EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

AN INQUIRY INTO IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIANS OF ALL AGES

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
MONDAY, 9 JULY 2012

SESSION SEVEN

Members

Dr J.M. Woollard (Chairman)
Mr P.B. Watson (Deputy Chairman)
Dr G.G. Jacobs
Ms L.L. Baker
Mr P. Abetz

Hearing commenced at 4.03 pm

SAWERS, MS YVONNE ELIZABETH
Literacy Educator, Curtin University, examined:

KONZA, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DESLEA
Researcher, Language and Literacy, Edith Cowan University, examined:

DAWKINS, MS SUZANNE
PhD Student, Graduate School of Education, University of Western Australia, examined:

FAULKNER, DR ROBERT
Course Coordinator Masters of Teaching, Graduate School of Education, University of Western Australia, examined:

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I would like to thank you for your interest and your appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist us in gathering evidence for our inquiry into improving educational outcomes for Western Australians for all ages. At this stage I would like to introduce myself, Janet Woollard and Mr Peter Abetz, committee members; our secretariat, Brian Gordon and Loraine Abernethie; and from Hansard we have Melissa Pilkington.

The Education and Health Standing Committee is a committee of the Assembly. This hearing is a formal procedure of Parliament and therefore commands the same respect as proceedings in the house. This is a public hearing and Hansard will be making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any document during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you could provide the full title for the record. Before we proceed to the questions we have for you today, I need to ask you: have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you understand the notes at the bottom of form about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet provided with the "Details of Witness" form today?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today's hearing?

The Witnesses: No.

The CHAIR: We might give you each seven minutes and we will go around. Brian, did you send some questions? No. You have all been sent the terms of reference for this inquiry. We are, obviously, very interested in the early years—how children are being taught literacy and numeracy. So, we have got UWA, Edith Cowan and Curtin. We might start off with Robert and go back around the other way. We are being told that at grade 3, or wherever the gap starts, as children grow older the gap gets bigger and bigger. How are you teaching your students to teach children in the early years about literacy? What pedagogical methods are you using with them and encouraging them to use in the classroom so that children get the best possible start to their education?

Mr P. ABETZ: We have been told that 52 per cent of kids 15 to 19 years of age have serious literacy deficiencies, shall we say, and that seems to me to be a far higher percentage than when I was going to school, which was many years ago. If you could you address that in your comments as well, I would appreciate that.

The CHAIR: We are looking from here, to stop it going like that and encouraging it to go like that.

Dr Faulkner: I should preface my remarks by saying my expertise is not in literacy. On another day we would have been able to send our two experts. One of them is delivering a paper on literacy in the eastern states today at a conference long arranged and the other is on vacation in Europe. I would like to qualify my remarks.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We would love a copy of that paper.

Dr Faulkner: I think you should, because the project that Val Faulkner—my namesake but not any relation to me—is reporting on is called the Making the Links project. That is specifically looking at the upper primary school, lower high school issues around literacy and the kinds of divergence that you have been talking about. Certainly I think that will be a paper worth looking at.

As I said, I coordinate one of the two Master of Teaching programs that cover the area that you are looking at—that is, early childhood—and Grace Oakley and Valerie Faulkner coordinate the primary program. Within those programs there are clearly very explicit units that talk about and do the teaching of oral language and literacy. In early childhood, for example, Grace Oakley, my colleague, along with Janet Fellowes from ECU has recently written a very authoritative textbook for the explicit teaching of language and literacy. It is an Oxford University Press publication and is being widely used all over Australia. We should be very proud that it has come out of Western Australia and is being widely used, because I think that book—others here may know that book better than I do—really approaches the teaching of language and literacy in the kinds of ways that we think are important in terms of that holistic approach. We are talking about phonological awareness again—others would be far better qualified to talk about that—and we are talking about explicit teaching that builds up amongst our teachers and in turn amongst their students a whole repertoire of literacy and teaching skills.

The CHAIR: That book, then, is being used at both UWA and Edith Cowan?

Dr Faulkner: I believe it is being used. I would be surprised if it was not, because Janet is the co-author.

Professor Konza: It is being used at Edith Cowan, yes.

The CHAIR: And the title of that book? Is it available in the university book shop?

Dr Faulkner: It certainly is. It is called *Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education*. At the beginning of our course there is an explicit course there for both our early childhood and primary practitioners, which is about teaching explicitly oral language and literacy and about getting that sequence correct.

The CHAIR: I know it is not your area, but is it through decoding, or what approach is being used in that book?

Dr Faulkner: Do you mind if I pass that to Sue, because Sue has taught that unit?

Mr P. ABETZ: Perhaps you should let Professor Faulkner finish his presentation before we go to others.

Ms Dawkins: You keep going and then perhaps I can comment on the end as we go along.

Dr Faulkner: I could not comment specifically on these methods. In addition to that, though, we have another unit for our primary practitioners which is about literacy across the curriculum. Having taught the fundamentals of how we teach the basic introduction to language and literacy, we then have a subsequent unit about literacy across the whole of the curriculum about teaching upper

primary language. So, there are two units in our 16 units that are explicitly about the teaching of language and literacy. In addition, we have an interventions unit, which is really aimed at equipping our students as teachers to tackle problems of language and literacy development—either the need for support or the need for extension of those skills. That means that our student teachers have to develop skills as reflective action researchers, knowing how to apply diagnostic tests to really be able to differentiate the teaching of language and literacy effectively. I could not talk specifically about those tests, but it is about developing the skills to go into a specific setting and identifying children who need support or extension and devising a strategic plan that would actually support their development.

The CHAIR: This may be a question for Sue later as well, but with each of your courses that you run under education are there readers that go along with each course? Would we be able to get a copy of the reader for those two courses?

Dr Faulkner: There are certainly textbooks for the Grace Oakley one and Janet Fellowes one. The first one we could certainly supply to you without any problem at all.

The CHAIR: Is there a reader for the second one, because I think it is the second one that would probably have the area that Peter is —

Dr Faulkner: There is not a reader, but there is a designated reading list. At UWA we do not produce readers anymore; most of our materials are online course materials. But we could certainly supply to you the reading list for all three of those units. The second one too is very interesting because it tries to say we have a great ongoing responsibility for the teaching of language and literacy that goes beyond teaching the basics; that is, the kind of scenario you have described of people getting left behind because teachers do not understand the developmental nature of the teaching of language and literacy and the spread of children's capacities. Then, finally, we have a fourth unit, which is differentiating the curriculum, which tackles all kinds of issues around English as a second language or dialect and special needs, whatever they might be, and looks at the impact of those things on the teaching of language and literacy.

[4.15 pm]

In all of our units there is a very specific focus on what language and literacy means within a specific domain. For example, I coordinate our arts units for early childhood primary teachers and we have a very strong emphasis on what language and literacy means in this area. Val Faulkner's and Grace's work making the link was in fact asking upper primary school and lower secondary school teachers to ask this question: what literacy skills do the students need in my subject area? What are the strategies they need to have in science and maths and so on?

The CHAIR: For your course at UWA, because you run, I think it is a three-year course —

Dr Faulkner: It is a two-year course; it is a Master of Teaching. These are students who have an undergraduate degree in all kinds of subjects.

The CHAIR: Do they get these four courses as part of their undergraduate degree, or only as part of their masters?

Dr Faulkner: We do not do an undergraduate degree anymore in Western Australia.

The CHAIR: So it is now only the masters?

Dr Faulkner: It is only the masters. They will come with undergraduate degrees in a whole range of areas, including psychology, linguistics and all kinds of things. Instead of the old Graduate Diploma in Education —

The CHAIR: The one-year course, because they had a degree from elsewhere.

Dr Faulkner: Yes, the one-year course. That is now being replaced. All the ministers have agreed that the graduate Dip. Ed. shall cease in 2015 and be replaced by a two-year Master of Teaching degree. We will wait and see if that actually happens.

The CHAIR: Is it currently a two-year degree? I thought it was a one-year degree.

Dr Faulkner: That is a Dip. Ed. We do not do a Dip. Ed. for primary early childhood; we do not believe that we can cover either the content or the pedagogical knowledge that they need. Like Melbourne—the Master of Teaching for primary is four or five years old and the Master of Teaching for early childhood is now in its second year. We are passionate about the graduate Dip. Ed. not being really sufficient preparation for the kind of questions we are talking about here today—how you could possibly cover the content.

The CHAIR: I was going to ask how you would fit them all into the one year.

Dr Faulkner: It would be ridiculous. That is where we are going. As I say, there is a federal commitment to cease the graduate Dip. Eds. at all levels in 2015. Whether that actually happens will remain to be seen.

The CHAIR: Deslea.

Professor Konza: You will have to forcibly remove me from the platform! We have a four-year undergraduate program. We have, including that resource, really good resources to teach. We know the process that helps children learn to read. Some of them we do not have control over because it all begins with oral language and exposure to print and all those early literacy experiences. I would love to forward to every member of the committee who would like one, a copy of a little book I wrote that explains the research easily, I think. I came over here from the University of Wollongong, which was the home of whole language—the home of the gurus. I beat my head against a brick wall there for a long time. I would have third-year students coming to do an elective—which was the only one I was allowed to teach, coming from a special education background—and I had to give them something in words of one syllable, basically. We know what is required. We do not have enough time. Essentially, we have four subjects across the four years, and that is all because of the very crowded curriculum; schools have crowded curriculums but we have a crowded curriculum as well. It is a pity that you could not be privy to the last hour out there as we all got here early, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, because we were talking about some of the frustrations that we have. We have students who, because of the last several decades of what was being used as the pedagogy—how you teach—we have teachers and principals who do not understand either the process of teaching reading or what is required.

The CHAIR: Stop there, because we do not want to miss out on what is required.

Mr P. ABETZ: Tell us what is required.

Professor Konza: Okay. I have conceptualised the research in something that I call the "Big Six". That is the basis of the research projects that we are doing mostly in South Australia. We have just got a guernsey with a public education endowment trust, so watch this space. Underpinning everything is oral language and early literacy experiences. We do not have a lot of control over that but we now know that we have to work on oral language, which all of us would agree on, once we get children to school, and a whole-language model of teaching reading, assuming every child has that. Children who did have that managed to learn to read despite the lack of specific instruction. It did not pick up children who did not have that or who had a phonological problem, because that is the next step. One, oral language and learning experiences; and two, phonological awareness, specifically phonemic awareness, because that is tuning into the sounds of language. Children have to come across the idea that language, this stream, is actually a series of words. They have to have word awareness, which little children build up when they are read stories and they point to each word; it gradually builds up and can be mapped onto a page. Words are a series of separate sounds. Until you come across that understanding, the whole concept of letter sound knowledge—phonics,

if you like—does not make any sense. If you ask a lot of three and a half or four-year-old children what is the sound at the beginning of "Cat", they will say, "Meow" because they hear that sound, and a sound to a little child is a noise. It is what a truck, a tractor or a plane makes. They have to understand that the English language is a series of sounds.

Number two is phonological awareness, which is tuning into all the aspects of the language that they hear and specifically the individual phonemes, which is phonemic awareness.

Number three is building letter-sound knowledge—the alphabetic principle, or phonics if you will—but also the fact that some words in English do not follow the rules. There are actually more rules than people think that are useful to teach children. The way to teach that is by very explicit and clearly targeted instruction. We know from the studies in Scotland that long term they will outperform children in accuracy and comprehension because of course it is all about comprehension, but it is also about understanding the skills you need to get there. The idea that just reading children beautiful books will somehow make it all work does not happen. They are the first three.

Number four is vocabulary. The incredible importance of that was highlighted again for us through the National Reading Panel research, which was a review of all the work done. Little children come to school and the top quartile of them have heard many millions more words than the bottom quartile and they have functionally about 1 000 more base words. A base word is a word like "play". If you know "play", you will understand "play", "playing", "playmate" and "playground". They have thousands more words. You cannot read a word if you do not know what it means. It is really interesting. I will use a quick example. I have seen this happen quite often. A child reading the word "yacht" for the first time will probably be seven or eight years old. In a little picture book might be a picture of a boat and they will come across the word "yacht" while looking at a boat. If they know the word "yacht" and that is in their spoken vocabulary—they already know by that time; it does not take them long to work out that English is a tricky language—they will say, "Oh, that is how you write "yacht"", and will move on. If a child does not know that word and it is not part of their vocabulary, they are stuck at that point. Vocabulary really helps you read. We now know that we have to teach vocabulary explicitly, especially to the children who come to school without that broad base. You cannot teach them every word. How do we make those decisions? People have not worked out a way of deciding which ones you should teach. Isabel Beck is the goddess of this field and she gives quite clear instructions about how you decide. Moving on—I cannot give you that lecture now, but I would love to!

Fluency is that point at which learning to read turns into reading to learn. It is a pivotal point where you are getting all the skills together so you are building a sound word knowledge and sight word knowledge and you have rich language and are practising all these skills and you get to the point at which you can put it all together. You actually need all those skills to get to what we call the point of "automaticity". That generally happens at around the reading age of eight or nine years. Around year 2 you are hoping that they are getting there. At that point, they have enough reading ability to start using their reading to learn so they move from learning to read to reading to learn. It is the magic point. Then, of course, it is about comprehension. That is what we aim for. The frustration, and my enduring frustration, is when you talk about the need to teach that letter-sound knowledge and you get people who keep saying, "But it is not about decoding; it is about enriching the language." Of course it is! They argue by caricature. They think that you are advocating just that but it is one principle, there are six others—it is one of them. We know that.

What we do not have is enough time. What happens with our neophyte teachers is they graduate and go out—I will talk about what happens there in a minute—to school and they will pick up the culture of the school. We have schools full of teachers who were lucky enough to learn how to read, most of them, although some of them had trouble. At the same time as the curriculum was "let us not teach letters and knowledge explicitly", it was also "let us not teach either grammar or spelling",

so they do not understand the structure of language, and there is so much of it. You need a deep understanding of this and it takes a while to get your head around; it really does. If they go out, they will pick up whatever is out there but we have to work with the practising teachers as well as our pre-service teachers because we have basically four 12-week units of a few hours a week. At Edith Cowan we are funded for two assessment points. They get very canny about what they do and do not need to access in order to do that. Yvonne was talking about the way she uses journals and things. She had experience of both. We have tried to do the A and B so at least you can double the amount of assessments, but they have complex lives and have to go to work. They do not have to come to the lectures because they can access them online. What will I need for this? It is incredibly difficult. I have worked with students on a research project and you could tell by their reference to mixed up terms; they were saying things like "abjective"—no, that was in South Australia—they were saying things like "phonical". There is no such word; it is phonics, phonetic or phonological. They have been exposed to it. At our pracs they do not have the opportunity. They are besieged with the need to manage the class and all that kind of thing. They do not have the time to assess, plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and reassess. They do not have time to do that unless they do a particular elective. Many of them will choose not to do that because it does not fit in with their timetable or whatever. Yes, we have the knowledge, mostly. We also do have probably still at Edith Cowan, and definitely at a university that is not represented here, people who are still weathered to an approach that does not explain that. We know we are trying. We have just done a revamp of it but we still have people who say, "I was told by the head of school to make sure that your Big Six gets in there."

The CHAIR: With your Big Six, Deslea, just as I asked Robert for the course outline with the readers, can you send us more of a breakdown of those Big Six?

Professor Konza: I would love to.

The CHAIR: We will keep moving around then because there are only two of us and there are five members. We do not want encyclopaedias, but things that will make it easier for the others to catch up on this.

Professor Konza: A couple of papers do basically outline it. They are on their way.

The CHAIR: We also want to see the course outline for where it comes in.

Professor Konza: It is meant to be there. I was talking to some students about the Big Six and they went, "What?" What I get told is that it is all in there.

The CHAIR: But if you cannot identify it for us, that leads to the question: is it there?

Professor Konza: It does.

The CHAIR: Robert thinks he can show us where it is in their curriculum. We want to look at the curriculum of each of the universities to see if it is there. Should we move around to you, Yvonne?

Ms Sawers: I agree with everything that has been said previously. I think we are all trying to do the same things with the preparation of our teachers. We know that teaching is really complex. We know there are a lot of pressures on teaching and that some people are very interested in literacy and that all teachers should be interested in literacy and be very capable, qualified and able to teach it at a high level.

[4.30 pm]

Part of the conversations that we have been having is that we know that a very expert practitioner will make a huge difference to children and that that can often be the problem for children that we take all comers in a school and teachers have to work with children that are at all different ages and stages in the classes. What children bring to school is really important. Teaching teachers to be aware of how we engage with children from many places and from many different capacities is really difficult. We run two undergraduate courses at Curtin: one is a four-year early childhood

degree and the other is a four-year primary degree. In both of those, they do three literacy units. We are in the throes of a great course change at the moment. I was previously at ECU and now I am at Curtin. I am the only literacy person at this point at Curtin. We are getting an expert group together to devise new ways to prepare teachers better. Some of those ways are about students not being able to hoop jump and see a unit as just basically a couple of assessments that they have to get through. It is about the deep learning that needs to happen, particularly in the area of literacy. These three units link, so you cannot do one without having done the other and you bring what you know from that.

The first one is about understanding language and basically the basis of language and how we communicate and valuing language. We now are in a multicultural situation where teachers are confronted with classrooms where there are children with many languages. It is not about a deficit—thinking about this as something we should be worried about. It is something we should embrace and something that we need the skills to be able to work with.

The second unit is, I think, the most important unit. It certainly embraces what Deslea says about the Big Six. We use the cognitive model of reading, which is very much what Deslea is saying, which looks at the automatic word recognition, which involves most of the Big Six that Deslea is talking about—the notion of understanding language and vocabulary and the importance, and then of course being a strategic reader and learning about the strategies of how you would learn to read and —

The CHAIR: Does phonetics come into your cognitive model?

Ms Sawers: Absolutely. Automatic word recognition is about concepts of print. Children need to understand that print carries a message and that there is a constancy. If you take the print away and bring it back, it says the same thing. Children come with varying degrees of the capacity of being able to understand that print is something that we are engaging in when we are reading. Some children with much experience will come with different levels of concepts of print. Then there is the phonological awareness, which is the idea of the sounds of the language, which encompasses understanding the phonemes.

The CHAIR: So this is still in your second.

Ms Sawers: This is the second unit. It is very much about how you teach children to read. That whole unit is constructed that way. The other parts of automatic word recognition are sight word knowledge and fluency. All of these things aid your comprehension, which is what Deslea was saying. It is a different diagram, but it is essentially the same content. I really like the model because it says all the important things about literacy. If you are only doing direct instruction in automatic word recognition, then you are actually not doing enough. That is why I like that model.

The last unit that we do is learning through English. Basically, it is how you use the English language to learn everything else. It is that idea of reading to learn. Hopefully in year 3 onwards, we would not see a non-reader, but of course we know that that is not the case. Also this unit is about differentiation—how you differentiate your practice. All of these units relate to reading, writing and speaking and listening. Speaking and listening is the bedrock for everything that comes to follow.

The CHAIR: You said that your courses were from preprimary to grade 7.

Ms Sawers: Preprimary to year 3 is the early childhood course and then year 1 to year 7 is the other course. Of course, there is a lot of discussion around at the university as to what happens when year 7s go up to high school. The university is grappling with what happens too. Effectively, if a school says, "We want early childhood people to teach K–3 and we want a high school teacher to teach year 7 in a high school environment", that leaves the primary school course dealing with children from years 4 to 6, and that is the bulk of our students in the primary degree.

The CHAIR: Robert mentioned the course that they have for the students who fall behind. To stop that gap getting bigger and bigger, where does it come in for the children having difficulties understanding? When you send them back, what do you give the teachers to help with those —

Ms Sawers: In literacy specifically, I would not say that there is a unit that relates to that, but I do work closely with others with children who are having difficulties in all areas of learning, because usually if they are having difficulties, it is not just in literacy. I cannot tell you the name of that unit at this point, but I know that they do address significantly children —

The CHAIR: Maybe by way of supplementary information, you could look at that and maybe provide us with that reader, because it would be interesting to compare that with what is being done at UWA. We are concerned that that gap is getting bigger and bigger and we do need something for those children who are falling behind to bring them back and help them build those building blocks of the foundation.

Ms Sawers: I think there would be something to suggest that it is actually not about taking them back; it is taking them from where they are at. If older children who are struggling are taught well they do not have to take the same amount of time it has taken for a child who has learnt this from kindergarten or the early years, there is something around that really says that older children can learn a whole lot quicker.

The CHAIR: But the child who turns up—maybe I could ask Robert and Deslea as well—at grade 4 who has English as a second language does not go off to the English as a second language school and come straight into your school. What additional skills are you giving? That is the same as a child who falls behind. What are you giving your future teachers to help so they have at UWA a course geared to helping those children who fall behind —

Ms Sawers: A unit.

The CHAIR: What is the equivalent at Edith Cowan and what is the equivalent at Curtin?

Professor Konza: At Edith Cowan in the early childhood program, there is a unit called differentiation assessment and instruction for students with a range of needs. In the primary program, the fourth of the four subjects is based around an ESL kind of thing, where you talk about developing language skills in a child who comes with a previous language. Once again, I just emphasise that having the course and the content in no way means that our students go out with expertise to the level that they need. We know that. It is evident and clear. We can prepare them for the beginning stages but we cannot —

The CHAIR: Whilst they may not value them when they are going through your university, several years later they may remember that framework and those systems and they may pull on what they learnt. That is why I think it is very important that it is there as part of the curriculum so that they have got something to refer back to when maybe they have a bit more time to meditate.

Ms Sawers: Certainly, I think that young novice teachers, when confronted with the realities that are outside a practicum: where they have got a teacher supporting them, need a mentor situation so that they can look at the context within which they are put and actually learn through experience and through extra support and help. I think, ultimately, as Deslea said, they do not know what they do not know. Going through a whole unit on differentiated instruction or dealing with children that are at risk or whatever, which is basically embedded in all of our units—when you are doing society environment or you are doing a unit on the curriculum, what does the curriculum look like for children—that is where it is embedded in the units. I would say that was probably still the same at ECU. You are coming across this idea of difference regularly through the units that you are teaching and the units that they are learning. But the reality is that until they actually are confronted with this complexity of difference that is required, and of course we cannot ever shy away from the fact that there is this sort of surface teaching that can go on and the very dynamic teacher that the novice that becomes the expert—it can take seven years to become this expert teacher—and that

they have actually had the right sort of mentoring, they have had the right sort of professional development, they have had the right sort of characteristics of a learner to go and continue learning, because we all know that you do not stop learning the moment university stops, and that is another thing. University says, "See you later", and that is it. There could be situations —

The CHAIR: That is my next question to all three of you. The point that you have just raised is that an undergraduate student nurse at each of your faculties, when they go out, they have one year going through medicine and nursing—it might be aged care or something else—which is a prerequisite for a practical. Should there be mentors in each of the schools or in each of the districts who are paid additional money to look after the new graduates for that first year to ensure that things like these programs that you are running for literacy are being given the support that they need in that area? Does anyone run that type of mentorship in the schools?

Ms Sawers: I think there has been varying degrees with the department of different literacy teachers and "Getting it Right" teachers and all of those things to support teachers. I think the number of people —

The CHAIR: Who is giving the support?

Ms Sawers: The education department. I think they have had varying degrees—they have a mentor program.

The CHAIR: Who do they have now then? Do they have a mentoring program now?

Ms Sawers: Yes; they have a mentoring program. That is my understanding.

The CHAIR: For all new graduates?

Ms Sawers: For all new graduates, and they have a professional learning centre that does a lot with —

Professor Konza: I think the money that was supporting the Getting it Right literacy and numeracy program is now more or less, "Here is the money; you can choose to do with it as you will", and some of them are continuing to employ and get the right person. We did a small evaluation in 2008 of the Getting it Right program and, as I said, the literacy expert might well be someone—in some cases, it was—who had a deep knowledge. The school might be told, "We've got money now to support a teacher. Who wants to do that?" "Yes, I am interested in that." They might come and do a bit of PD or whatever. It is not overcoming the lack of knowledge, and it is about what they get at the school. If they are really lucky, they will get a school with really good teachers who are supportive and collegial and whatever. If they are really unlucky, they will end up in a school like your son's, where they do not get that and you lose a good teacher. We need to be working with the practising teachers in the schools too. There is certainly expert knowledge and good practice out there, but it is not widespread enough to really support the teachers.

Ms Sawers: Universities can advertise for literacy people, and you do not get bowled over by the amount of people that are available out there to teach literacy at a university level. We are not growing the next generation of literacy people either.

Dr Faulkner: I think we are hopeful that the new professional teacher standards may actually help us in developing better partnerships with schools for the support of these kinds of things. Certainly, if the AITSL professional teacher standards are actually implemented properly, one would hope that the highly proficient teacher would be expected to take on these kinds of responsibilities, whether it is in a specific area or whether it is in more general terms. We faced this problem with our practicum placement as well all the time—about getting good practicum mentors, about getting good schools. The question of who is paying for it endlessly comes up. I am sure you are aware there is a working party now federally from commonwealth funding looking at the whole issue of the funding of practicums.

[4.45 pm]

It is all part of the same question about the education community taking joint responsibility for the education of our pre-service teachers and then further support when they get out there. The kind of add-on payments model, I think, has become rather fraught. We already have a situation where some universities are paying schools more than others, and it becomes very complicated. I think the same might well happen in the mentor situation. I think it is more about: What does professional identity really look like? What does it mean to be a member of the teaching profession? How can the professional teaching standards that the ministers have signed up for—what does this mean for providing the kind of mentor support for a specific learning area like literacy or for anything else for that matter?

Mr P. ABETZ: With the mentoring, I think it is a really positive thing; I have seen that. I was on the teacher selection panel for a private school for about 15 years, and fresh-out-of-uni teachers are really enthusiastic. Given the right kind of mentoring, they can actually end up being often better teachers than somebody who has been teaching for 10 years already and is mediocre. We often went with them because they were cheaper to employ, but you could actually mould them into the sort of school that you want to be. With the mentoring in the state school system, if you have got teachers who have 10, 15 or 20 years' experience but who are locked into the whole-of-language kind of thing, they pooh-pooh what you have been teaching and they are actually undermining what we are trying to do to get this phonics thing and all that happening again. How do we overcome that? I see that as a real issue.

Professor Konza: Quite a bit of encouraging results came from a project that we started out calling "Principals as Literacy Leaders"—PALL. We worked in a pilot project with 60 principals across three states and the Northern Territory. You have got to get the principals on board. Then we found out that actually we had to get them on board because they are meant to be leading learning in the schools. But in fact, I got so many requests, "Deslea, I know you said it, but, like, you know it better than me. Could you just come in and teach us that?", so we do need follow-up work; that is, what the PEEF grant funds project we hoped to do with just a small number of schools. We are winning people over. Most people are in teaching because they want the best outcomes for children. There are problems and questions; there are people who leave on principle; there certainly are, but most of them are actually persuaded by things. The Big Six model is criticised by them as being simplistic and whatever. Yes it is, but it is my way of putting something understandable in front of people and actually that is the benefit of it. We still have people saying that they need to understand social semiotics, and saying, "Let's just give them a framework of something, try to impress upon them that they are not all separate, but they are," all that kind of thing, because anything, once you list something, like you get people thinking it is just—but it is grabbing their attention in that it gives them something. As a matter of fact we get principals saying, "How come your students don't know this?" That is why the school said, "Make sure it's sort of there".

So your original question was: what do you do about that? We work with teachers on an extended basis, and also we need time. Okay, you do the project this year: "What has happened to the NAPLAN results next year?" Well, nothing, because guess what? That will take time. You are trying to turn around the *Queen Mary* here, and we literally had decades of another model that works for some children but not all children to overcome; it will take a long time. Not decades, hopefully, but it will take more than a year.

The CHAIR: We might move to Sue, and then if we can we will come back to you.

Ms Dawkins: You will be pleased to know I do not have much to say! I think everyone has pretty much covered it. I, too, come from an early childhood background with a particular interest in oral language and how language develops into our literacy and written language. I am just about to finish a PhD that actually looks at how children go from being storytellers to story writers. Early literacy is very much my area of passion. I have been doing some sessional lecturing this year in the program Robert has talked about, particularly in the language and literacy unit. It has a very clear

focus on developing a deep knowledge of how children become literate. It is for both primary and early childhood; I note that I had a few primary students comment: was it really necessary for them to know about language development and literacy development in such detail, given that they will probably teach years 4 and 5? That is already the sort of attitude or idea they have, and having come from the classroom very recently, I see that teachers are struggling to deal with students in years 4, 5 and 6 who really are very weak in literacy; they do not know how to address those problems and they do not know how to identify the gaps in those children's knowledge. That is the hope of providing a sound background in the development of language and literacy at this stage for the pre-service teachers. In the area that I am working in, we use very much a lecture–workshop style, so that the pre-service teachers have an opportunity to be exposed to theory. They come to class having read the designated readings and their text as well, and then we will have a lecture-style session and then at some time a workshop where they can apply some of the theories we have been talking about to what they might use in the classroom. Then, of course, they are encouraged to take that into the classroom when they go on prac. They have five distributed days, then a whole week of prac; this is in the first semester for first years.

Robert mentioned the professional standards for teachers, and I think that is actually something worthwhile mentioning because the teaching profession has really struggled to get a professional body, unlike the nursing profession, medicine or engineers. All the other professions are very much better at sharing their expertise with their colleagues than teachers are, so I think the professional teaching standards are a starting point. Within this particular course, pre-service teachers are constantly directed back to those professional standards: "How does this fit in with your planning? Are you meeting these standards?" They are well aware that it is a progression from graduate teacher through to highly proficient.

I do not really think I had anything else to say, apart from reading instruction, because that was something that Robert was talking about earlier. I am sure, just like these other ladies, we aim for a comprehensive approach. We talk about word identification, which is where phonics comes in to it—you were talking earlier about phonics—and then, of course, the comprehension. Deslea and Yvonne talked about comprehension, spelling and vocabulary; those, too, are all covered within our literacy unit. I missed the first bit of what you said, but this second semester, the first year early childhood students have a unit that is centred around oral language and play, so once again the pre-service teachers have an opportunity to see that in action. We have a few sessions at the university's kindergarten and preprimary centre. They get to observe children playing, the language they use and talk to the teachers there, which fits in with our whole development of language and gets the pre-service teachers, from the beginning of their professional practice, to appreciate the value and power of oral language and then build on it.

The CHAIR: I think it was really interesting, the comment you made about the teachers for grades 3, 4 and 5 asking why they needed to learn that. Is that not telling?

Dr Faulkner: We hear that from secondary school teachers as well, all the time; secondary teachers do not think it is their responsibility at all. With the push now for year 7s up into secondary, it is going to become even more acute. We are going to be pushing up to secondary schools students who are obviously in even greater need for good English teaching and, generally speaking, secondary schoolteachers do not think it is their responsibility to be doing these things, so there is a grave danger that this —

The CHAIR: Do you think when year 7s go to high school that there should be one year of just general introduction so that that finetuning can happen, rather than them being thrown into the lion's pit with their courses and all going off to a place where no-one really gets to look at each individual child? Should they have a mentor?

Dr Faulkner: I am not convinced that that is the answer.

The CHAIR: I am just trying to think what they call them in the classes.

Professor Konza: Those are support classes or something, where they —

The CHAIR: Should each class have a teacher who is, maybe only for six months, looking after them and saying, "This child needs" before —

Dr Faulkner: If I am to be honest, first of all, we know about the gaps and the gaps can be a tragedy for a lot of kids. We know that kids can waste two years of their lives transferring from primary to secondary because of the kinds of problems that go on about communicating and that kind of stuff. But to me, it is about educating secondary school teachers to take their responsibilities seriously. That cannot happen under the present graduate diploma arrangements, because there is just not the space in a one-year course to educate secondary school teachers to understand what language is about and to know where language is coming from. We have enough of a problem; we have a unit called "Teaching and Learning: Development Theory and Practice", which tries to trace developmental psychology. We start with Trevor Parry's lectures on developmental paediatrics, right up to early adulthood. We have enough problems trying to get secondary school teachers to appreciate that that is important for their understanding of what they do. So until we get to a model that gives us more space—that is, a two-year graduate diploma of education or a two-year master of teaching—we will not be able to equip secondary teachers to fulfil the responsibility they have, and that applies to every maths teacher, every science teacher and to every teacher in secondary education; they all have that responsibility.

The CHAIR: In which case you have brought up a really interesting question: We know it is not being introduced until 2015, but who is doing what now to equip those high school teachers? Who is preparing the curriculum and the in-service that will need to be done over the next 18 months or two years so that those teachers in high schools are equipped to deal with those younger children who maybe are falling off the ledge?

Mr P. ABETZ: the thing we have got to keep in mind, though, is it is only six months' difference to what it used to be, because we changed the starting of school. So it is not a year's difference; it is actually only six months' difference, so it is not such a massive —

The CHAIR: We know we are falling behind already, going in at grade 8, so, yes, it is only six months but —

Mr P. ABETZ: Thinking back to my education, I went to a very much working-class primary school and even the kids from the lower socioeconomic part of that, I do not know of one kid who did not learn to read. Some were better at spelling than others, but everybody passed; everybody got at least six out of 10 or whatever for their spelling tests and all that sort of thing. When we went to high school, it would have been totally unthinkable for our high school teachers to have to teach us how to spell or read. The question also is: At high school, which subject teaches kids to read? Is it science, is it English? Which subject area, when you have specialist teachers, takes responsibility for that?

Dr Faulkner: Comprehension of maths problems is very sophisticated. We know from all of the NAPLAN results and all the tests in the world that a great many kids these days struggle very much in understanding maths problems because of literacy problems. We are putting all these textbooks in front of kids in a high school when they do not have the fluency that we are talking about.

Mr P. ABETZ: Do you envisage that happening at the high school level? Is it the maths teacher's job? Is that the social science teacher's job? It really needs to come back to the primary school.

Professor Konza: It is everybody's job, but in fact that job is too hard if a child is well behind where they should be. It is too hard because it is beyond the time that that teacher has. The teachers that you had would have known a lot about the language and they were real experts in the field because that was the way teacher training was then; it was a four-and-a-half day week, not 15 hours a week. Teaching children to read is the most important academic outcome of primary education, yet now with all the other problems teachers have to cope with as well, they are trying to feed

children and address all the social problems. More and more, our curriculum is becoming crowded, which is another issue for us as well.

[5.00 pm]

Teacher training does need to be more intense, if we are going to seriously address this and to give us a chance to develop the knowledge base and the skills.

The CHAIR: Should primary school education be competency based in terms of graduating from grade 1 to grade 2 to grade 3 to grade 4? If the children do not reach the competencies, should they stay in that class until they do reach the competencies before they move up to the next year, rather than having someone in grade 5 at grade 2 level?

Professor Konza: We would have a lot of 14 year olds still in year 2, if we did that.

The CHAIR: But would you if they repeated it back in year 2?

Ms Dawkins: It is not so much they need to repeat a year, but as they move into year 2 there needs to be serious time, money and effort put into remedial teaching. If you go to any school, there is a remedial program but there is not the money or time to address it. You probably would have fixed it by year 3 if there was a genuine desire and money put there.

The CHAIR: We just went to Cape York where they run a direct instruction course. They say that one of the advantages, the pros, for running direct instruction is that remedial education is very costly and it is much more cost effective to run direct instruction than to run remedial instruction. Is there a role for direct instruction? Should teachers be looking at the students and should we have some schools in the metropolitan area and in the regional areas that are direct instruction for those children who are not coping with the curriculum? Just as we have ESL schools, should we have some schools in the metropolitan area that are direct instruction so that those children who are not coping with explicit instruction and phonetics in a more loose environment go into an environment that is direct instruction, where they may have a greater chance of success?

Professor Konza: Capital D, capital I "Direct Instruction" or, as it is known by some, the "devil incarnate", is scripted, and people think that is absolutely awful. For people who do not know what they are doing it certainly has its place and the results in that school that Noel Pearson is involved in are evidence for what can happen. If we are looking at the situation now, I would like to discuss that option further—or whether there are classes where there are people who, generally, will come out of a specialty background, which is my background and why I was protected from the whole language malaise that was hitting all my colleagues—if that kind of option is available. If teachers do not know how to teach explicitly—we now use the term "explicit teaching" rather than "direct instruction", when it is actually just watered down, or not watered down, but it is giving teachers the confidence and the knowledge to do it without a script. There is a place for the script; I honestly believe that. If they have the knowledge and they see enough good models of it, they can develop that and within a very rich program that incorporates a lot of oral language. But when you are talking about teacher knowledge, people can make flash cards of a night—you can be a very engaging teacher, although not every teacher can be—and we need to develop the acting skills of some teachers. You can make all sorts of games out of what really is direct instruction, little "d" little "i", as I call it because it is really about a clear target instruction, lots of opportunities for rehearsal, practising and blending in that practising. In the research projects that I am doing in South Australia that is exactly what we are doing. I will let you know how that goes.

The CHAIR: Deslea, I hear what you are saying but what about the children who are failing? Should we have a 0.5 or one FTE equivalent at the school for children who are falling behind or should we have a separate school where children who are falling behind can go and get that intensive assistance to help them?

Mr P. ABETZ: You can drop out the other curriculum things and instead of focusing on all the other exciting things you focus on literacy.

Ms Sawers: I think literacy can be very exciting.

Mr P. ABETZ: Supposedly more exciting, I should say.

Ms Sawers: If children are privileged to have an expert teacher who can go between the many pedagogies or the many methodologies—I was an early childhood teacher and I certainly taught in a very engaging way and I taught children, in some instances, in small groups with direct instruction because I know it works. I do not think it is sheep dip though.

Professor Konza: "One size fits all."

Ms Sawers: I do not think everybody should be dipped in. The child I taught in kindergarten who came to me when I put *Farmer Duck* up could read that text. There was no point in him being taken through direct instruction.

Professor Konza: I do not think that is the suggestion.

Ms Sawers: I know. I am saying it is about many different types of learner, and it is important that the teacher is highly skilled. I think that removing children for either 15 minutes or half an hour of direct instruction—some of the reading recovery strategies work beautifully in a mainstream classroom in small groups where you are targeting instruction to what the children need. The moment you take it out of the hands of the teacher—what we need to do is make that teacher responsible for the level of learning that they have in their classroom, and if they need more support because they are a novice then they get the extra support through the assessment. A good teacher uses the assessment that they are given of all of the children in the class, groups them accordingly and teaches them accordingly; that is what is important.

The CHAIR: Yvonne, that is the ideal world. We were told the percentages were 25 per cent, 50 per cent and 25 per cent. What I am asking you—maybe by way of supplementary information if not today—is about that 25 per cent gap that is becoming higher. I agree with everything that you are saying that teachers should be masters of all and be able to impart this knowledge, but we know that is not happening. Because that is not happening with these 25 per cent—or it might be 10 per cent or five per cent—what do the teachers do at the end of the year rather than graduating someone? Maybe it is not at the end of the year. Is it every term when we find out that a child is falling behind? It is the same with English as a second language. My teachers tell me that when they have a student coming into their class with English as a second language, they have trouble coping with that student and with the rest of the class, because they are coping with that student. Just as those English as a second language children need additional assistance, what do we recommend as a committee to the government that it does for those children so that gap does not continue to grow and they drop off the peg?

Ms Sawers: I do not think there is one answer.

The CHAIR: I do not mind if you want to put to us the options.

Ms Sawers: I actually think that it is a very complex issue, and there is the warp and the weft of all of those answers. I do not think removing children and putting them in a school just to catch them up would necessarily be the answer. It would be very costly. I am not sure that would be the answer.

The CHAIR: It might be something that Robert has in his program.

Dr Faulkner: I do not think that we have the answer. I have certainly two or three things I think are very important here. One is to do with the whole very early childhood issue and the kind of issues going on here with whole service provision in child–parent centres that the department is thinking about now. After all, we have heard that if the child is having 10 minutes' conversation with one parent during the week, the chances of them coming to literacy ready to read are pretty much zero. They are your 10 per cent; they are already there. We need to look at early childhood, and by "early" I mean early, and that may be beyond your remit.

The CHAIR: We are from zero. We are looking at prenatal as well.

Dr Faulkner: Exactly. It is the whole child–parent centre initiatives and the whole inclusive service initiatives are very significant. The other point I would like to make is that we do need to look at what this means. Essentially, we are talking about effective teaching here and we have a model of teaching in the Western world—Australia is symptomatic of that—which is really very, very archaic. You would have seen, I am sure, the recent Grattan report about our neighbours in Singapore and Hong Kong and the ways in which that report challenges stereotypes and our typical understanding of what is going on in education. By that I mean that teachers there are clearly adopting a far more reflective, collaborative view of their teaching responsibilities in which they have much greater time to work together, to get into each other's classrooms. The teacher you were describing earlier who has been teaching a patterned type of whole language for 30 years is not going to be changed, unless we change the way we look at teaching as a whole. There are very serious implications for how we structure teachers' contracts and obligations, and how we open classroom doors—to us as universities, to principals in your kind of project and those kinds of things—is absolutely fundamental.

The CHAIR: What was that report that you just referred to?

Dr Faulkner: The Grattan report, a very influential report about what our neighbours are getting up to.

Mr P. ABETZ: When was that?

Dr Faulkner: This year. It came out just before the other Grattan report.

The CHAIR: Maybe as part of supplementary information, you can direct us to that one.

Dr Faulkner: Yes, it is certainly worth looking at.

Mr P. ABETZ: With this DI thing, we have been told that foetal alcohol spectrum disorder kids often need to be told something 40 times, whereas a really bright kid is told twice and gets it—especially in the regions. For example, in the Kimberley, we were in one place where the principal recognised that 40 per cent of the kids were definitely foetal alcohol syndrome affected. In that kind of setting with a really scripted direct instruction method, a bit like what Noel Pearson is doing, all of those kids seemed to be learning to read. I am sure that a lot of those kids probably would be foetal alcohol syndrome kids as well but they are learning to read. What are your thoughts on that? Is that perhaps a more appropriate method because there is a fair bit of repetition there? What are your thoughts on that?

Professor Konza: It is about a kind of mastery approach. When you have a small group—we talk about a wave or tiered approach, so you have whole-class skills; wave one, 80 per cent—this is the ideal model—and about 15 per cent might need a bit more in a slightly smaller group, and about five per cent might need one to three instruction. When you have one to three, and you are doing this kind of whole response interspersed with individual response, it is really hard to see in a class of 28 to 31 who is picking up and who is not, but in a smaller group you can pick up even more, and in a group of one to three you can pick up a lot. One of the things that I do when I demonstrate this is I get someone to count how many times the child has an opportunity to do that, and to match it to a sample practice: I see it, I say it, I hear it, I say it. How many times? You can get within a seven to 10-minute session, like 12, 14, 18 or 22 extra practises. That is exactly what you are talking about. That has come out of special ed. Very few of our teachers have any idea about that kind of thing. It should be taught as part of undergraduate training—unless they do a special ed unit they do not get it—as part of a lot of other things for the kids who need it and not for the other kids, as soon as the children are identified. There should be someone in each school with the skills, not just someone who puts their hand up and says they will be the literacy person, but someone who has the skills. In Finland, which has been beating us for X number of years in PISA—Shanghai just tipped them this time—they have a model, which is almost a revolving door and which is so widely accepted there is

no stigma attached at all. Once children are identified they slip into that period every day when they have this intensive period of time and then they pop out again. They have the same thing for bright children too. There are opportunities that are much more differentiated as part of the mainstream offerings. You need to tour Finland too! They have a much more monocultural country. They have subtitles on their TVs much earlier, as well as the Finish language. That is because they do not have a TV industry; they import things. Kids have exposure to print by watching TV. There are lots of other things that are contributing to it. People say they do not start school and learn to read until they are eight, and then say we should not do anything until eight. There are lots of things that go to it, but it is this model of picking up kids early, which becomes part of just what we do and there is no stigma. That is part of why we probably do not want the remedial school. But we need teachers, or at least one teacher, with the remedial skills.

[5.15 pm]

Ms Sawers: It is actually the teachers that need the intensive training to be able to do that, and I do not think it fits in an undergraduate degree because I actually do not think they can see that. It is touched on.

Professor Konza: I think the opportunity to practise it —

Ms Sawers: Absolutely. And they need to see it in action and work with children to see the benefits of it and see that it is not punitive; it can be joyous.

My son could not read. All he wanted to be able to do was read. That is how I came to literacy. I think it is really important that we do not underestimate the skills it takes to learn to read. You can do them in many contexts. That is what is important. How it is working in the Kimberley or how it is working in Cape York—the context has to be taken into consideration. I think every school can be that context for children if there is that expertise and the support. It is complex.

The CHAIR: Robert said the report you referred us to shows that in Shanghai—Brian has here that in Shanghai, average weekly teaching time in class, 10 to 12 hours; in Australia 20 hours, so the teachers in Shanghai have more time for classroom observation, team teaching, school-based research, feedback, identifying learning needs, modelling good practice and active collaboration. Rather than having that hands-on, they are actually having more time for reflective teaching and looking at how they can do things better. Is that then, Robert, something you are looking at within your course—how it can be done?

Dr Faulkner: We are certainly passionate—I know we all are—about reflective practice and the days of teachers shutting their doors the first day in schools or as soon as they have had their probation signed off —

I was at a conference a little while ago in Melbourne where I asked a six years and out teacher, “How many visits have you had in your classroom?” She said, “Well, I had some in my first year, and since then nobody’s been into my classroom. This is a travesty.

The CHAIR: How many visits?

Dr Faulkner: Several in the first year-none —

The CHAIR: From who?

Dr Faulkner: From the principal or from colleague or that kind of thing.

The CHAIR: Right, so no-one is coming in —

Dr Faulkner: But since then, none at all. And this is not uncommon.

Ms Dawkins: It is part of the culture too; you just shut the door and nobody comes in.

The CHAIR: Apart from the principals, is it a good thing for parents to go into a classroom or not?

Dr Faulkner: Why not?

Professor Konza: It depends on the parent.

Dr Faulkner: Yes. I see this —

The CHAIR: Should we, as a committee, be encouraging parents to go in and, say, find out what your —

In Victoria I have heard that for some years they put up the curriculum at the beginning of the year so the parents know that in term 1 or semester 1 the children, maybe in the early years, are learning about dinosaurs, so that at home they can talk about dinosaurs and in term 2 they are learning about trains so at home they can talk about trains to help the children at school. As one of our recommendations should we be saying that parents should be more involved? It is a shame that our education department does not put that curriculum up at the start, but go in and ask the teachers what they are doing so that you can support the children.

Ms Dawkins: I think that already happens in schools. I think schools do a very good job of keeping parents on board. Having said that, the interesting thing is, traditionally in early childhood, parents have had huge involvement. But with so many working parents, you are often struggling to get parents to even come in on duty. It depends on your client base as well, of course. I do not know that that is really such a big deal. I think, by and large, teachers welcome parents into the classroom but I think the comment that teachers are not having their colleagues into their classroom is a really big issue. We are not sharing, which is what I was saying earlier.

The CHAIR: Active collaboration—the team teaching.

Professor Konza: Every teacher in Shanghai has a mentor—every teacher. Someone who has been teaching 40 years still has a mentor.

The CHAIR: In Shanghai?

Professor Konza: In Shanghai, yes. Every teacher has a mentor. It depends on the quality of the mentor, but that is the culture. Everything depends on the knowledge.

Dr Faulkner: I agree with Sue entirely. Anything we can do to encourage better parenting—first of all, to make parents realise that this teacher is going to be the most important person in your child's life. Good, effective communication and a sense of collaborative responsibility for teaching your child to read will make it or break it. I think most schools do make an effort. I think it is good to try anything we can do to encourage a more genuine partnership with parents, especially in those early years, when so many of our parents are stretched beyond belief because of other demands.

Mr P. ABETZ: When our kids went to school, three or four mums were always rostered to listen to kids read. Mum would drop the kids off at school or walk to school with the kids and stay at school until morning recess and in that time, especially with kids struggling a bit with reading, they would sit at the back of the classroom and hear the kids read and help the kids with reading. Is that sort of thing still done?

Professor Konza: Absolutely. It depends on the parents' availability. They might be available but they may not have the resources emotionally or in lots of other ways to do that. That certainly happens.

The CHAIR: In some schools.

Dr Faulkner: But probably not in the 10 per cent we are talking about.

Professor Konza: No.

The CHAIR: This is a very interesting topic and we have appreciated this. Can I give you each one minute; the gold coins are in the pot; the money is there and we can possibly make a recommendation that could make a big difference to education, so I will give you 60 seconds to think about two recommendations. What would your two recommendations be for us to make to the government? If you were us sitting here and we were going to make two recommendations to the

government to try to make a difference, what would they be? We will not make you go first, Sue, because you are still the student. So I will put the pressure on Robert to start with.

Dr Faulkner: My first one would be better provision in early—I mean early—childhood for proper diagnostic assessment and intervention support with early language and literacy—more resources on the ground at that level in schools.

The CHAIR: So, kindergarten and preprimary.

Dr Faulkner: Kindergarten and preprimary. Well, kindergarten, if not before; but certainly kindergarten where we need much more support for proper diagnostic assessment; proper differentiating.

The CHAIR: Not just the peds?

Dr Faulkner: Much more. Yes. We are talking about foetal alcohol syndrome. Sue has talked about that but we do not have time to go into it here. The amount of resources being spent on special needs at that kind of level is not sufficient for people to really be able to differentiate properly between these kinds of things. How is autism different from foetal alcohol syndrome stuff? What does that mean for the teaching of literacy? We do not have enough resources in early childhood education, number one.

The CHAIR: Maybe not just kindergarten, from what you are saying, maybe the child health nurse first.

Dr Faulkner: Absolutely.

The CHAIR: More on trying to identify the children who are not developing as well as they should.

Dr Faulkner: Yes.

The CHAIR: That was one; what is the second one?

Dr Faulkner: The other one is about parental commitment. I will get on my hobby horse. I am a musician. I think we need to do much more about encouraging secure attachment between infant and mother and one of the ways we could do that is through much more support of their communicative behaviour. By that I mean we need to put singing back into early childhood education at all levels because there is not enough of that. That is just a pet hobby horse—music making and singing in particular as the basis of all oral language; as the basis of first human communication; and as a fundamental way of people developing social identity and communicative functions. Too many of our professionals, whether they are teachers or health professionals, have not got a clue about literature on early mother–infant interaction in terms of communicative musicality.

The CHAIR: Deslea.

Professor Konza: A minute! Early identification; school resources that would pick up—we certainly cannot wait a year; it would have to be school based because it is that many kids—and be responsible for identifying—not identifying because the teachers will do that—but working with those children on a kind of cyclical basis starting as early as possible and you can identify these children who do not have phonemic abilities, with a very simple rhyming test very early. The other thing is developing real expertise in those people who will be that school-based resource. I think there has to be money put into working with those people. Working with the principals means you get leadership, but you cannot do it enough; working with the teachers, there are too many. We need to work with those people who will be those experts in the schools, who really do develop a deep knowledge because then there will be a school-based resource for them. But we need to ensure that they have not just put their hand up to be the literacy person. Training needs to go into people who say, “I want to help these kids who are behind and I want to learn how to do it.” I do not know how many that would mean, but that is where we will make the difference. In the project I am working

with in the northern region of South Australia, I am the one running around driving hundreds of kilometres because they do not have that. It is clearly not sustainable and that is what we will have to do. Can I have another one? That is about looking at the programs where we are making inroads into the attendance of our Indigenous kids. I am not sure what they are doing in northern Queensland, but you cannot teach them if they are not there.

The CHAIR: They go for 100 per cent participation and if they are not there, they go and follow up the families.

Professor Konza: That is resource intensive. We somehow have to get a compromise between the time they spend at their funerals. We have to stop them dying; that would be a good start, and then get them back to school.

The CHAIR: Yvonne.

Ms Sawers: I am with the others regarding the key is the early learning. The key is the literacy and the oral language development and the early childhood development linking in with AEDI surveys and the support into those areas that need the support. I think the therapies and all those things should stick with the people. The speech therapies and all those things should be perhaps on site in schools and the support services to schools so there is a one-stop shop for early childhood. It is really important because it takes a community to raise a child and it cannot just be schools. That is my key. I think the teacher development and the mentoring programs are very good. What is working at Curtin very well, which I did not mention, was a coaching program so that there are a whole lot of coaches out there in schools that actually work with the lecturers at Curtin. They support the students when they are in the school. That whole system of coaching and mentoring would be very useful. I think we do not need to go down a punitive sort of testing regime and turn all the good practice into a test. I think that would not be a good outcome for children and I think teacher development is the key and definitely the creativity and joyous learning and that notion of early childhood practice being less, not more, but very creative and joyous; it is about drawing it altogether through the experts.

Ms Dawkins: Pretty much what Deslea said: those teachers who are working in special areas need to be genuine experts. Money needs to go into training them properly to deal with those children within the school rather than removing them from school and maybe even extend it to an after-school program that involves parents, because a lot of parents do not know how to help their children. They do not know what to do to help them with their literacy if those literacy experts are working with children in small groups in class and then maybe after school in some homework programs. That too might be useful to help parents in literacy.

The CHAIR: I thank you all very much for your evidence before the committee today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days from the date of the letter attached to it. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. Thank you all so much for staying long. We could stay here all night. It is great because referring this to the Grattan report as well is a case of how it is being done in the classroom and how we get that opus into the "how". We will certainly look very carefully again at your transcript because you have given us so many things to think about. Thank you.

Hearing concluded at 5.30 pm