

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian schools

Melbourne — 29 April 2014

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Ms K. Seddon, coordinator, Victorian Student Representative Council;
Ron, Lalor Secondary College; and
Tess, Templestowe College.

The CHAIR — I welcome Tess from Templestowe College, Ron from Lalor Secondary College and Krista Seddon, coordinator of the Victorian Student Representative Council. It is fantastic to have you here. I will firstly go through some formalities with you. It is important for me to stress that we want to have a really good, interactive session and to hear your issues. We want you to relax, be forthcoming and understand that we are genuinely endeavouring to get to the real issues and the things that really strike you as individuals, both through your study experience and also in your role as representatives and conduits for us. You have a raft of responsibilities in coming before us today. We will try to make it as relaxed and interactive an environment as we possibly can so that we can derive the benefits of your knowledge and experience and you can feel you have made a contribution and can leave here with a spring in your step.

We will now move into the formal part of the process. I formally welcome you to the public hearing of the Education and Training Committee's inquiry into approaches to homework in Victorian schools. The evidence that you give here today — that is, your conversation with us and how you respond to our questions — is covered by parliamentary privilege, so you can say things here that you would not normally say outside. I am not giving you carte blanche to say anything or use any form of language that you like — it must still be respectful — but it is a special privilege that is extended to you while you are sitting in this room. That privilege does not extend to you if you go on to talk about this outside this formal setting.

You may notice that we have two representatives from Hansard here today. They record everything that is said. You will be given a copy of the transcript in about two weeks. You can correct any typographical errors but you cannot change the context or the syntax. We invite you to start by making some opening comments and then we will put some questions to you. We will be referring to you as Tess and Ron for the purpose of the record.

TESS — We are delighted to be here. It is quite awesome an achievement, and we are very proud to represent all students from across Victoria. We are the Victorian Student Representative Council, the peak body representing secondary school students from around Victoria. We are a democratic network of SRCs that represent the views of students at every level of decision making. Pretty much we have students from all over Victoria, so it is cool that you are here representing different areas of Victoria too, because we have people from rural Victoria to the eastern areas, and we try to represent as much as we can. We are very happy to be here today.

One thing we did before we came was that we conducted a survey of around 30 students from years 8 to 12. Students came from 25 different schools, including Catholic, independent and government. From that survey we got many views from different students at the different stages in their learning and the way they perceive homework and how they think it influences their learning and what they benefit most from it.

One of the responses we got from the survey we did was the disciplined form of homework and the contrast between secondary and primary students. We found that, along with parents and their input into homework, students who are in primary school — these are the views of secondary students. They said that when they were in primary school there was more input from the family and more assistance in that, but once they graduated into the secondary school years it became more of an independent form of homework and the learning was more about disciplining themselves and preparing them for the workforce and the future, to have the abilities to respond to work that needs to be taken home and further worked on — like emails and reports. It is a good response. We found that people do understand that homework is essential and a good part of learning.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for undertaking to develop and conduct that survey. We certainly do appreciate that, especially that you got so many schools making a contribution, so I commend you on that initiative. Ron, do you have some opening remarks as well?

RON — Yes. As well as the workload for homework in high school increasing — although homework is minimal for primary school students, it should be noted that the workload should increase as they get to higher year levels, namely, grades 5 and 6, to prepare for years 7 and 8, and through years 7 and 8 they should prepare even more for their senior years through years 11 and 12 or VCE as the main stage of their learning.

The CHAIR — They are very interesting comments, Ron. I would just like to ask you a question around that. Do you feel that in terms of the school's approach — your primary school's approach to homework in your primary years — that you were ill prepared for the transition and the step up into what the expectations of secondary life were as a student?

RON — My experience? I believe my school is in transition as well as to that. I was prepared for later year levels. It was basic worksheets from grades 2 and 3, which later developed into more projects that required criteria that needed to be filled in from, say, grades 4 to 6 — projects that had long deadlines, so about two to three weeks. That is enough time to do enough, but as I moved to high school it kind of shortened down, as there is a tight schedule in high school and primary school.

The CHAIR — So from that, you had to make an adjustment as to how you manage your time when you were not at school?

RON — Yes.

The CHAIR — Have you developed time management skills as a result?

RON — I have, yes.

The CHAIR — What would be the general opinion that you have gleaned from your surveys in terms of Ron's comments in terms of years 5 and 6 having more focus on being organised around homework?

TESS — Some students feel that they did not have as much preparation. They said that in the later years of primary school — grades 5 and 6 — it should have been almost as if it was like an integration into the senior years. I remember that when I was in year 7 it was a bit of a surprise. It was very different and the way of learning in secondary school is very different to primary school in many ways, although there are similarities. Of the students who answered the survey, the majority said that there is more work needed in the later years of primary school to gradually warm you up and get you ready for secondary school so it is not such a shock. It can be a very confronting change in learning, and if there is not that gradual step into it, it can be hard on some students. While some find it easy, others need more of a gradual step into it.

The CHAIR — Is it part of the challenge that when you are in primary school you largely have one teacher and when you go into secondary school your experience is that you have specialty teachers? You can have quite a number of teachers across specialty subject areas. Is that one of the differences, that you have to learn a bit more about the ways of a variety of teachers all at once, as well as their expectations? Is that part of it?

TESS — I guess it is in some ways because especially for some students they find that it takes time to warm up to the way a teacher teaches. If they are used to having one teacher and then they are given six, it can be, as I said before, confronting to warm up to it. It is something that takes a bit of time and that is why after the junior years of high school everyone gets the hang of the flow, but having so many teachers can sometimes be a bit of an overwhelming shock to younger students, especially in year 7. From what the survey said, I am guessing the way to stop that is to be prepared for that. In some ways I guess that could be getting students used to more than one face. It is a lot to do with social networking and being able to communicate on the right level with the different people that you meet. I am guessing that is why some students react differently to others when they are confronted with more than one teacher.

The CHAIR — And the teacher's expectations and some sort of competition between the volume that the teachers give you. I am going to invite Colin Brooks to put some questions to you, including about yourself?

Mr BROOKS — One of things we have learnt from the experts and academics that have been here over yesterday and today is about parents having too much involvement. I have children at both high school and primary school level, and I plead guilty to the offence of hassling them to do their homework — 'Mia, do your homework'. Wanting to help them to make sure that they get their homework

handed in is a bit of a no-no. It is not really helpful according to the research that points to the effectiveness of homework.

I noticed in your submission that you included a section on the engagement of parents in student learning. There are some interesting comments, and I just want to ask you for some personal observations or to reflect on the survey that you have done, which is really useful, about what the survey found was useful interaction from parents, both in terms of assisting to get homework done, or where it is negative and not of assistance.

TESS — Many students thought that when they studied at home homework did not engage their parents — that is coming from secondary school students. I guess when you talk about the constant nagging to get homework done that can sometimes put out the fire of any real desire to get it done, because if it is a self-achievement and self-discipline to do it, then you know you are doing it for you and you are not doing it for your parents. When the parents are there constantly asking to help or telling you to do it, it can sometimes flatten any enthusiasm towards the task given.

The CHAIR — Ron, do you have a comment on that aspect of things?

RON — Usually homework is specific to the individual, and the parents' involvement may be some small assistance but only when it is really needed, in a way. Currently parents' involvement is mainly for the student who needs it, or may not need it.

The CHAIR — Have you always felt that way, or is it only as you have got older and more confident and perhaps even self-disciplined? Is that a reasonable thing to say at this point?

RON — Yes. As well as my parents, I usually look up to my older brother, who has developed his own way of disciplining himself. As well as relying on parents he relies on himself and maybe his mates for help. I have asked him for help too. Parents' involvement is not really an issue for me in my experience. I only asked them for help when I was much younger. In primary school, you may need parents' help when you need to build something or you have written work and you need some further knowledge from a different source than what you are using.

The CHAIR — You spoke about building things. Do you mean little models, science experiments and putting a few wires together?

RON — Yes, more practical work — not just in school but at home too, which our parents may get involved in. As I said before, it is usually specific to the individual how they do it and how they approach it.

The CHAIR — Good.

Mrs MILLAR — It is absolutely wonderful that you are here with us today, because it is very important as part of this inquiry that we hear from students. They are the ones who are doing the homework, so we are particularly interested in your perspective this morning on how you find homework. There are a couple of aspects that I am especially interested in. With the respondents to your survey, did you find there were significant differences between schools, and potentially between regions or types of schools, in terms of the amount of homework that was being set for students?

Ms SEDDON — No, we did not have that much data analysis of regions, so to speak. It was more an engagement tool on our behalf through our social media platform to get students engaged with this topic. I would hesitate to say that we have comprehensive answers to that.

Mrs MILLAR — Thank you. The other question I have is in relation to the balance between doing homework and extracurricular activities. It depends what you define as homework, I suppose — whether you regard doing training for sports, and dance and swimming classes and those types of things, as part of your homework or not. But did you receive much input on the balance between homework, extracurricular

activities and family life? I notice it is touched upon in your report. Did you receive much feedback on students' expectations around this balance?

TESS — Yes, we did get quite a bit of input on that. The majority of students said that in some schools the homework load can be a bit too much, and without the balance between social life, the family and study, it can completely throw out the wellbeing of the student and can lead to stress. Connecting with family is very important, especially when you are growing up and maturing. You do not want to lose that connection with family. Some of the responses we got were that sometimes the balance between family life and school load was thrown off, and that depended on different subjects as well. Family and their input into everyday life is sometimes not labelled as important as homework, when in many ways it is.

The CHAIR — Ron, do you have an opinion on that?

RON — Sometimes commitments can have a restriction on your life and, as Tess said, that can throw out the balance off your life and your schedule. If you focus more on your school you may be forgetting about your family and your extracurricular activities, which you have chosen to do. But if you have no time for it, there is no point in choosing the extracurricular activity in the first place.

Ms SEDDON — Just to quickly add to that, we hold a state conference called congress every year, which has around 100 students, and they vote on whatever are the top priorities for students in Victoria. Last year one of the resolutions passed was around getting credit for extracurricular activities. Students were really adamant that the extracurricular activities they were doing were benefiting their broader learning. They were looking to get recognition at the VCE level for those activities, and I think that plays into your question about that balance.

Mrs MILLAR — I think it does too. Were there any findings in respect of participation in extracurricular activities assisting with school performance overall?

TESS — Not in this survey in particular. It was not one of the main focus points. But I believe that extracurricular activity improves the wellbeing of the individual student and it can motivate them to do better in school and in life in general. It does not have to be any particular extracurricular activity but without that there is no teambuilding and no socialising. If you are lacking that and it is all study, study, study, then you are blocking out the world around you and that can flatten your health and wellbeing as well as your ability to socialise.

RON — You feel like you are stopping yourself from experiencing new things that you may need later in life. Obviously you will have the experiences in school, but sometimes you may not be able to apply them to the outside world.

Mrs MILLAR — Do students generally feel that in setting homework schools are sufficiently mindful of the balance between the amount of homework set and extracurricular and family time?

TESS — We really did not get a straight answer to that question, but students pretty much felt that sometimes the load can be very difficult to balance. It depends on the individual and the classes they choose to complete in their schooling and especially when it gets to years like VCE it is sometimes hard to find that balance. It is very important, and as one of the students said, homework can take away the precious time you need to spend with family, friends and on doing extracurricular activity.

Mrs MILLAR — The reference in that section to 1 hour per subject, is that 1 hour per week or per day? Does having an average of 1 hour per subject restrict other areas of life such as social life, outside school activities, family and other non-school-related occupations?

TESS — I think it means 1 hour per subject per week. My school says that you should try to do at least 1 hour per subject per week just to make sure you keep up with the class and on revision to make sure you do not fall behind on anything.

Mrs MILLAR — How many subjects would you typically be doing?

TESS — I do six subjects in school and one out of school.

Mrs MILLAR — You are in year 12?

TESS — Yes, I am doing year 12 subjects as well, so it is a bit different for me, but yes, you need to find that balance. You also need to do a little bit more homework when you are in year 12 than you would have done in your younger years just to keep up.

The CHAIR — Ron, have you got a comment on that?

RON — I am the same as Tess. Even though I have not jumped into VCE completely yet each subject usually brings around the same workload, which can mean a higher amount of time spent at home doing the work than on other activities and your family and anything else that you have in your life that you need to do.

The CHAIR — Have you got any information that you can share with us about people for whom life and their relationship with their family might be difficult? Let us say the family has a retail business. They might have to pitch in to help with the family business, they might have to supplement the family income by having a part-time job or they may have to take care of younger siblings. These sorts of things can cause a lot of stress for young people in how they accommodate a number of things as well as what they need to do for their own study. Do you have any comments or information on that, any sort of feedback?

TESS — It does depend a lot on the individual and the circumstances of their family. I know some who, as you said for example, have to care for their younger siblings and that can be a large distraction from the other priorities they may have, whether they are extracurricular activities or school-related homework. Especially with time management and everything, it can influence that and whether you do stay up-to-date. That really depends on the individual rather than the whole, because it is quite hard to speak for everyone when it is only a small percentage that have to deal with that. But yes, that can be a struggle for some, and I have met people in the past who have had things like working for the family business and having younger siblings that did result in them having to discipline themselves and find the balance between family, work and homework. Yes, sometimes that can contribute to the struggle and stress of all the homework that is required to be completed by the school.

The CHAIR — Ron, do you have a comment on that?

RON — I have younger siblings that I have to take care of every day.

Ms SEDDON — Does that impact on the time you have for homework and that kind of thing?

RON — I guess they are mature in their own way for me to not — I still look after them, but they know what to do and how to keep me well balanced in a social way.

The CHAIR — Krista, do you have a comment on that?

Ms SEDDON — Yes. A lot of the students we work with — we have a team of 15 students on the VicSRC executive. The majority are juggling part-time work as well as the VicSRC commitment, which is a huge external commitment, plus a full-time student load. I think of one student in particular who is juggling these three things plus family commitments as well. I think the more involved he is, it is almost like his maturity level increases. With the level of responsibility, his level of maturity and his commitment to his studies has increased. I guess I am trying to say that we find the more commitments students have, in a way, the more their responsibility, maturity and commitment increases because of that. Not that that is necessarily a good thing; it does not mean it necessarily allows them time to focus on what should be the focus in schools, but often we see students stepping up to manage these different hats that they have to manage and these different work-life challenges.

The CHAIR — I think we have two splendid examples with our representatives here today, Ron and Tess, in terms of how you accommodate everything that you need to be as a family member, as part of a

school community and as a student, and you have taken it to another level of responsibility and representation. Perhaps we can anticipate other leanings towards leadership roles in the future. I have to commend you on how you have accommodated all that.

Ms SEDDON — Absolutely.

The CHAIR — It is a very special example.

Mr BROOKS — Getting down to the tin tacks about homework, my question sort of flows through some of the things that are in your submission. I am looking for either some advice from the survey you have done or just some personal reflections again, and that is on the balance between the amount of time that students are set homework, so how many hours you might have to spend on homework, compared to the value you think it provides you. Is it quality homework where you think you get a lot of benefit out of it or is it just time spent doing homework? I suppose my question is: do you think the quality of the homework could be improved so that you can get more out of it?

TESS — We had quite a big response saying that the majority of homework set was mainly revision questions. It is really pen to paper, book, very classroom-like homework. Students found that they did not get any teamwork or hands-on or outdoor aspects of learning in their homework, because the majority of the time spent on homework was on revision or questions. That resulted in students saying that there is not enough of a balance between the key things in homework — we put together a graph — being the importance of teamwork, hands-on and applied learning, I guess you could say more kinaesthetic learning, which again does depend on the individual.

But to answer your question, in some ways a lot of homework is very tiring because it is very repetitive. I feel there is not a balance between the hands-on and the teamwork. More interactive, social and outdoorsy kind of homework would be more beneficial to many students. Time spent on revision and just looking at a book can put students off. In some ways it can demotivate you and not encourage you to do the homework that is set, because, depending on the class, it is so much like school: read, answer question; read, answer question. It can be a very repetitive process and it is sometimes overwhelming. It is not as beneficial as, say, hands-on, outdoors, teamwork learning. There are so many more benefits to homework. The way a lot of schools do homework is lacking in benefit and could be vastly improved.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Ron, would you like to contribute now on the same topic?

RON — You pretty much spend more time preparing for an assessment, specific just to you, than actually socialising and interacting with others, which may be needed for future work in the workforce or anywhere else.

The CHAIR — Or just how you feel about yourself, how you are mixing with people and what you are learning about people in general. Is that what you mean?

RON — Yes.

The CHAIR — One thing I would like you both to focus on is how you feel when you respond by assiduously doing your homework. You are saying some of it is repetitious, and I am assuming that is underpinning what you have learnt in class. This is like a reinforcement and transferring that so you become unconsciously competent in that area. After you have done your bit on the homework front, when you go to school and tender that, what is the teacher's response and feedback to what you have done at home?

RON — From my different experiences, say, we have done the homework, it is: 'Let us check. Okay you have done it. All right, go back to your seat. You have learnt something new'. For us it is that we have to ask questions rather than them saying what we have done wrong. What we need to learn and improve on is not usually stated when we have completed the homework or whether we have done it or not.

The CHAIR — So you are saying, Ron, that in your experience you are not getting feedback on your homework. You have to be in the driver's seat.

Ms SEDDON — You have to ask the questions.

RON — Yes.

The CHAIR — Tess?

TESS — I guess in the past it has been important to do the majority of homework, but it has not been important for it to be recognised that you have done it, and that can demotivate you in doing it. If you are set a task but then it is not recognised that you have completed it, it is not as much of an accomplishment as it would have been if there was some sort of — it would not have to be a grading, but something like, 'Well done, you have completed it, that is an achievement in itself'. It is a good feeling when you have achieved something and you have done it right, and if you have not, you need to be able to go and talk to the teacher and feel comfortable with the feedback that you will get from the teacher.

Sometimes homework is meaningless in some ways because it is not set out to show you what is most important about it and why you are learning it. Sometimes what you have spent all this time working on is not relevant because it has not been set to a degree that is in-depth enough for you to be able to benefit most from the homework.

The CHAIR — Or perhaps even learn something that extends your knowledge or you can see it applied.

TESS — Yes.

The CHAIR — Have there been any instances — and I am not sure whether your survey covered this or not — where students felt that homework was given because things got derailed in the classroom in terms of coming and going or disruptive behaviour? Homework is set — and there might be one teacher who does not command the respect of the student cohort or it is something to do with the quality of teaching practice — and it is a way of catching up what should have been covered in the day.

RON — Speaking of disruptiveness or when you cannot get your class together, that usually becomes the set homework as well. When you have not learnt the things you need to learn in class, it usually becomes homework. Usually you will need the teacher to teach you this, but sometimes you just get left on your own, considering all that time wasted, and that time adds on to your own time for homework, which leads to restricting your life too.

TESS — Most students stated that any unfinished classwork can be homework and when given that, as Ron said, it is a whole bunch more added onto the workload. If the individual is a slower learner than someone who is much faster, the teachers tend not to realise how it affects those who have extracurricular activities and lots of things that they still need to do, and then have that homework on top of it. When there is no teacher there is not as much benefit to be gained from doing the homework because you do not have their response. You cannot say, 'Wait, have I done this right? Have I done this wrong? How can I do it properly?'. If they are not there to help you, it is very hard to do that.

That topic links into one of the resolutions that was one of the views from many of the students at congress last year. They concluded that they wanted more classwork to be able to be viewed from home.

Ms SEDDON — Like key teachings recorded.

TESS — Like filmed teaching, and then if you were absent for some reason, you could still see a private broadcast of them. You could take notes and it is a visual connection. Even though you are not in the classroom, it is the next best thing to connect to the teacher and then be able to write the notes, come back and get their feedback and ask questions about things you did not understand, instead of just missing that whole class and coming back completely confused.

I have found many times in the past that I have missed a class for an extracurricular activity or leadership roles or something and I have come back very confused. If you do not have the connection to your teacher or any feedback from your teacher or the ability to talk to them, it is very hard to know what you have missed and you find that you get very behind. That can affect the way an individual looks at school and homework.

Mr BROOKS — My question follows on from that. One of the issues we have been talking about is access to technology and the usefulness of technology in homework. What do you think the impact would be on a student whose family does not have access to the internet at home or devices that might be useful for education at home?

RON — It kind of restricts access to more resources on the internet and other online or electronic sources of information that may be needed, that the teacher may have asked you to look up or for your own benefit.

Mr BROOKS — If you do not have access at home, in your personal experience are there other options available — the school library, homework clubs, local community libraries and that sort of stuff? How do you think students might get around that?

RON — They may need to ask assistance from other students who are technology enabled, otherwise they may go to their local library or they may try to do everything by hand or pen and paper.

TESS — It can really affect the motivation to do the homework and to learn if you are the only one who does not have access to the technology needed. One example of this happened a couple of years ago when there was a student in my class who did not have internet at home. Everyone was asked to watch a broadcast or research something to bring back to the next class, and that student felt kind of excluded and as if they were not able to take part in that section of what we were learning because of a barrier as simple as technology and internet at home. They did not have that. That restricted any motivation to take part because there was that shame that they were not the same as everyone else and that they did not have the benefit of technology. One of the students in the survey said that technology is not to be feared, it is to be embraced and learnt. They said that the future of learning and homework should, in their view, be based on technology. That ties back into the individual and family circumstances and whether students are able to have that or not.

The CHAIR — Are you aware as to whether the person, who seems to have suffered as a result of this, had an alternative at the time? Were they able to go to the library, pop over to a friend's or have someone help them out?

TESS — I am not quite sure. I did not go into it, because after it happened it was simply fixed. I am not sure in the end whether she went to a friend's place or something. Yes, those resources were there. It was more that it was not the same as everyone else. Everyone else could do it at home, but she had to travel. It was as if she was not as lucky in some ways. For most students there are libraries nearby and there are friends. Among the most highly recommended resources are study groups because they allow students to work in a group and get feedback from each other. In that particular incident I am not exactly aware as to what she did, but I know that she did get it done somehow.

Ms SEDDON — One of our executive students is a regional-based student and does not have internet access at home. Our group communicates primarily online, and I know the majority of the students on our team receive communication from their schools via email a lot. I know that her school is supportive of the fact that she does not have internet at home. The assistant principal goes out of her way to allow her to go into the school on a Saturday to access the teleconference facilities, for example.

The CHAIR — That is good to hear.

Ms SEDDON — It is great, but at the same time we are in a world where we are into immediate communication, and there is no denying that without having internet access at home she is missing out on conversations that she could be a part of. It is really disadvantaging her.

RON — As an anecdote, from grade 6 to my junior years there were long periods of time when I did not have access to the internet. When I was given assignments that required research and bibliographies, I would spend time getting references and information rather than spending time with my friends and socialising. I would do more work at home based on resources that I had saved. If I did not have the resources I had saved, I would be disadvantaged in that I would not use that time as effectively as I usually would. I would have to spend more time getting resources at school than I would at home.

Ms MILLAR — This touches on some of the same areas, but I note the students hope that in future homework in Victorian schools will be more enjoyable and valuable. Tess, I know that you touched on a few possibilities for this, but I wonder if you have any other suggestions for us on how the Victorian school system makes homework more enjoyable.

TESS — I guess the response we got from this is that a lot of homework is revision, and that is repetitive, as I said earlier. I guess the response was that students want it to be more hands-on, interactive, stimulating and engaging for all the students, not just a particular few, because everyone learns very differently to each other. For some people questions and answers are great, but there should be the option for others, who find that would be easier for the information to sink in, of maybe videos — different forms of learning — to cover all aspects of the way students learn. From the response to the survey, a lot of students felt that it did not cover all aspects, it only covered the way some people learn, which is very pen to paper, and there should be more teamwork involved — outdoors and hands-on learning — so you learn different skills as well as those targeting the subject that you are learning.

RON — Obviously all students do not learn the same way, and it is more than just getting notes from a PowerPoint presentation. We can also get learning from, as Tess said, teamworking activities or other activities that may induce a better experience with homework and that are more enjoyable.

Ms MILLAR — Did any of the students raise examples of things that they found particularly worthwhile or engaging as alternative forms of homework?

Ms SEDDON — One example that has come up a lot in our discussions — and it does link with that congress resolution — is around having key teachings filmed. This was the no. 1 priority for students at congress. It was around the idea of the flipped classroom. A lot of students were saying, ‘If you did have access to those key teachings, then you could watch them at home’, and that was the homework, I suppose, that kind of learning. The idea is you then go back to school and have the discussions about it. Maybe it is not so like rote learning and is a bit more creative.

The CHAIR — So they come with a sense of anticipation and fascination — —

Ms SEDDON — They have the content.

The CHAIR — because somebody has set the scene on a topic that is going to be covered in a greater depth and with greater opportunity for explanation.

Ms SEDDON — Absolutely.

The CHAIR — It intrigues them and fascinates them.

Ms SEDDON — Yes. The students are saying that if they can get that information outside of the classroom, and that is homework, then they come ready to learn. You actually take out the chunk of time that the teacher spends in the first 15 or 20 minutes of the class giving the information and you go straight into the learning activities around whatever the topic or content is.

The CHAIR — We are out of time. Ron and Tess, if you could just give us a succinct answer to: have you had the experience of this idea of flipped learning, where you immerse yourself in something and you look at something, perhaps on YouTube, and that is followed up with the class after you have some conceptual understanding of it?

TESS — Yes, I have that in a few different classes. That is one of the goals for my school this year. We are a very individualised learning school, and we try to incorporate the flip model of learning. We do that in my maths class and my outdoor environment class. Homework, like maths questions, is set and then we take notes, come back, and then ask. If a question is asked, the teacher can help and explain, and if it is something that many people have a problem with, then it will be done on the board. But you can go on with your own work. It is really about the independence of being able to do it and then still having that opportunity to return back to the teacher — to flip back and be able to have their response and feedback. I reckon that is really working. It seems to be pretty good to have that independence and discipline to do it yourself but also have that support and that feedback that you need to have to know that you are on the right track.

The CHAIR — That is excellent. Ron, do you have some examples there?

RON — Speaking of immersing yourself in something, I do media at school, and one of our first assessments was to make a film. I was in charge of editing. Rather than just putting the clips in and saving it as that movie, I incorporated my own skills of editing from, say, YouTube videos or other tutorials to make the movie look more like a professional movie, in a way. That helped me to improve in that subject in that way.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. Our time together has now elapsed. I want to thank Krista Seddon and Ron and Tess and commend you on coming in today and the contribution you have made. I want to wish you well in your studies, in your endeavours and in your student leadership roles. We will probably hear from you as you raise your profile in society. I wish you well and commend you. Thank you very much.

TESS — Thank you.

RON — It was an honour being here.

The CHAIR — We really appreciate it.

Witnesses withdrew.