CHAIR — Thanks, Karen. I notice that Jim Delaney also came in halfway through the presentations. We have, of course, heard from Tony and Leigh. I do not know whether you want to add anything at this stage, Jim?

Mr DELANEY — Probably just one or two things. Like the last person said, the sense of the whole thing is being time poor and the many demands about professional development that are made on teachers that may be skills based. One of the things we are looking at more systematically now in terms of models of PDs is the notion of reflective practice and the person of the teacher and their own renewal, so at things that appear to help. The legitimate part of the question about learning is about learning to renew your spirit and your imagination and your heart as an educator — those sorts of things that help teachers engage in a creative and positive way with their students. We are just starting to look at that in a way that makes sense to teachers, without putting even further demands on them.

The CHAIR — Thanks, Jim. You have presented us with a very broad range of experience and views that we would like to be able to tease out in the time we have available, and it is going to be a bit of a challenge to do that. I do not know whether Nazih wants to start with some questions. Then I will follow on and we will go on with some other questions to follow those.

Mr ELASMAR — Again, I welcome you and thank you. There are a few questions and it is for all of us to share the answers. I would like to start with Sue. You mentioned something about the role of the TAFE, industry and university sectors. What is their role in teachers' professional learning?

Ms GOODBOURN — In our teachers' professional learning?

Mr ELASMAR — Yes.

Ms GOODBOURN — We would like to think that our teachers are very connected to industry — I took your point before — and we do that in a variety of ways, through industry release programs and through them being connected into the networks and industries themselves. For their role in passing that on to their own students, they need to be up to date with what is being used in industry. Our teachers need to have a connection with industry so that their students know what is happening in the industry at the time and what is needed. Is that what you are asking?

Mr ELASMAR — Yes.

The CHAIR — Can I just follow on while we are talking with you, Sue. In the TAFE sector you have a different arrangement with staff than you would, say, in the secondary or primary sectors because you have sessional staff, and so on.

Ms GOODBOURN — Absolutely.

The CHAIR — How do you ensure all staff are challenged to undertake professional development? And how is the arrangement, in terms of what professional development staff will do, planned and practised?

Ms GOODBOURN — There are a variety of ways. As you know, the TAFE portfolio is broken up into schools and then into departments. Those heads of departments are given certain hours, or each teacher is given certain hours, which they can put aside for professional development. We have a lot of project work which heads of department would then talk to their staff about and join in on. We have centralised staff development opportunities so that people can just choose to come to their own and might not be selected or nominated for a particular project.

We have a particular process at the moment; it is a strategy that we are using. It is interesting that you were talking about working in schools, because we have an e-learning facilitator strategy. That is because we got to the point where people had a baseline of ICT skills and were able to use computers and a certain amount of technology, but we thought that by actually placing a person within each department who knew the staff, knew how they worked, knew what the programs were about and knew the industries that they were working with, they could be of better assistance. We now have 15 of those people working within the departments, and we have seen some very good results from that. I am not sure that I am answering the question that you asked?

The CHAIR — You are certainly giving us some examples of the way PD is practised.

Ms GOODBOURN — Yes, so we have a variety of things. We have that particular strategy, where the people are working within the departments to do that. We have projects where people come outside and work in a blended way, either face to face, some technology backup work, work-based projects, cross-sectoral projects or cross-department projects. So there is a variety of methods that we use to ensure that all staff are connected into some sort of staff development.

The CHAIR — Following on from that, can you give us some examples of some cross-sectoral type stuff?

Ms GOODBOURN — Yes, I said cross-sectoral and then I went back to cross-department. I think the Institute of Professional Organisational Learning, which — —

Ms FENELON — IPOL.

Ms GOODBOURN — IPOL, which Virginia mentioned before, will enable us to at least work between portfolios within the university. And we work with schools. I cannot think of a particular project at the moment, but certainly we do work with schools through the TAFE development unit and a variety of schools within the thing. You might talk about cross-sectoral stuff, Lawrie?

Prof. ANGUS — I do not think so.

Ms GOODBOURN — You do not have projects with schools?

Prof. ANGUS — Oh yes, certainly we do. Relating to a point that I have made and other people have certainly amplified on, much of the traditional PD is based on very poor models. The kind of cross-sectoral work that we do, particularly in schools, or the kind that we would like to build on and do more of in schools, is to work in the schools respecting the knowledge that the teachers have, rather than the traditional model that may be one-off, or some mechanism of bringing someone who supposedly has knowledge or expertise into contact with a bunch of other people who need that expertise and then tipping that expertise into them, and they all go away. We know that that simply does not work. So we are much more interested in, with cross-sectoral work for instance, actually working in a school or educational setting where the participants in the professional development are learning from each other as much as from whoever is involved as an expert. I think you have perhaps summarised this approach.

Bob and Pauline and others were saying similar things. There is a view of best practice professional development where someone has the best practice and upgrades everybody else, which is not nearly as good as a good practice view of professional development. That means groups of people working together to try to construct what they believe is good practice and what will work in the context they are in. For someone like me, coming into a school and working with a group of people, I may have a few tricks and some knowledge and all the rest of it, but what is most important is the group of people attending the professional development, working with each other, bringing their own ideas and bringing any ideas that I and they share in their own context and building on them. That is the kind of thing that can be sustainable.

Ms FENELON — Could I just add that in my previous roles as head of school in the TAFE area and with the TAFE development unit, in my opinion, following up from what Lawrence and Sue have said, the most effective professional development I have seen for teachers is where it is work-based and where teachers are brought together from across disciplines or across departments. What they learn from each other and their support for each other is just fantastic. But to be really effective it has to be embedded in their teaching practice, and the outcome has an immediate benefit for them that changes their teaching practice or their teaching behaviour, if you like.

I think the focus in the TAFE development unit for some time now has been to make sure we set up programs like that. The other thing is the question of time poverty. As you know, both higher education and VET education sectors often have strategic policy shifts coming from either commonwealth or state level that we need to respond to and, en masse, bring all the teachers on board. In my experience with the TAFE teachers, the only way we could really respond to that in a meaningful way, because of the time poverty situation, was to buy out a teacher's time — actually use our professional money not just for the program but also to buy out people's time so that they could immerse themselves in it. Examples of that would be things like some new technologies, employability skills, recognition of prior learning — all of those policy initiatives that would be driven through the VET sector that the teachers had to pick up and deliver.

Mr ELASMAR — Lawrence, what should the professional learning priorities be during the first five years of a teacher's career?

Prof. ANGUS — I would think that one of the priorities should be the priority of taking professional learning seriously and seeing that, as a learner in your profession, you have emerged with a qualification but you are just a beginner and you need to grow.

I think what is important in those early years too — and perhaps this may be particularly important for the current period we are in where there is kind of an age bulge with a large number of 50-plus teachers who are going to disappear soon — is that those teachers are given the kind of professional development so that they can use their experience to demonstrate a sense of leadership to the newer teachers, almost a new breed of teachers, who are coming out with newer ideas, newer issues. You really need that capacity to be able to respect the older teachers and to learn from them. In a sense, some professional development to the more experienced teachers is one thing that will really help the early career teachers in their early years.

The last thing is to really get inducted into the nature of the profession that requires ongoing professional debates. As they learn to survive as a teacher in their own classroom and get on top of that, they need to be given the kind of professional development that equips them to see themselves as players in the debates, ideas and developments of education.

Mr ELASMAR — Can I just ask Tony whether teacher professional learning is being used locally to address skills and knowledge gaps among teachers and to assist teachers who are teaching out of their field?

Mr BRANDENBURG — I think the answer to your question is, yes, we do a fairly good job. I think that, to pick up the point that you were talking about earlier, embedding practice in PD is essential. The development of ongoing skills development as part of our professional development programs is also essential. I think that whole concept of learning to learn as part of the professional development for our teachers is important; it is that ongoing learning.

The point I would like to make — and I think there is some pretty good research coming out of the University of Ballarat in this whole area — is that you need to have skills to learn. So the idea of being able to reflect on your own practice, to reflect on what you have learnt, and to reflect on the skills that you have, is essential. Maybe that is something that we need to continually help our teachers to learn — to learn those skills so that in turn they can learn. Is that making sense? I think that is important.

The CHAIR — I would have to say that is the point that is coming out very strongly today. Our school-based educators are seeing that the internal work they do on an ongoing basis, not only mentoring but also bringing teachers together to challenge each other and share skills, but then build on it, is something that they are appreciating as more and more important, as well as sending them out to gain experiences in a range of other areas.

Ms FENELON — I have just another observation. I have been in secondary teaching and TAFE teaching and I am familiar with the higher ed. context as well. This time-poor thing not only hits professional development opportunities, but it also hits sitting around having a coffee and chewing the fat and having what I would call professional conversations, to the extent that I actually think part of our approach in professional development is what you were just saying really: we need to engineer opportunities for teachers to have professional conversations.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — Can I add to that? I could not agree with that more. I run a lot of professional development, and I have no doubt that one of the reasons that many teachers come along to the professional development sessions is as much for the social interaction and that chewing of the fat that Ms Fenelon was talking about as it is to listen to the presentation on maths or to be involved in some literacy professional development. It is extremely rich. The other stuff that is happening is the real richness, there is no doubt.

Prof. ANGUS — I would also like to add to your point, Chair. Professional development is going on all the time, and you do not need an external facilitator to go in and cause professional development to happen. But it particularly happens in contexts and environments where people are trying to do something different, which means they have to talk about it. In our region we have had a huge number of schools that have been involved in the Schools for Innovation and Excellence program, cluster programs, and a whole huge range of internal innovations within the school, all of which generate huge amounts of professional development. Part of the time-poor syndrome is the tragedy if all of that work, all of the building together to do these fantastic things and all of those ideas are allowed to kind of leak away, without people having the opportunity that Tony Brandenburg was talking about, to kind of get a sense of reflecting on this: what have we done, what have we learnt, and how did it work out? Too often great things are done and the ideas leak away, and we have to stop that.

The CHAIR — Can I also reflect, Lawrie, on something that relates to your role with the VIT. One of the issues raised this morning that was of significant concern was the VIT requirement for professional development, not that the 100 hours was going to present any problem, but that half of it had to be external. A number of the people were asking why external is so important when they think the internal stuff they are doing is more important? So they were asking, ‘Why do we have to make sure we meet that external hour period, and how do we work through the process of teachers ticking off how much they have done?’.

Prof. ANGUS — That has involved a lot of discussion on that committee. The 100 hours is regarded as the kind of minimum that any teacher who actually feels they can call themselves a teacher should be doing. The external is something that needs further definition. My colleague Maxine might have something to say about that.

The CHAIR — Let us just go to Maxine first to finish off that point and then come to you, Bob.

Assoc. Prof. COOPER — I guess I am struck by the idea of learning communities more than just in-site, in-school situations. I can certainly see the benefit of a lot of in-school stuff, but it must be continuous and it must be ongoing. I like the idea of learning communities both inside and outside your school, so you can go outside,

spend some time talking with others and reflecting on your situation as it is different to other contexts, but then go back to your own situation. Then you can do some reading, thinking and looking at some research as well. So to me it is a matter of getting the balance right between working within your own situation over time and with outside groups as well. I would like to put in that sort of thing.

The other thing that gets me is the gender issue, which has not been mentioned. It is one of the issues to be thought about. There is also the time poorness and the flexibility that we can develop with online learning communities. Some of the women with young children who have much work to do have not been doing some of the face-to-face and late afternoons at schools, but they could still do and be involved on a more flexible time basis. I think that could be useful.

The CHAIR — Now I will come to your point, Bob.

Mr ALLAN — Not being at a school but at the Eureka Centre and, like Pauline and Peter, pretty exposed to a large number of students, I suppose each year I work face-to-face with at least 10 000 students, and that is about 1000 teachers who come through the doors as well. I am able to observe the different needs of teachers, not so much in the schools but as I see them at the centre. I have broken it up into those people who are the early career teachers who have come out of a training institution and they have the latest skills in approaches to delivering the message and know how to use IT and other resources. Then you have the mid-career teachers, who have been there and are experienced, but they are in a transition period. I see a lot of the late career teachers. I think their needs — in some cases they are really addressing burnout. They are looking for 54-11 and beyond. They bring a different need to the professional development as well. That really needs to be addressed. I am not sure how it is being done at the moment, but I notice just from talking to teachers and detecting very quickly the ones who are really enthusiastic about the learning and the others who are sort of standing back and are over the hill really. I do not know whether it is being addressed.

The other things are rolled down through new developments like VELS. I know that some of the teachers that I talk to are struggling to come to terms with how to implement the VELS. I take the point that was mentioned before — many of them are teaching into areas. They might see an issue like the Eureka Centre as being just history, but the VELS requires them to see that much more broadly than history — it is the civics and citizenship. It is a much broader way, and also the way of delivering that I think is really challenging to some teachers. It is sort of looking at the needs, however you break it up, of different teachers. In some cases the need that I see is for the teacher just to survive what they are doing, particularly at a later stage. I do not whether I am just noticing that because I am at that stage. I really see that in the needs of people I meet.

The CHAIR — That is a fair point. I am also just interested in following up — maybe it is for Barry, but also for others — in terms of VCAL and VET. I guess there are a number of issues being raised in terms of linkage across to the community and to the industry sectors and so on that, I suppose, has a particular role within those programs, but then there is a broader opportunity. How do we ensure teachers do get those experiences up to date with what is happening outside the school experience? I do not know whether you, Barry, want to lead off with any of your observations and whether there are others who can add into that?

Mr WRIGHT — I think with VCAL, because it is relatively new, there needs to be a fair bit of support. There is a support network; the VCAL coordinators do meet, but I am not sure how much support they get within their own school environment. From an external observation I think that should be strengthened even for the VET teachers, because I think, because of the skill shortage — and there are a number of groups working on that within the Ballarat community and trying to grapple with it, and most stakeholders around the table are involved in that — the way it is going, I am not sure in a lot of the traditional trade areas that we have enough qualified VET people. That is another issue. Obviously we need to train them up at ongoing PD, but I think there needs to be stronger networks and support for them.

As far as industry, I think there is a lot of goodwill within the industry in Ballarat, but we have a problem here in that we do not have enough big international or national companies. They are more SME-type businesses that I think interact with most of the schools, or a large proportion of them do, at work experience level and work placement level with the VET training, and obviously with pre-apprenticeships and whatever with the university. But once again with the SMEs we have a lot that do not look at any internal training, so they do not know whether they have got skills gaps or genuine skills shortages. From a corporate responsibility we need to change their mindset because they just do not see that training and education and participation is part of their core business, but I

think down the track if they do not change that mindset and attitude they will either go out of business or they will be fighting everyone in the marketplace for qualified people coming through.

Mr ELASMAR — How can the government support this?

Mr WRIGHT — From the corporate social responsibility, I am not sure — maybe some legislation. Years ago I think we had a training levy. I do not know whether you go that far, but I know in the UK, for instance, now every organisation has to show in their annual report what contribution they have made to the community as a corporate social responsibility aspect. Some put in that they donate or do in-kind support in various ways, and those that do not have to show ‘no corporate responsibility’. Whether that is an embarrassment to get them to start integrating more into their community and becoming more involved, I do not know, but from a support aspect within the school community it really comes back to resourcing, and it is a matter of whether you can put more staff in. Whatever you do, even with the external PD, you have to pay someone to go into the classroom to pick up when a teacher comes out. It is a resourcing issue as well.

Ms RIGBY — I just have a point to make, I guess, in relation to your alternate education programs, so it is your VCALs, your VETs and any other programs. We have quite a few alternate education programs here in Ballarat. I think one of the considerations that needs to be made, although these students are enrolled in a government school, is they have been removed from these settings because they do not fit. Often it is the teaching staff running these programs — again your mainstream teachers, which tend to be from a young person’s perspective a lot of the reasons why they do not fit in those systems. I do not want to classify that that is the only reason by any means, but I guess what I am alluding to is that there does need to be some skills training for those teachers working with alternate education programs who perhaps have a very closely linked youth welfare-type or youth worker-type setting. I think there are a number of scenarios where the mainstream teaching — I am not sure how to say this — practices just do not work with some young people. I think the fact that we have some of these young people still engaged in education means there needs to be some training around alternative means and measures to keep them engaged in these programs. I think some training needs to go behind that. I think the programs are fantastic, and I think it is great that the education department is allowing the funds to support these. I think there need to be more funds going towards the professional development of those teachers to be able to run those programs successfully, because I think there is a lot of, ‘Let’s put these people somewhere, but let’s not give them the resources that they need to run the program adequately’. Some of that does come back, I think, to professional training of the staff and trying to maintain those programs.

Ms DOWNEY — I was just going to add on the notion about learning communities that perhaps there can be some professional development done with schools as a whole about embracing their community and being involved, because often we find as community development workers that the whole thing about being time poor and the rigid structure of the curriculum and getting through all the classes mean that the opportunities to link with participation in community projects is reduced, but it could be incorporated within those learning outcomes. But it is the attitude of whether the schools will embrace the community as part of their learning community and all the skills and knowledge and contribution that other agencies and workers can make with teachers as part of that holistic viewpoint. I think it works a lot better in smaller communities, possibly in rural areas. That may not be right either, but the mentality around ‘this is our school, this is our class, this is what we do’, I think could well be challenged in terms of a professional development model.

Prof. ANGUS — I wanted to comment on the question about what can government do. I think really, going back, with both political parties over 15 years at least, maybe 20 years, government has had a strong effect on driving education debates and things that are considered important. Over that time, largely, those debates have been driven by policy and by particular kinds of outcomes and targets. They have been performance driven, typically with a view that policy is implemented or done to the educators where they need to be brought up to speed in order to do what government is kind of mandating in some senses, rather than debates and discussions where educators feel that they are part of that debate and discussion.

I think we are at a stage now where there is kind of a swing towards more of an emphasis on issues like pedagogy and curriculum, alternative programs, for instance, where educators feel that that is what they do and what they are good at. So I think by giving teachers more voice in these kinds of discussions around issues that the educators see as important and around issues like engagement — I do not know how many people around the table used the term ‘engagement’ — and if that became the key driver of educational debate and discussion right up to the top level of government, that would have a very substantial flow-on effect and could lead to a different kind of professional

development around the areas where teachers want to be professionally developed, because that is what their real work is rather than other things — administration.

Ms RIGBY — Could I just add to that point as well, because I think it is really valid. Whether they be young people or students of any age bracket, I guess, I think they certainly have a role in discussions not as to what professional development they feel their teacher or lecturer or whoever needs, but as to what is missing. That might then give government or the provider the opportunity to say, ‘Well, this is what our’ — because they are our clientele in the essence. So if our clientele is identifying a particular need that is not being met, perhaps professional development is what we can implement to identify or rectify that gap or that need. Perhaps that then is the opportunity as well for the clientele to stipulate what is working really well so we know what is working well to then run down again for professional development, making sure that all our educators are implementing what is working well already. I think there is a twofold purpose there of using the clientele of all these services to provide some feedback also.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETT — We actually do that at the moment. Just this last week all government schools received their student attitudes to school survey results. The student attitudes to school survey does in fact survey many of the things that you have just spoken about — their connection to school and the community, their connection to each other, their connection to learning and so on. Whilst I hear you, I think we have gone some of the way to listening to that student voice. I agree with you that the student voice is incredibly important.

The CHAIR — We certainly gained that message clearly this morning. The issue, though, that has been mentioned here and that has been raised regularly by teachers is the time issue. There is so much information or so many things that teachers are meant to be across. While a key part of the focus of professional development might be associated with ensuring that the goals that they have as teachers are being responded to in appropriate ways by their students and that they are making the linkages that they hope to, there is a whole range of other issues in terms of teachers expanding their knowledge base in a range of areas — whether it be directly to do with subject area, the challenges of IT or dealing with the challenges of the emotional side of the kids they are teaching — which are not part of direct teaching roles. That is going to be a challenge. This inquiry is not going to know how to deal with time. There was a suggestion that there needed to be more student-free days. I do not know whether anybody else has suggestions about how the time the teachers have can be utilised more effectively so they can focus on those key things. You have got good information, whether it be a student survey coming in or something else, but how do you make sure you take hold of that and deliver a good result out of that?

Ms GOODBOURN — As I said before, I do not think teaching is any different to any other industry, and everyone is time poor. Everyone does need to keep up with the massive change that is going on within their industry, and you were talking before about that. I think we need to look at what other industries are doing to address that within their industry. I suspect that we will find that everybody is clamouring for some way of making time that is not there. That is why I mentioned that ‘just in time, just for me, just enough’ type of staff development, because I understand that there are a variety of things that can be done, and I take your point that at different stages in your career you need different types of things. I think we are trying to answer the question with one answer, and I suspect we are not going to do that. As you said, you are not going to fix the time. Have you thought of looking at what is happening in staff development in other industries that are facing the same issues?

The CHAIR — Certainly a big part of what we do as a committee is a lot of research into what is happening in other places and in other circumstances, so that comes into it as well as the direct contact and the direct submissions we have. That will all have a bearing on our final result.

Ms GOODBOURN — And then we spread it to every industry, is that right?

The CHAIR — We go some way down that track. Jim, you wanted to add something?

Mr DELANEY — Yes. Maybe somebody has pointed it out, but there is a little nuance here. The letter I received talked about the delivery of professional learning. I do not know that professional learning can be delivered; opportunities can be. Part of the debate needs to be around the very nature of learning itself: how do people learn and under what conditions do people learn? I believe from the years I have been around schools that the very way that teachers’ work is structured and organised can in fact be an impediment to professional learning. It is incredibly busy work, and all the time you are dealing with little crises. If you are a prep teacher or a year 12 coordinator, you are responding to the immediate demands of people around you, whether they be students, parents

or teachers, and that can in fact become part of the environment that impedes your own learning and your own reflection.

I have noticed that some of the work the education department is doing in the restructure of education in Bendigo is really based around the very nature of what is teaching and learning and how you can embed into the teaching and learning process opportunities for ongoing learning by the teachers. The very organisation of work, I think, is a critical issue. I do not know what other people think.

Ms FENELON — I have a slight twist on the same point, really. I think there are leadership issues here for all of us in the design and provision of professional education for teachers, because we have tended to immediately start talking about the actual teaching and professional development related to learning and teaching. But if you actually look at the professional development that teachers in all situations get, they also get professional development in a lot of compliance matters, occupational health and safety, student administration processes and so on. If you actually add up all the time that is done in any sort of professional development, it is more than that just related to learning and teaching. So I think there is, as I said, a leadership issue here about the proportion of time allocated to non-pedagogical PD and the rest.

Assoc. Prof. COOPER — My point was picking up on different phases of people's careers, but I am interested in the Scottish model, where they do not expect teachers in their first two years of teaching to have a full-time teaching load. They have not very much but an hour or two less teaching load in their first couple of years where they could meet together and support each other. I think that is a lovely model, because I think going into a full-time teaching load is very taxing. So in the first three years, I would suggest, there could be a slightly modified teaching load for people to do that mentoring with each other and support around professional learning.

Assoc. Prof. McNAMARA — If I could just follow on, I think what Jim and others have brought forward is that the underpinning of sustainability is the value of what professional development is. As you said, if we look at what is being put into compliance as one aspect of professional learning as opposed to that learning which is a part of the teacher's profession of teaching and learning, then I think we would find that the way in which teachers value it is the way in which they are going to put in that time. No matter how time poor they are, whether it be associated with a one-day, an ongoing, a degree program or whatever else is, it is the value that is put there, not only by the teachers but by the society or the community in particular, which is where community engagement — and I suppose that is one of our fortes that we put forward — becomes extremely important in partnerships in particular too, that if it is simply something that we are ticking boxes for to say teachers have another thing that is poured into their expertise, it is not going to be taken on board.

If it is something in which they see that the value is ongoing, then it is going to be sustainable. I think there are models out there which show that. Some of them will work for a small variety, and some of them will work for a much larger community. I think it is a case of one size fits all is not the way we should be looking at the future.

The CHAIR — That is a good point. I will follow on by asking Leigh or others here: when you are working with teachers, what is the best way of identifying the individual needs of a teacher or the best options for them in terms of professional learning?

Mr MITCHELL — That is one of the biggest concerns we have. As part of its flagship the ministry put out PoLT, principles of learning and teaching. That was probably one of the most effective tools for helping teachers identify where their strengths were and the areas they needed to develop. I suppose that is one thing we are looking at with regard to next year as a means of really focusing in. We accept that children learn in different ways, and we try to cater to those.

One of the things that we are looking at next year is that we will try to get people into classrooms to model with teachers, to support the teachers, mentor the teachers and coach the teachers as they are moving along. Then you have the whole concept of a professional learning team which does not focus on how the school sports are going to be running, because it is not a general staff meeting, where I think a lot of our teachers waste a lot of time. It actually focuses on the theory, the understanding and the critical knowledge that teachers need to understand about what was modelled, the coaching that was taking place and the mentoring that was taking place.

If we can bring it down to a very personal level, then we have a fairly good chance of actually being able to take that teacher's capacity and extend it out. At the end of the day all the professional development we have undertaken needs to lead to some sort of improvement to student outcomes. I am just wondering, of all the evaluations and so

on that actually get undertaken over the years with regard to professional development, whether that really has ever been a factor that we have looked at. If it is not leading to improved student outcomes, then basically you are wasting your time.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — I do not think there is any doubt that the education department schools now all have to have a strategic plan and an annual implementation plan, but that is directed towards improving student outcomes. Not only that, but teachers' professional development through the school is also to be directed at improving student outcomes.

I am probably telling you something that you already know, I am not sure, but when schools develop a four-year strategic plan they are looking at the five or six forms of data, such as parent data, student data, teacher feedback, and performance data of course. They look at all that data and ask 'Where is it we need to head?'. Then as staff members seek professional development it is important that the leadership team at that school is having conversations with staff about having their professional development link in with the strategic plan for the school. So there is a strategic focus and not just a case of thinking, say, 'I feel like doing something on student wellbeing, or maths, just for the heck of it'.

I feel there is a real push now. In my position in school improvement I feel I am certainly working with schools that are not reaching performance targets in really directing their energies there. We are going some way to looking at that.

Prof. ANGUS — I think that emphasis on outcomes is fine, provided what is covered under your definition of 'outcomes'. I think, for instance, the kind of work that Mary-Jane Rigby is dealing with is picking up people where a whole range of different outcomes are actually not being enhanced much by the schools, not just academic outcomes. One of the problems of talking about outcomes is that it has tended to mean academic outcomes, and that can have quite a narrowing effect, unless we get clear what we mean by outcomes in that broader sense.

Mr DELANEY — I think a couple of things have been covered. I think the notion of leadership has been referred to. I think school improvement and teacher learning are dependent to some extent on a leadership culture where schools look to higher performance. You cannot have professional learning without proper appraisal processes which are essentially collaborative, involving the staff member as well as other colleagues. Another outcome of appraisal of professional learning is building a sense of optimism and celebration and recognition for things that are well done. One of the things we suffer from as professionals is that people do not know the excellent work that has been done within the school and the school community more broadly. Part of it is that we to learn the positive reasons as well as the deficit reasons.

Ms DOWNEY — Can I just talk about the example of a something that we have developed through Strengthening Generations in collaboration with Sebastopol College and Mount Clear College called SSMART ASSK? The network is called SSMART — surviving substance misuse and alcohol risk taking; and the program itself is called ASSK — alcohol substance survival knowledge. We take students at year 9 level through 21 Arms Nightclub and with the police, the alcohol and other drug workers and the St John Ambulance officers we give them a 100 minute double-period program on the amount of alcohol in drinks, binge drinking, what happens if your drink is spiked and how to put your friends into recovery position. Then we have a skit team showing the kids enactments of scenarios that happen when you have drunk too much. Kids are dying from drinking too much. This is reality and this is what kids are dealing with, as well as their families and communities.

That is what I am talking about when I talk about communities being involved with schools and developing things to address all the needs of our communities and young people. Having teachers involved in that as professional development in terms of the learning outcomes side, the lessons — all that stuff is brilliant because that is what the schools want, but we are fitting in to work with them, and it is working really well. I think those sorts of examples and those sorts of models are really powerful when you get to outcomes that may just save some lives, I suppose.

The CHAIR — One of the other issues I would like to raise now is an issue that has been raised at a previous hearing about the incentive for teachers to take on professional development, and the need for greater recognition of the work they do. It has been suggested that pay levels, for example, should relate to various levels of professional learning, but I am interested in getting some feedback as to whether that is an issue and how it could

best be addressed — that is, recognition of professional learning that teachers undertake. Does anybody want to take that one up?

Ms FENELON — The starting point has to be the award classifications that teachers are working under. I would suggest in our context in higher education that your success or not of gaining promotion can in part reflect the professional development you have done, whereas in TAFE it is just time serving. I think there is not just the one answer in terms of pay.

Prof. ANGUS — I would agree with that. Perhaps the recognition should not simply be for the amount of professional development received or engaged in, but the ways in which the teacher has taken the benefit of that professional development to work with colleagues, and showing the results of the professional development rather than the fact of simply having just done the professional development. The only thing I can think of to use is the award structure, and a level in there that is a kind of a promotion position. It is a very short hierarchy in the career path.

The CHAIR — But you are also then saying, Lawrie, that effective professional learning that teachers undertake makes them feel better about the job they are doing.

Prof. ANGUS — Yes, that, but also that they do something as a result of the professional learning. If they have been upskilled, and that may be in a collective process of working with their colleagues and implementing new programs, the test of the effectiveness of that professional learning is then the ongoing work in keeping this new program innovative and recognising that there has been an improvement; they have contributed to the profession as a result of their professional development.

Ms FENELON — Maybe what we are saying is that the reward has got to be tied to changing teaching practice rather than to the amount of time. We all know PD junkies who go to anything that is on, because they like the opportunity to reflect and network, perhaps, but that does not actually ever change their practice. I think we need to think in terms of awards for changes in teaching practice, and these exist in some areas at the moment. Maybe it is a range of scholarships or things which actually enable people who have already shown that they have made changes to grow, and maybe help disseminate it through a sector, or a region, or a school or something. Something like a mini sabbatical where you pay them to give them time to do something with the change they have made.

Mr JAKOB — From an organisational perspective I think our challenge is that the system seems to be so focused on delivering outputs that it does not enable an opportunity to have what we would call effective organisational development happening through learning and application. Most organisations are saying now that it is not just about going away and being taught something but that it is actually doing the application and learning process as you go through. I think Virginia was saying that in perhaps another way one of the contemplations we have got is that probably we are seeing a need to establish a formal environment for that to occur, which is our institute for professional and organisational learning.

Not only are there support mechanisms to identify the sorts of learning that we need to do, but opportunities to put practical tasks or projects or whatever into that so that people can come out of their day-to-day work, go into a project or a program, learn, develop, put something on the table and then go back and apply it in the institution. To some degree that would need to be linked to perhaps staff progression and development overall, so that there is that relationship between doing the continuous learning activities and the development of the organisation — and not just me as an individual taking on a learning opportunity and another piece of paper and another piece of paper and another piece of paper. I think it was said clearly before that it has to lead to better outcomes at the end of the day.

From our organisation's perspective we see that the pressures within the actual teaching and learning environment will probably not enable that to occur unless some other intervention is put in. To take that one step further, perhaps to the government, in your purchasing methodologies for the system are you constraining it from doing that particular type of practice, and do you have to put in initiatives, not just through strategic plans — because that is my part of the business, and we all know the hopes and desires we have for those things — to encourage that practice to occur and then reward good practice?

Mr BRANDENBURG — It might be just outside the bounds of what we are really talking about — professional development — but I think there needs to be the celebration of the profession. You can talk about salary, and you read in the papers the comparison between Victorian teachers and New South Wales teachers. You

see all that, and that is terribly important, because that is livelihood and it is the way that you support your own children et cetera. For what it is worth, my advice to government is basically to celebrate the profession, honour it, encourage it, develop it, and recognise the fact that teachers, no matter if they are kindergarten teachers or university professors, are all part of a profession that is intrinsically important to our society. I think that sometimes teachers cop bad press, because it could be outcome driven — because the supervision in the playground was not up to scratch, or whatever. Teachers are extremely professional people who, I think, should be celebrated.

Prof. ANGUS — I would also add that maybe the current minister might be asked to think really carefully about the publishing of the league tables kind of results and to look at some of the research on the effect of that in places like England before she steps boldly into that arena.

The CHAIR — Okay, fair point.

Ms DOWNEY — Sorry, what was that?

The CHAIR — The point was about the publishing of the league tables, where schools are in comparison to each other in terms of the listed outcomes, and the effect of that within the schools.

Prof. ANGUS — I suspect that almost everybody around this table would be very concerned about that prospect.

The CHAIR — Following on from that, is there also this issue? One of the messages that has come out today is that effective PD often happens where the school at the local level and the teacher is involved in planning those activities. Is there a problem that needs to be directed back to the education department in that it should not clutter this with top-down programs? They may be well intentioned and may be good, but if they are too strongly directed from above — like VELs or others that keep coming on — are they therefore impinging upon other opportunities for good professional development that might be more beneficial? I do not know what people's views are about that. That is the sort of thing that appears to be coming out.

Ms FENELON — There has got to be a balance, though, doesn't there, Geoff?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Ms FENELON — There are high-level government strategic policy areas, such as retention at school, where you might support statewide initiatives, there are curriculum developments and there are compliance issues. For example, it strikes me at the moment, from my experience and that of friends and acquaintances, that teachers are now expected to be able to understand and recognise the symptoms of almost every health issue that a child might have. It is balance. And then there is the profession of teaching — the scholarship of teaching — and having time to think and grow in that respect in the actual profession.

The CHAIR — Yes. That is probably a fair point. That is good. It is the balance that needs to be in there.

Mr MITCHELL — Government initiatives have sometimes taken away the very goals that schools have actually set themselves for what they wish to achieve over a period of time. I think sometimes the knee-jerk response to something that actually comes out from a government initiative takes away the complete learning focus that the school has set up for itself. I think that has a detrimental effect in the long run, especially when schools in Victoria are obliged to comply with not only state government but also federal government initiatives as they see fit to bring them in.

Ms RIGBY — I would just like to add to that as well that with state and federal government initiatives for community-based programs to enter into schools and join partnerships, often if there has not been consideration in the future planning at those particular schools for that to happen, it is very difficult to get into the schools once you receive that funding to start those wheels moving. Coming from community development backgrounds and principles, we are certainly there to support the programs that state and federal governments are implementing; however, it is often very difficult to put those things into schools given the time barriers and time constraints and where they actually fit with that curriculum at that time.

In terms of when those initiatives are coming out and coming forward, perhaps there needs to be some consideration as to the time of year that schools are looking at putting their curriculums together for the future

12 months, 4 years or whatever it needs to be, so that it actually does fit in and tie in with when the funding becomes available so that you can work with what is there.

Ms DOWNEY — A bit more coordination.

The CHAIR — What issues have we not covered?

Mr ELASMAR — You mentioned online learning before, Maxine.

Assoc. Prof. COOPER — Yes.

Mr ELASMAR — What do you want to tell us about it? Are there any weaknesses in it or any strengths in it?

Assoc. Prof. COOPER — I think there are strengths in it for people who are time poor and have family responsibilities and a whole lot of other personal and professional things that are hard to balance. There are some people who would be able to be part of a learning community who could perhaps do some face-to-face work in their schools but could not do everything else, so they could do some of that work online, keep in contact with other teachers and keep in contact with new ideas that are coming out more from a distance than necessarily face to face. I would think there is enough technology available in schools now to do a lot more of those sorts of interactive online whiteboard-communication processes that could be encouraging for some teachers to maintain their passion and their love of teaching through working in their own ways a little bit more.

The CHAIR — Is there ongoing research into the effectiveness of e-learning opportunities?

Assoc. Prof. COOPER — There certainly is, yes. I do not know whether anybody else wants to comment?

Assoc. Prof. McNAMARA — In both a worldwide capacity and in Australia there has been since the 1980s, Geoff, and it continues now.

Prof. ANGUS — I think, Sue, you have done some of that work, and one of the important issues also has been identifying ways in which the recognised weaknesses of IT and web-based learning compared with face-to-face learning can be compensated for in other ways, so that even if you do not get the full richness, you can get something very similar to it. A lot of that kind of work has been particularly helpful.

Assoc. Prof. McNAMARA — The notion of flexible learning in the online communities, as Maxine said, has got a lot going for it. It does depend a lot on the personalities and individual learning styles that go with them, which are coming up through schools. Victoria has been doing it since the 1980s when it had the RA3 agreements. It led the world in those kinds of things. The notion of the technology continues, and it is dependent on the pedagogy, or the andragogy, if it is adults — whoever it is working with it — as to the effectiveness of it. But, yes, it can work, and it can work extremely well. We have had those examples throughout the world, and we have led the world in Australia in it, too. But we need to be very careful about the expectations that go on and the outcomes that are wanted too, because it is not as simple as just putting the technology in there and off we go. There is a lot more to it than that.

The CHAIR — But it does represent an opportunity for more remote schools to ensure that they get equal access to professional — —

Assoc. Prof. McNAMARA — Undoubtedly. Yes, it does.

Ms FENELON — Sometimes we use language in different ways. Some people say flexible delivery and actually just mean online delivery. When I say ‘flexible delivery’ I mean choice. What we need is choice for different learning styles for a different person’s circumstances for different time opportunities.

Ms WAGHORNE — I think that is a good point. It is not only for people who are at a distance, it is for people who need that flexibility for other reasons around their working life or their personal life. We need to be careful that we do not talk about online being just about distance. I understand that you are not, but I think that sometimes comes through in discussions.

Mr BRANDENBURG — I know that two of the Victorian teacher associations in IT, VITTA and ICTV, are both doing a project at the moment with rural and remote schools in Victoria on the delivery of online learning. I know one of them is going to speak to the inquiry.

The CHAIR — Good.

Mr BRANDENBURG — That is ongoing at the moment.

The CHAIR — We will be interested to find out. The last issue I still have in my mind, which Maxine has raised of course as part of the inquiry reference, is the gender issue associated with professional development. Do you want to make any further comments? And others around here might have some expertise to add in terms of what the challenges are what special issues our committee might look at addressing to deal with that and to respond.

Assoc. Prof. COOPER — My understanding is that a large proportion of teachers are women who have a whole range of personal and professional issues. I hope their voices are heard enough for the sorts of concerns and needs they have, both for their professional learning but also to have that engagement with the sorts of knowledge bases, the sorts of understandings about the pressures on boys and girls in schools.

There are a whole lot of gender issues that could be teased out, and I do think there could be more professional development around the pressures on young people and the engagement of young people and the engagement of girls and the engagement of boys. Because there is a lot of overlap, but there are also some issues where there are specific needs. I think gender is something that does need to be teased out by listening to both boys and girls in all different sorts of schools and listening to the men and the women who are teachers and their own particular needs. It seems to me we should not hide from a lot of issues that are around, whether we are constructed as men or women in our society.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — May I comment?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — In my experience running professional development for the department it has come to my attention certainly that we obviously do not meet the needs of our male teachers in the sorts of professional development that we provide. Ninety-five per cent of the 1500 people who attend professional development for the Teacher Education Network are women, so that indicates that there is certainly a deficit in the model that we have, and that is serious.

The other point to make is that 92 per cent of that same figure are other than secondary teachers. So secondary teachers access very little professional development through the teacher education network. It is indicative of a lot of things. I believe it is indicative of different time pressures. There is something different happening in those schools. I have a secondary background and a primary background, and I understand it, but I am no closer to addressing it. But I know that it is an issue.

The CHAIR — Any other comments in that area?

Mr JAKOB — Just one anecdote, Geoff, and I think it may be parallel to what you are talking about. I have had some experience through my wife being a primary teacher. Her colleagues have come through an era that was pre the Victorian Institute of Teaching, and they have enjoyed the benefit of maternity processes which were there before but they have found a barrier to coming back, with the gap and the continuing learning and getting back into the system. I would suspect that there is a barrier to re-entry. In a number of cases that I know of, that has turned people away from returning to their careers. It is a whole-of-life thing. If you want people to spend their careers in and to have opportunities to disengage from the system, which I think is a good opportunity — my family certainly benefited from it — and you want people to re-engage with the system, which is now more professionally constrained, perhaps, are those barriers and are we using times of disengagement as opportunities to redevelop and re-engage people into the system? I do not know the answer to that.

The CHAIR — I would like to think that there is some research out there that we can link into to ensure that there is some action.

Mr JAKOB — You have a skills shortage. You do not want to lose skilled people.

The CHAIR — That is right.

Ms HOWDEN-CLARNETTE — And ultimately the regional office of the department of education has a responsibility to provide beginning and returning to — —

Mr JAKOB — Yes. I think that it is coming, but I think it is an important part of that professional development and engagement process.

The CHAIR — Are there any other issues that you want to share with us in this last bit of time? Those of you who need to go can continue and for those who want to stop and have some afternoon tea and share anything with us informally, that would be a good opportunity. Thank you very much for your time here this afternoon. It has been very helpful to us; we have covered a lot of different areas. I hope we can present a good report and get some good outcomes as a result of that.

Committee adjourned.