

**EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO CHANGES TO THE POST-COMPULSORY  
CURRICULUM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**SESSION TWO**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN  
AT PERTH  
MONDAY, 12 JUNE 2006**

**Members**

**Mr T.G. Stephens (Chairman)**

**Dr E. Constable**

**Mrs D.J. Guise**

**Dr K.D. Hames**

**Mr J.N. Hyde**

**Mr T.K. Waldron**

**Mr M.P. Whitely**

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**Hearing commenced at 1.02 pm**

**TEMBY, MRS THERESE**  
**Chair, Curriculum Council, examined:**

**AXWORTHY, MR DAVID GEORGE**  
**Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you for attending today. These committee hearings are a proceeding of Parliament and they warrant the same respect that proceedings in the house itself demand. Even though you are not required to give evidence on oath, any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" forms?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you understand the notes attached; did you read the notes?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did you receive and read an information for witnesses briefing sheet regarding giving evidence before parliamentary committees?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** My intentions were to ask either of you to make a brief opening presentation about where we up to and to then make yourselves available for questions. How do you propose to handle what I am hoping will be the final presentation from the Curriculum Council to the committee on this issue?

**Mrs Temby:** Mr Axworthy will do that.

**Mr Axworthy:** I will keep my initial comments brief because I understand that we are called back because the committee has questions to ask of us. I am well aware of the amount of information that we have already sent in. We are more than happy to continue to answer any specific questions you may have. Just to put things in perspective of where we are right now, the council has, from the outset, said that it could work on an adaptive model in implementing these courses, which basically means that, as information comes to light that requires some adaptation or refinement to courses, it is noted and taken care of at the time. What has become apparent to the council is that, during the two to three years of preparation time for these courses in which courses were trialed in schools and action research was undertaken and many, many consultation meetings were held, the number of teachers who actively engaged in the courses at the micro level was relatively small. In some cases, it was as small as only 25 or so teachers who responded to earlier drafts and various versions and to the results of consultation. The result of that was that the council determined that, on the basis of the information we had, no response was a favourable response. We have now been engaged in producing the courses and running professional development. We have now run three professional development days with teachers of these courses. Some 6 000 have been involved in the courses. That is 6 000 teachers spread across the state for the 17 courses that are planned for implementation next year. As a result of that, we have received a vast amount of feedback. The majority of that feedback is about fine-grain detail of courses and requests for some points of clarification and some refinement to some aspects of the courses. We have undertaken to do that. Our first major evaluation of our phase 1 courses - the four courses that are currently operating in

schools, which are English, engineering, media and aviation - is a rolling evaluation. We have given a commitment that any information that comes out of the evaluation of those courses will be taken on board and will lead to changes in our current regime. As a result of that, on 10 May the council issued a major change in policy regarding assessment. The reason for those changes came about partly as a result of the feedback from the phase 1 courses. That was predominantly from English teachers who were saying that while they now felt very confident in undertaking the course of study and while they welcomed the new courses of study from the students' point of view, there was a workload issue involved in assessing the courses. Taking that on board, the council made two major changes to the assessment process for all courses. That was delivered to teachers on 10 May. Following from that, we now have information that has come back from day 2 and day 3.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Can you elaborate what those two changes were on 10 May?

**Mr Axworthy:** I am sorry; I have a bit of a croaky throat.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We have a doctor standing by to attend to you!

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I will not be able to do anything.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** You could philosophise over him.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I will not even do that; I have known him too long.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The assessment might take a while!

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Make sure that it is fine-grain!

**Mr Axworthy:** I have already sent copies of this document but I am happy to distribute fresh copies now. In a nutshell, there were two major changes. One was to increase flexibility to allow teachers to use marks and percentages in marking students' work in the way in which they normally do or traditionally have done. Those marks can then be mapped back to the standards and outcomes of the new courses. That was number one. That was a commitment that we made some time ago in preparation largely for science and maths teachers, although not just those teachers. Those teachers had been telling us that they would prefer -

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** When you say that they can map percentages back to standards, who does that? Is it the teachers or is it done externally?

**Mr Axworthy:** In this particular case, it is teachers. I have been very clear that this is a change that was made on 10 May. The other change was to announce that we would continue to use an external examination in cases in which students are seeking a tertiary entrance score or ranking. We would use the external examination in a subject to statistically moderate the score from the school. That is the process that parallels the process that happens with TEE now. That was to ensure two things. The first was that students would not be privileged in one school compared with another school by virtue of a school assessing its own students either harder or easier than others. The second was to ensure that we had a comparability, not just within a subject across schools, but across subjects so that the ultimate mark that went towards a tertiary entrance ranking in English would be the same as the ranking in maths, physics, history or geography. Those were the two major policy changes that were announced. That was done on 10 May.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are we finished with that point? There was something else you were about to say?

**Mr Axworthy:** Further to that, there are changes, or refinements, we are now proposing to make to all courses. These are a series of changes largely involving more clarity for teachers in reading the documentation about the courses. It is to move the way in which formatting occurs on courses and the way in which we explain the courses so that it has a more familiar feel and look about it for teachers. The language we use is more precise and is more relevant to the particular discipline that we are talking about. In other words, when we are talking about economics, we use language that is

familiar to economics teachers, and when we are talking about physics, we use language that is more familiar to physics teachers. Those are changes and refinements that we have always said we would enact and have in place before day 4 of the professional department program, which occurs at the beginning of next term, which is about 20 July. These are changes or refinements that are ongoing. We have additionally said that, as all courses are implemented, there will be a rolling evaluation of particular courses so that further refinements can be made. I would like to bring to your attention that this is not unusual with syllabus and curriculum development, in particular, at the upper end of schooling. For years 11 and 12, traditionally the TEE syllabus materials were modified and changed, but not necessarily on a yearly basis. Every year there would be changes to some of the courses as content is added and as content is taken away and as courses need to be made more relevant to society. I am quite happy to leave my initial comments there.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Before we move to more general questions, the processes through which there is current consultation with the education community would suggest that there have been discussions on the weekend and opportunities for additional issues to be on the table, some of which are to be put before the council tonight. That is from evidence we have received from the director general. Do you want to speak to any of the issues that will go before the council tonight? Where are we up to with those issues?

[1.15 pm]

**Mrs Temby:** The issues that we are looking at tonight fall into a number of areas, including content, assessment and external examinations. In the area of content, one of the things that we are looking at is reformatting the courses of study into a much more familiar package. We are looking at translating that for teachers. We are looking at how teachers can use their existing work to keep up their confidence so when they go to the classrooms at the beginning of next year, they feel confident. How does what they have been doing at the moment relate and how can they use those materials in the new course of study? The wording in a number of courses needs amendments and refinement. That has come from the feedback from the teachers, particularly through professional development and also assessment seminars. In the assessment area, as David mentioned, we have already made the changes that we announced. We are now looking at whether there are other changes that we should be making to the assessment. That is an area that we are looking at tonight. Are there other changes that we should be making to the assessment so that teachers feel more confident with it?

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Can you elaborate on that?

**Mrs Temby:** We have handed out those changes and made changes so that teachers can use percentages, but we are looking at whether there is another way that we can help teachers with that. Is there some other thing that we can put in place to help teachers with percentages and standards, using both of them? That is what we are looking at. We will also look at the course outcomes to see whether there is something that we should be looking at in the future. In a number of courses, people have raised the social or the ethical outcome and where that fits in. That is the area of assessment.

In the external examination area, a number of specific things have come up from different courses, for example, the history course of study. It has been raised that the contexts should be more detailed. If we do that in a course of study, perhaps that would make teachers more comfortable with it. This is the area of examination. There are specific things like that but they relate to particular courses of study. They are the areas that we are looking at this evening.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In view of that, I need to obtain from you this week the outcomes of tonight's council meeting. I would like a detailed presentation at your earliest opportunity, ideally no later than the end of the week. I will request that.

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

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**The CHAIRMAN:** I would like a feel for the final decision of the Curriculum Council. How often does the Curriculum Council meet?

**Mrs Temby:** The Curriculum Council has a regular meeting once a month. However, over the past 12 months - the last six months of last year and the first part of this year - we have been meeting more often than that. Quite often we meet fortnightly. The meetings were scheduled to be held monthly but quite often they have been fortnightly.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you have a feeling for where we are up to in the other two sectors away from the government's own school system? How are the Catholic education sector and the independent schools responding to the resource issues of professional development? Are they also experiencing an injection of new programs and teacher development centres?

**Mrs Temby:** The Catholic education sector is looking at a different support mechanism to teacher development centres. They would prefer a more school-focussed support rather than teacher development centres. That is how they are proposing to look at increased support for their teachers. In terms of the independent sector, there is a mix between more school-based support or something more akin to teacher development centres where maybe schools take on responsibility. There is a mix of the different modes. It would be fair to say that both the independent sector and the Catholic education system are also looking at increased support for their teachers like the government sector.

**The CHAIRMAN:** One of the key issues that has been raised in the public debate and is also in our terms of reference is the issue of the sector's readiness to roll out the programs. What is the council's assessment of both the issue of readiness and the question of whether delay is warranted in view of the flexible nature of the curriculum changes that have been offered? Is there any comment from the Curriculum Council about the advantage or disadvantages associated with delaying or issues of readiness?

**Mr Axworthy:** When you see the feedback from our meeting tonight, you will find that the council will be speaking fairly much as one on these issues. If the refinements are made, we will see the independent sector, the Catholic sector and the government sector feeling much more confident about the capacity of their teachers to implement these courses next year.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What about the issue of the universities' readiness?

**Mr Axworthy:** The universities are certainly ready.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is that to cope with the variations on assessment issues?

**Mr Axworthy:** They made it very clear in a meeting last week. The two vice-chancellors met to confirm that the universities wanted a move towards outcomes education and did not want to see a delay in that process.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** These changes that you made on 10 May are very good. Subsequent to that, there has been strong, concerted opposition to the timetable of introduction. Suddenly after the meeting on the weekend, smiles were on the faces of those people who had been the main opponents. I was not here earlier today, but you have said that nothing much has changed and you are going to look into doing this and that - things you were planning to do anyway. You are saying nothing much has changed yet to turn those people around, if that is what you have done, from strong opposition a week ago to guarded support now after the meeting with the Premier, you must have made some fairly significant statements, concessions or promises. What you have told me today does not seem enough to turn around the strong opposition that was there a week ago. I would like you to explain why that is and what has happened that has convinced those people that maybe they will support it after all.

**Mr Axworthy:** There are a number of things. Firstly, it is one thing to be telling people that we will make refinements and it is another thing for people to see that those refinements are happening and occurring. In terms of the work that the council secretariat has been doing in refinements, we

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had two major workshops on Tuesday and Wednesday with teachers of the 17 courses. They were able to see for themselves their requirements put down on paper. That is one set of things that is seen as being put in practice. The other is to do with assessment. There have been discussions over the weekend about allowing teachers more flexibility. One of the problems that we have had all along is that I can send something out on 10 May to all teachers, but it goes out through principals and it works its way through the system. Teachers are busy; they do not always read the bits of paper and they do not always see the impact of what has been sent to them. People are now seeing that there is considerable flexibility. Many of the concerns that teachers had are being addressed by these changes and there are other changes that we can put into place.

One of the things that we have talked about is confirming these changes in plain English for teachers of those subjects. I really want to stress that we are talking about a subset of students and a subset of the courses. These are the courses of study that in the past had a TEE element, so they have taken the place of a previous TEE subject. Nobody seems to be unhappy about the changes and the way in which these will impact on the 60 to 70 per cent of students who will not be pursuing tertiary entrance. It is about those students who are pursuing a TEE and another TER. That is the point at which all of this conversation is centred. We have given some guarantees that teachers will be able to become more familiar with new content and new assessment regimes via an incremental change model rather than a forced "everyone's got to adopt this on day one next year" approach. Those are the sorts of changes that are sufficient for sector heads and union executives to be saying that that sits alongside of what our teachers are saying.

I would not underestimate the power of reformatting and reorganising previous work. We felt that the economics course was not ready to go into phase two this year, so it was put back until next year. In negotiating a reformatted form of that course, we documented all of our material in a format that was more familiar, as in the old TEE format. It was literally that format but with previous headings. When teachers around the state saw that, suddenly things fell into place much easier for them and they said, "Oh, is that what you mean? Are these the sorts of changes that we have?" That was done deliberately in order for us to have a fresh set of discussions and negotiations with the particular discipline of the economics course. This was a course that we had been talking about for three years and we had not come to a position where everyone was sufficiently happy to go ahead. If it worked in economics, it showed a powerful example of what would happen in some of the other courses. We have now shaped that up and taken them back to our panels of teachers and university representatives. Suddenly the fact that it is written in a familiar form enables people very quickly to see what is new and what is continuing. They can see that the vast majority of things are continuing. For instance, the vast majority of what we are going to be teaching in physics will be what we taught in physics TEE previously. There is a reassurance that the world has not totally changed. I do not want to belittle teachers and I do not want to talk them down but sometimes the changed format and the fact that it looks so different exaggerated the amount of difference rather than led them to understand where the true differences were.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I would like to take a moment to step back. I understand what the Curriculum Council is all about. I have the Curriculum Council Act with me; I was reading it on and off this morning.

[1.30 pm]

It is my understanding - correct me if I am wrong - that the Curriculum Council is an independent authority. Is that correct?

**Mrs Temby:** It is a statutory authority.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Can you give me an idea of the sorts of decisions that are made at council level, and then put into place by the secretariat? Tell me what you do at meetings. How micro do you manage the decisions that are made?

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**Mrs Temby:** I will use the example of the change in assessment. That was talked through over three meetings this year by council members to come to a position, and reach agreement around the table. Then the secretariat put that into operation. In coming to that position, the secretariat would put up the papers that canvassed the options and the way forward. The secretariat puts up the papers, and the council members consider and deliberate on them. This particular issue took, as I said, three meetings. Once agreement has been reached, it goes back, through the secretariat, out to the schools.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Are you able, under this act, to take direction from the minister?

**Mrs Temby:** Yes.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** What sorts of directions can you take from the minister?

**Mrs Temby:** The minister directs us in writing.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** To do what? To reassess assessment? Tell you to go back and have another look at something about the courses?

**Mrs Temby:** I assume she could, yes.

**Mr Axworthy:** Since the council was formed, and the act has been written, such an event has not taken place.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** There has never been a direction of that sort from the minister?

**Mr Axworthy:** No, but the act is quite clear that the minister can direct the council in writing, and that the written direction then needs to appear in our annual report and be tabled in Parliament.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I want to understand the most recent events. There was a meeting yesterday, attended by the Premier and the minister. As a result of that meeting, I am gathering from what has already been said, you will be having a meeting tonight?

**Mrs Temby:** No.

**Mr Axworthy:** No.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That is all right; I need to know from you. Some undertakings were made by the Premier at the weekend. Is that correct?

**Mrs Temby:** To answer your question, I need to go back a step, if I could.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I am trying to understand the sequence of events.

**Mrs Temby:** The council had a meeting last Wednesday, at which we looked at the feedback from the professional development days and the interim reports of the rolling evaluation of phase 1 courses. From that feedback, council resolved that there did need to be a number of refinements, and some other things needed to be attended to; for example, the one Mr Axworthy has talked about, of putting the courses into a different form. The council had already looked at those, but we needed to do some of those things. We actually ran out of time at that meeting to take that forward, but we resolved that refinements needed to be made, and that we needed to come back tonight to look at those refinements.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** In the meantime, there was a meeting yesterday. I understand there will be other meetings. Were either of you at that meeting yesterday?

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

**Mrs Temby:** We both were.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Were some undertakings made by the Premier for change, development, refinement, flexibility, clarity or whatever words you want to use? Is that correct?

**Mrs Temby:** We talked about refinement, clarity and flexibility.

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**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I do not understand the relationship between that meeting and what the council does. At some point, I would have thought, the council would have to translate whatever undertakings were made at one of those meetings.

**Mrs Temby:** Absolutely.

**Mr Axworthy:** That is absolutely correct.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I do not understand, when I look at this act, how the Premier can make decisions and give undertakings, and then you have to rubber stamp those. What will happen if you disagree with what he has decided to do?

**Mrs Temby:** The refinements that were under discussion yesterday had already been talked about by the council on the previous Wednesday, and the council will talk about them again. There was general discussion about all of those refinements with all of the parties present.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** So the Premier did not suggest any new things, different from what you had already agreed to do?

**Mrs Temby:** There are a number of specific matters in the refinements we were talking about that we have not actually signed off on, but a lot of specific matters came up that needed to be looked at. They came up last Wednesday, and in discussions yesterday, and they will need to come up in discussion tonight.

**Mr Axworthy:** Can I just add a little bit? Last Wednesday, the secretariat put up a paper to council members. That paper gave some background about the feedback from the phase 1 and 2 courses and the professional development. In noting that, the council said that we now needed to conduct some specific work on refining course content and looking at assessments. Step 1 of that work would be a course-by-course detailed audit. We are not making sweeping generalisation about all courses needing this or that. The feedback on some of the courses is that virtually nothing needs to be done because people are very happy with the way they are. Some others may need some minor working changes. Even when we make a statement along the lines that the social and ethical aspects in the science course are being questioned by science teachers, that is not strictly true in some science subjects, but it is in others. In the earth and environmental science areas, for example, the teachers are very strong in wanting that social aspect maintained, included and assessed. We just need to be very careful what we do. We said that we would go through and provide a course-by-course audit to identify where minor changes or refinements need to be made so that those could run on. If there was anything in that course-by-course audit that indicated the need for a shift from existing council policy, we would bring that back to the council for ratification. That is where we got to on Wednesday.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Did the Premier give undertakings yesterday to the various teachers about any changes or clarifications?

**Mr Axworthy:** He gave no undertakings - as in commitments?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Yes.

**Mr Axworthy:** No, he did not.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I have a hypothetical question. If the minister or the Premier did give an undertaking or commitment, it would still have to be agreed to at a council meeting. Is that correct? I just want to understand the process.

**Mrs Temby:** The council would need to agree to it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Either that, or it would be subject to direction.

**Mrs Temby:** Or be subject to direction.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** That has to follow the course you described earlier?

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**Mr Axworthy:** It needs to be in writing, and needs to be tabled in Parliament.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That direction can be about anything you do at the council?

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes, that is provided for in the act.

**Mrs Temby:** We then have to report on that direction in our annual report.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I remember that.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** The Premier is probably a bit like me. I want some reassurances that you have not thrown the baby out with the bathwater. From what I have heard this morning, what I am gauging from you and what I have read in the media, if it is heading down the track I think it is, including what you have already announced, that will provide a lot more confidence in the system on the part of teachers and the public. I think Martin will explore a bit more about the changes to the assessment, which he did well this morning. Identifying the essential content of what was in the syllabus, but was not clear, is also welcome. I understand that part of the debate you intend to have is also about weighting, for example, the 25 per cent for outcome 4 in science. That is also a useful conversation. So far, from what I have heard about clarification of the standards, moderation of scaling and an acceptance that the consultation in the early days was with a very small number of people, which should have signalled something and thankfully is being accepted now, I am seeing some movement here. The question I have put to the Department of Education and Training is the same one I will put to you. How will you sell it to the public? First of all, you have to convince your educators, so you must sell it to the teachers, the students and the parents. The other factor I left out is a big one for me. Refinement of the language in some of this stuff is necessary. I agree with the gobbledegook statement in some respects. The way that was written was pure nonsense. A year 11 student told me that it would be really good if it was written in such a way that he could understand it. That signifies to me that there is a problem. The fact that you are revisiting that, and that you are doing these other things, which we will explore in a bit more depth, is all positive for me, from where I am sitting. That is good. However, to get this out of the political arena and back into the education one where it bloody-well belongs, how are you going to sell these changes? I want to know how you intend to sell it, and get the message out to those three tiers.

**Mr Axworthy:** Fundamentally, the change must come directly through the teachers who are concerned, because it is largely through the teachers that the parents get their information. Anything that is looked at about getting information to parents would indicate that parents are very suspicious of anyone giving them information about education unless it is the teacher that is teaching their children. While we can put things on council web sites and put it out generally in the public arena, if the classroom teacher who is teaching a child is saying to that child's parent that it is rubbish or that he does not believe it, it is dead in the water. Fundamentally, it involves getting to the teachers who will be teaching these courses. How are we going to do that? The answer is not about just what the Curriculum Council will do as a statutory body. It is about what the representatives, the people who sit around the council table, will do. What part do they have to play in selling this? I mean the Department of Education and Training, AISWA, the Catholic Education Commission, the teachers' representative, who is Mike Keely of the teachers' union. What will they be doing to sell this? We have members representing industry and the universities. What will they be doing in their sectors to sell this? We can do some things. What will the council and its secretariat do immediately? We have two more days of professional development to roll, and we have a web site. Those channels will obviously be used. Tomorrow an e-mail will go out to all of the networks to which we have access that the teachers who have been to any of the day 1, 2 or 3 courses belong, to inform them that there are further refinements coming, and asking them to stay tuned and they will get that fresh information when it is available. The day 4 professional development will need to be, not a generic professional development day, but something quite specific for drama teachers, physics teachers and biological science teachers. The challenge for us is that, if we have heard the comments they gave us on the first day and we have addressed them,

then this product will sell itself, and I believe it will. I believe we have listened to the comments and we are adapting and adopting the issues that they have raised, and making things clear.

You mentioned the language problem. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. When you develop these courses, you tend to get teachers together who are experts in their areas. Typically, if people are prepared to come in and spend additional time to work on such things, they are usually those at the forefront of wanting to introduce a new course, and they tend to go for broke over the language they use. I accept straightaway that there has been a tendency that the language that has been used has not been the language of either the common person or the common classroom teacher of physics or economics, or whatever, but it has been the language of the outcomes-based educator, and they have pitched it at that end. That has not been helpful in explaining to the regular person who wants to move down that track. That is a fault we have had in our communication. I readily accept responsibility for my part in that.

[1.45 pm]

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Did I get it right this morning: is the Curriculum Council assisting with putting together a DVD for teachers with all the relevant information on it? Are you assisting with that or is that just something that the department is doing?

**Mr Axworthy:** There are a number of CD-Roms, PowerPoint presentations and a whole raft of things. In addition, life does get complicated because of this arrangement of combining sectors and whatever. However, we still have the task force that was established, and that task force had membership from the council and each of the three schooling sectors. So that group meets to talk about implementation issues and to have joint projects together. So that kind of work is operating, because for us it is always helpful if one sector goes off on its own and does something; but we have to take all sectors with us from our point of view, so we want to try to share that across Catholic education, AISWA and the government school system.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** What I am hearing develop is a recognition that there are actually two cohorts that years 11 and 12 are dealing with: there is the vast majority of students, about 70-plus per cent, who do not go on to university, and 27 per cent who do. The concern that I had, and it has become less because of some of the changes that Di was talking about previously, was that we are actually trying to advantage the 73 per cent at the risk of losing some of the validity in the way we rank the other 27 per cent; is that right?

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

**Mrs Temby:** Yes.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** I am really encouraged to hear that teachers can go from outcomes and objectives, design a test and then come up with a percentage score; is that all right?

**Mrs Temby:** Yes.

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** And that is orientated for the academic pathway, the 3A and 3B levels of courses particularly. However, I heard David describe it as an incremental change. Is that where we are going to as a first step and going to OBE afterwards? If it is our final placement, I am happy, I am comfortable; but not if it is an incremental step towards softening them up for something later on.

**Mr Axworthy:** No. I am sorry, when I said incremental change, it is the notion of taking it one step further. What we already have said to teachers is that we have the scales along the side here of standards, level 1 to level 8, and if teachers are able to use those levels for what has been called "levelling" in order to give kids a level and a rank, they can do so. In the first instance, the council was saying that that was the only way teachers should be assessing under this regime, and that every teacher had to do so. Increasingly, teachers are saying that it is not natural to them and those scales

are not in either sufficient clarity or sufficient fine-grain detail to enable them to do that work. So we said the indirect way - that is what 10 May was about - is they can still use their marks and map back to the standards. I guess what I am saying is that there are still probably teachers out there who are saying that they are not ready to do that yet because they are not used to these standards and this is all new stuff for them. So the incremental bit that I was talking about was the council maybe doing that for teachers.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Good.

**Mr Axworthy:** So you can see that I am saying that the teacher can give the mark and tell us about the mark and the unit and we will refer it back to a standard for them.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Because if I understand correctly, people like those on PLATO have been raising that criticism. They are saying things like they do not mind if they produce the 100 per cent and if they want to force fit a subject to a scaling process that ensures academic validity and force fit levels at the end, they are not uncomfortable with that. However, I was concerned to think that this was a step towards the next process. So that is the question I asked when you were going through your spiel about whether teachers convert at the end. You are saying they do not have to do so, and that it can be done by board examiners or -

**Mr Axworthy:** I think that is exactly the point. Right now we are saying that teachers will have to do so. That is what the current policy says - teachers will do that.

**Mrs Temby:** Yes.

**Mr Axworthy:** The suggestion, the easing if you like, the transition -

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Yes, of the reform.

**Mr Axworthy:** Whatever. The transition is that we can do that for them.

**Mrs Temby:** Yes.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Okay; that is good. So that is one of the changes that is emerging.

**Mrs Temby:** It is a discussion point. We are having a discussion on that tonight; so that is the position at the moment.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** If it goes well - put it that way.

**Mrs Temby:** Yes.

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes, I am sorry. Just appreciate that we are in an awkward position between meeting and -

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** You also outlined what was going to happen in the two more days of PD, but it has been put to me that teachers had been told to develop a curricula around the course of study. That is not what is going to happen, is it?

**Mr Axworthy:** We published a document in November last year that said what would happen on the five days worth of professional development, and always day four and day five were given over to talking about the assessment aspects, plus an opportunity for teachers to bring back to a larger group of their colleagues any planning or any work that they had already done; but the issues about assessment were always going to be structured to days four and five. So in this particular case, if there are changes, as there have been changes already on 10 May and further changes, that is what will -

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** So that will inform what happens. Therefore, that statement or understanding might have been true back last November.

**Mr Axworthy:** That is correct.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** But because we have moved from a less purist model of OBE -

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**Mr Axworthy:** That is correct.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** It is not OBE really at all, but that is academic. You have actually quite a different pathway rolling out for days four and five.

**Mr Axworthy:** That is true, and it will be very much differentiated according to the courses.

**Mrs Temby:** Yes.

**Mr Axworthy:** I think we may well see in drama studies, for example, where there is going to be little change and the teachers are saying they are gung-ho and want to go ahead, that the professional development there will be a greater opportunity for teachers to share ideas that they already have and are planning. In those areas such as physics, where they have not done so much of that -

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** In a sense, what is emerging, as I have always thought, is that English teachers would be more comfortable with this sort of process than maths teachers, because it is the nature of the subject.

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** It is the subjective - the necessary assessing to some sort of criteria.

**Mr Axworthy:** Less content.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** It is less content and assessing to some sort of criteria. I always thought they would be more comfortable with that than with an ambiguity. That is in a sense where we are headed, are we not? We are actually abandoning this sort of rigid, one-size-fits-all approach and allowing it to be more flexible to match the nature of the subjects and the backgrounds of the teachers as well, are we not?

**Mr Axworthy:** That is exactly it.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** I have a whole bunch of stuff about scaling, but I am happy if others want to have a go and I will come back to that later.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** If these courses were delayed, do you think the damage to students would be greater? With the changes that are happening, if you did delay it, would the loss to students be greater than if you went ahead, even though things were not quite finalised? In "advantage" to the kids, I am thinking about students who are actually -

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That is assuming there is a loss either way; there may not be any loss.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I did not mean the question to be negative; I actually meant it to be positive. What I was trying to say was - because it was suggested this morning - that if there was delay, that would be very detrimental to students, yet there is a feeling in the public that if we rush this and we are still making changes on the run, that will be detrimental. I just want your comments on that aspect.

**Mrs Temby:** I think that for the students, and they are coming to perhaps three areas, that a delay would disadvantage them. I think in terms of schools, they have been gearing up for this. Many schools have published their handbooks and have had parent evenings, and all of that process that they have done is out there. Students have selected where they are going, what subjects they are doing and what courses they are doing next year. There is the whole process happening for year 10s at the moment, so I think that would all have to be undone. In terms of the students that are TEE students at the moment, if there was to be delay considered, those students would be disadvantaged, because the idea is that students now can count all of the subjects for their tertiary entrance rank. If we were to delay it, it would keep that very narrow focus of TEE subjects that we have, unlike other states. So, that widening of the courses available for students would not be available. For the what we call non-TEE students, the other group of students, they would be locked into the pathways that they are locked into at the moment, making these decisions at year 10

and not having the capacity to move one way or the other, and I think that would be a disadvantage. So for those students, a delay would mean that the cohort students would not have the capacity then to move this way or that way. So I think they are three areas that I can see that we really should be going forward on.

**Mr Axworthy:** I agree entirely with Therese's comments. I would also add that if we thought the refinements in the changes that we thought were good but were moving teachers further away from where they already are -

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** No, they are not.

**Mr Axworthy:** Then I would have some sympathy; there could be some sort of question here. However, since the refinements that we are talking about are to build a stronger bridge for teachers from where they are now, I see no dangers.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Just carrying on from what "Tuck" has said, and I understand some courses are perhaps more ready than others, and some teachers are more ready than others, what would be the difference for a child in year 10 now and year 11 next year if there was a delay with those same children from the year before who have gone through and now just finished year 11? Would those kids, if it were delayed, have anything whatever different from those students who have just finished year 11?

**Mr Axworthy:** There are large numbers of students who, under the existing TEE course structure, take TEE courses and do not succeed and do not do well in their TEE courses and as a result of that are penalised and have difficulty in either gaining access to TAFE courses or in getting VET - vocational education and training - qualifications recognised at the same time. One of the great things that this offers for students is the fact that they do not have to make a definitive choice at the age of 15 or 14 and a half when they are in year 10.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** David, can I just interrupt because you are not answering my question?

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** You are in effect giving a critique of the current system and the impediments that it imposes. The children who have just finished year 11 now have had those same impediments, if they exist.

**Mrs Temby:** Yes.

**Mr Axworthy:** They have.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Presumably, if the course was delayed, those children whose course was delayed would have those exact same things as the ones who have just finished year 11.

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** So they may be disadvantaged in terms of what you think they could have had under the new system, but they will not be disadvantaged in comparison with the kids who have just finished year 11, will they?

**Mr Axworthy:** I was using an absolute about "disadvantaged". I think they are disadvantaged and I think in economic terms we would say there are opportunity costs attached to doing that.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Sure.

**Mr Axworthy:** In human terms, I would say -

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Yes, but the disadvantage is the opportunity costs, not in comparison with the kids who have just finished year 11.

**Mr Axworthy:** We would be denying them opportunities; that is all.

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**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** I will ask a question based on what I heard this morning. Are there students who are actually going down a particular path at the moment in a course of study who would then find if there were delay that what they are doing currently would not count towards graduation? An example was given about the School Apprenticeship Link program, for example, and that if there were delay, the courses those students are currently doing would not count towards graduation. That is a very definite example.

**Mrs Temby:** Yes.

**Mr Axworthy:** That is absolutely the case. As I said, this conversation and most of these conversations focus on the TER kids and it focuses on the council-developed courses. There is a whole raft of council-endorsed courses and ways by which students can get - what in the old days we would have called graduation - their WACE, the WA Certificate of Education, and they can get recognition. Those would be things that would be denied for students.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Can you tell me all the changes, clarifications or refinements that have occurred since the end of first term last year? If you cannot tell me now, I am sure you are sending things out to the schools all the time and I would be happy to receive those by the end of the week if it would save time right now.

**Mrs Temby:** Perhaps we could start with the major ones.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Yes, do that, but I would really like a list of them and maybe the supporting documents that you would have sent out to schools with those changes. I think a package of those would be worthwhile getting. We do not need it all now; but go ahead on the major ones.

[2.00 pm]

**Mrs Temby:** The major one is the courses of study. Originally, 20 courses of study were scheduled to commence next year, and three of those have been delayed because they were not ready; that is, religion and life, integrated science and economics. The second major change is the assessment changes that we have put out for you. A third change that is of the same magnitude is, as David mentioned previously, council-endorsed subjects. At the end of last year we put out the draft process on council-endorsed programs. We have worked on that and made changes to the draft, and that has now come out. At the end of last year schools received a handbook that contained some of the policy changes that were finalised and some that were in draft format. They have all now been formalised. I do not know whether that could be classed as a major change. It is really moving it from draft to final.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I think I do count that as a change.

**Mr Axworthy:** The other changes were the two additional professional development days that were provided for schools and the PD program of five days, which I outlined earlier, and that was published in November last year.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I want to make sure that I understand what is going on. Given yesterday's meeting and your continuing meetings, there will be continuing change and refinement as we go along. I know that we have talked about it today, but can you quickly give a list of the sorts of things you see happening this year that will affect the introduction of courses in 2007?

**Mrs Temby:** The first one is the reformatting of the courses so that they are more like the current syllabus format. Together with that, there is the clarity of the language and refinements to the language of the standards in particular. We are looking at further refinements to assessment. We are looking at refinements to the examinations, and that differs from course to course. I gave the example of the history course, in which we would detail the context.

**Mr Axworthy:** I will comment on some very specific things that we have seen. We have been told by teachers that some of the language in what was previously the English as a second language

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course is a little complex for the kids who will be looking at it, and that something like a glossary of terms would be required.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Some of these things sound so obvious now. Why has it reached this point? Why would you present a course like that in language that was difficult for a student? How have we got to this point?

**Mr Axworthy:** As I explained before, in the development of the courses, the course writers who were drawn in did the very best they could and relied on the consultation process to shape things. Maybe this is just human nature, but teachers did not engage in some of these things at the depth that we hoped they would.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Yes, but let us put ourselves in the seat of the person writing the course. A person who is going to give a lecture would ask himself who his audience is, especially with an English course. This would be funny if it were not so serious.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The public debate seems to have focused on the fact that there were advocates for refinements, and apparently there is nothing wrong with a refinement. However, if you make a change or back down, that is suddenly the basis for the need to defer. The language that is being used includes the word "refinement", but when the word "refinement" is used, it has been used with a series of commas. That can then result in the headline that dramatic changes still to come equal defer. I have a sense that the Curriculum Council's job is to refine all the time. Presumably, refining all the time is what the Curriculum Council has done historically. You have previously been involved in refinements that have not scored headlines indicating dramatic change, and therefore it all happens. If there were someone more tricky than Dr Constable in the room -

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Excuse me?

**The CHAIRMAN:** You would never be tricky.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Norm Marlborough called me forensic.

**The CHAIRMAN:** If you were faced with people who wanted to make mischief, you could say that this is simply extremely unusual and you are refining and shaping and are listening and responsive to the debate. Is this not what you do all the time?

**Mr Axworthy:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I have not read the act in great detail, but I presume that the Curriculum Council -

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** It does not say a lot in great detail.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Presumably, it gives you the opportunity to be shaping and refining and responsive all the time, and hopefully that is what you do all the time. However, on this occasion, you have been involved in a very large one and you will continue to refine.

**Mr Axworthy:** That is absolutely right. It is just unfortunate that we are not in a neutral climate and teachers do not find themselves in a neutral climate in which they can engage in assisting us to get things right.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** However, it could never be a neutral climate when it involves all the children in the state, parents and everyone else, and you would not want it to be, surely?

**Mr Axworthy:** It is a very unforgiving, zero tolerance.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** From what I have heard today, even if you had taken other courses of consultation and communication, do you feel that no matter how much you had done, once you started to implement it, there would have been an outcry because it was so new?

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes. Historically, that has been the case. Whenever there has been a syllabus change in a TEE course -

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** The problem with that is the perception or understanding of the general public and I have been listening to it and the reaction has been very strong.

**The CHAIRMAN:** One of the things we discovered in New South Wales, for instance, was that it was able to change a lot of the direction, but its high school certificate did not change. We are moving to a system to embrace this - that is, WACE - which will give you a few extra essential changes that will create more uncertainty than might otherwise have been necessary, except that we have some fundamentals that we have to get over. That is a convoluted way of saying that more terminology had to be changed to accommodate the fundamentals.

**Mr Axworthy:** One of the problems is that the change has taken so long to come about. We are the last state in Australia to adopt some changes, and so a lot of things that needed to be changed have built up. Certainly, the changes that occurred in New South Wales were not without a fair degree of screaming and shouting through both the press and the political arena, but the time line that it gave for the change was very short, so it curtailed it into about 18 months; whereas we have been talking about the change for many, many years without actually getting to the pointy end of it, and now we are at the pointy end.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** I just want to make one comment. I am also hearing that you are arguing that in the early stages, those who were engaged in the process were those who were OBE purists or enthusiasts and they tended to get a response only from those who had a similar opinion. Once it came to the implementation test, you ran into the sorts of concerns that we have seen. That is a natural progression, given the longer time frame for implementation.

Will all students do the general aptitude test?

**Mr Axworthy:** This year, yes.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Have year 11s done it yet?

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Will they do it going into year 11 or at the end of year 12?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** They did it last week.

**Mr Axworthy:** This year we have asked all students who are studying a new course of study to do this test. That is predominantly year 11s. There are a few aviation students in year 12, and there may even be a few year 10 students.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** On an ongoing basis, when will it be done?

**Mr Axworthy:** The simple answer to that is that we are not sure. We have said that, as a research project, we will investigate the usefulness of the GAT, or something similar, and see where it is useful and how and where it can best be used. We want to use it in the moderation and comparability of marks across schools and across courses, and we want to look at its usefulness in doing that.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** There is a system of scaling that compares performances of cohorts across subjects.

**Mr Axworthy:** Average mark scaling.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** If we continue with that system, given that you are going from 22 subjects to 47 subjects, it seems to me that, statistically, that may not be as valid. Is that how you see the GAT reinforcing that process?

**Mr Axworthy:** It has the potential to be used to reinforce that process.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** If the cohorts are too small - do you understand the point I am making?

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**Mr Axworthy:** Absolutely. One of the problems with average mark scaling is with those courses that have small groups. Last year modern Greek had six students. Any kind of statistical methodology with six students will not be anywhere near as valid as that with 6 000.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** It also seems to me that there is another opportunity for a general aptitude test. Fundamentally, there will be subjects with two cohorts of kids; that is, those who do not sit the exam and are not university bound, whom I will call vocational kids, and those who are academic kids. If a scaling test performance is used in the general aptitude test, there is the basis for comparing the performance of those kids who will be assessed largely with levels and those kids who will be assessed largely with marks. There is an opportunity to do a bit of a match and give a mark. Perhaps it will not be a tertiary entrance ranking, because many of those kids are not headed for tertiary education. However, there is an opportunity to give them an index of educational performance, or something like that. Do you understand?

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes, I do.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Is that an idea that has been explored?

**Mr Axworthy:** It is an idea that will be explored as part of the research that we are doing this year. We are also very interested in using something like a general aptitude test. In the old days it was the ASAT. That can be used for the scaling at the end, almost in a post-hoc way, or it can be used earlier. It can start to be used in year 11 and then we can start doing some moderation and give feedback to schools about their cohort results early in the piece, rather than leaving it until the end of year 12. There is a variety of things that the GAT could potentially be used for. The problem, of course, is that whole-cohort testing is expensive and it takes time from schools. We need to see that it is worthwhile for schools.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** It seems to me that there is one advantage to this. The changed system is supposed to open pathways. No system is perfect, but there is the potential to have a more objective basis for comparing vocational and academic kids. Universities might be able to say that this vocational kid did very well on the level assessments and he might go no further, or the university might look at his general aptitude test and say that he is also a bright kid and it will take a punt and offer him a position. It is not a guarantee of tertiary entrances in the way that the TER is, but it may open further pathways.

[2.15 pm]

If we do not have that sort of process, we will always be stuck with a mismatch between vocational levelling and academic exam results. Obviously, it is not a decision that must be made now; it is something that can be done further down the track. It is not something that we have to resolve by the end of this week; however, it is certainly worthy of consideration.

**Mr Axworthy:** The decision to have the GAT came out of the Robson task force last year. Funding was provided for two years for a research project. This year it is being run with all students - although, basically it applies to the year 11 students - so that we can get advanced warning about how this kind of assessment process is running and where we could put it. If what comes out of it is that there is a way forward, we will go back to the government and ask for funding so that it can continue in the future.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Will you elaborate on its use for moderation in year 11? I have not quite got my head around how that will work.

**Mr Axworthy:** At the end of this semester, we will get from every student and every school a level and a band on the scale, whether or not it has come through marks. We will have that. We will also have a GAT for schools. If it does not match up, either a teacher is teaching very well and exceeding - in which case we should all visit that teacher and see what it is that he or she is doing that is wonderful for kids - or he or she is assessing kids too lightly or easily.

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**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** So, it does not answer the question; rather, it raises questions?

**Mr Axworthy:** It raises questions. That is why I said that we would be using it at the front end as part of our consensus moderation. It is an extra bit of information that a school gets. This year there is certainly no suggestion that any student's scores will be moved up, down or around. It is just an extra piece of information.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** I understand that.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I am still not convinced about what some people have said about less able students being better off under the new system. A number of good educators have told me that that will not necessarily be the case. The idea that the system will move from 400 subjects to 47 seems to narrow the situation for less able students. Whereas less able students once could do senior English or some other subject, they are now in a class with bright students doing English. They will struggle with level 3 or 4, or however it will be assessed, and they will not get the sense of achievement that people say they currently get under the courses that are available. Can you comment on that? Has the Curriculum Council considered any changes or developments to take into account the needs of these students?

**Mr Axworthy:** In addition to the 47 to 50 council-designed courses, there is an unlimited number of what we call council-endorsed subjects or units or bits of courses. It is possible for a student to graduate to gain a WACE having studied half of their course in terms of council-endorsed units. They would not meet the requirements for university.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Is that five of 10?

**Mr Axworthy:** No, it is 10 of 20. The reason that we have thrown that open is to cater for two major groups of students. The first group is those who are less academically orientated. They are the students who have been traditional clients of educational support facilities or who traditionally would have dropped out of school and would have been lost to the school sector. To cater for those students we have council-endorsed courses. Many of those alternative courses - which is what they have been called in the past - for students at risk can continue, and they will continue. However, the school can get those courses endorsed and recognised by the council. Many students in educational support would be capable of achieving quite well in one or two of the regular, mainstream 50 courses. However, they can make up the rest of their course through council-endorsed subjects. The other group is vocational students who want to do part of their course in vocational education training course or an AQTF qualified course, but not within the school setting. There are ways for those students to have those courses recognised under the council-endorsed aspect of the program.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** However, to get a WACE they would need a level 4 in English, whatever their combination of subjects. Is that correct?

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes. However, having said that, every student will get a record of their achievement at the end.

**Mrs Temby:** We have had significant consultation, particularly with the special needs groups, and they are very comfortable with the idea of a record of achievement.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** When was the decision about what you just told me made?

**Mrs Temby:** Council-endorsed units have always been a part of the process.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** And the 10 of 20?

**Mrs Temby:** No, that is the change.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** When was that change made?

**Mrs Temby:** I think it was earlier this year; I would have to look up exactly when it was. It was eight and 12 and we changed it to 10 and 10.

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**Mr Axworthy:** I suspect that it was made at the April meeting, but I would need to clarify that.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** In a small country school, the subject of early childhood might be taught and all students might be in the same class but some of them might do a modified course within that class. Does that course have to be a council-endorsed course or can it run separately?

**Mrs Temby:** It could run as one class and some students could do it as council developed and others as council endorsed because it has less content, different content or something of that nature.

**Mr Axworthy:** One of the great benefits of this - and the major reason that we have found ourselves in this almost content-free, context-free environment - is to cater for those students in the 1A, 1B units of courses. In a sense there has been a bit of a creep through into the 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B courses. Some of the refinements we are making in terms of specifying content and context for external examinations, which are at the upper end of the courses, could still leave us with flexibility at the lower end. The English course is only one term into it. In English there were three levels: straight English, ESL and English literature. There was an English course, a general English course and a vocational English course, virtually in that order of demand. Those have been brought into the one English course. The teachers of VOC English or general English are saying overwhelmingly that they are quite capable of putting their previous materials and content into the council course.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Do you think there will be a council-endorsed English course?

**Mr Axworthy:** We have looked at that. We do not see a need for it unless a school puts it up and makes a case for it. One of the courses that is frequently put to us is a course that was originally designed for adults who are trying to return to the work force. It is like a returning English course. Some TAFE colleges have used it for young students, but it is really designed for middle-aged people. A few schools have picked that up and considered whether that would be a good course to run as a council-endorsed subject. However, having looked at it, they have decided that they would get more flexibility running the existing council course as 1A and 1B because they would have all the flexibility they need. It is theoretically possible if a school wants to do it. Another example is physical education studies. A number of schools currently run alternative education programs around a sporting notion, usually for boys, such as a football program. Those schools would have the choice of bringing their existing program in under the guise of physical education studies in 1A and 1B, which can be done with a bit of movement and tweaking. They would have to adopt a semesterised system or have the existing physical education football program recognised as a council-endorsed course. Both are possible and there are gains either way.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** The refinements being made now are based on the feedback from day 1 and 2 -

**Mrs Temby:** Day 2 and 3.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** So, it does include two and three, because that caused some angst for the union?

**Mr Axworthy:** Day 2 and 3 and the feedback from the phase 1 courses brought together.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Excellent. That is quite up-to-date. As you have already indicated - I think you are quite right - you have to win the hearts and minds of everybody. The refinements are positive. The world as we know it has not changed necessarily and we will all wake up tomorrow morning. The key to this is improving the confidence of teachers in their ability to do this, because if you do that, you will win the hearts and minds of students and parents. I understand that discussions were held over the weekend. Given your meeting tonight, do you envisage further discussions during the week with the representatives of the two teacher groups - the independent teachers' union and SSTWA - about what you envisage and about what results from your discussions tonight? It is imperative that you make sure that they are up-to-date with where your thinking is at and with what is happening, so that you win their hearts and minds so that we can get on with it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are both groups represented?

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**Mrs Temby:** There is a teacher representative, and that person is from the State School Teachers' Union of WA. There is just the one.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** I knew there was one representative, but that is different from meeting with its executive, because the State School Teachers' Union of WA has another executive meeting and it will have to regroup if they are going to overturn its previous decision.

**Mr Axworthy:** It has a council meeting this coming weekend.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Are you planning to meet with it before next weekend?

**Mr Axworthy:** Absolutely.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** What about the independent teachers' union?

**Mr Axworthy:** The same.

**The CHAIRMAN:** How many students study English literature any given year?

**Mr Axworthy:** I do not know. I could find out, but I would not want to pluck out a number just now.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** What was the number we were given earlier? Was it 300?

**Mr Axworthy:** Three hundred students does not sound enough. I can provide that information.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Have you recently added some languages to the languages that students can study in years 11 and 12?

**Mr Axworthy:** In terms of the current TEE requirements, we have been asked by schools to get the universities to agree to accept for tertiary entrance requirements both Arabic and Hebrew. The council has written to TISC requesting that. It has gone from TISC to the universities. We are expecting a response. I imagine that they will agree to that. We have an arrangement with languages other than English, which involve a particularly small number of students.

[2.30 pm]

We do not necessarily have the examiners here in Perth or the capacity to set an examination in those subjects, so there is an arrangement for certain subjects around Australia when we know there will be small numbers and we borrow each others' examinations for the purpose of tertiary entrance. There is a separate process for scaling them which takes into account the fact that they have come from different states and territories. It is an issue for all of us. With respect to these courses, the issue is not so much whether we can offer them but whether the universities will allow students to count those subjects for their marks. If the universities will accept them, we will credit those courses and then it is just a question of whether teachers are available in WA to teach them.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In making that request to TISC, does the issue of whether that language is being utilised by a person for whom that language is their first language come into consideration?

**Mr Axworthy:** It has in that, at the moment we have languages for first-speaker languages and for people who do not have that as their first language, and criteria are attached on which we insist. It is one of those ongoing contentious issues for the Curriculum Council and previously the Secondary Education Authority.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In the inclusion of Arabic and Hebrew the assessment is done to deal with the issue?

**Mr Axworthy:** These are offered not as prime-speaker courses, but for second-language speakers. There are set criteria for that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is not without its complexities.

**Mr Axworthy:** No; it is not.

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**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** In terms of values and outcomes, I notice that the hard sciences of physics and chemistry will be temporarily removed, with their possible reintroduction with a lower weighting. Comments I have heard are that physics and chemistry teachers are not against having an ethics and values component included, but they want a lower value perhaps in the order of five to 10 per cent. Also, they would like to have a hand in the design and make it relate to concepts related to physics and chemistry, such as the nature of scientific proof and application of precautionary principles - things that teachers can get their heads around.

As a past accounting and finance teacher, I notice outcome 2 “Social factors influencing financial decisions”. How will that be built into the more content-focused courses? When I read some of this material, I struggle to understand it. An aspect of level 6 refers to understanding how cultures, beliefs, values and ethics of individuals and/or communities through legislation or other means ensures that financial decisions are acceptable in a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts. I do not get it. If certain processes do not go well, I might be teaching that in three years’ time. How do we make that meaningful to classroom teachers?

**Mrs Temby:** It may well be that that particular outcome receives a different weighting from science outcomes. There are other ones we need to look at for the weighting of that social outcome. Secondly, we are talking about the clarity of the wording around those. That is something that must happen.

**Mr Axworthy:** It is clarity of the language. Also in the accounting and finance course there is a need to be much more specific about the content.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Disclosure to third unrelated parties and duties to non-shareholders for example are real ethical issues that I can get my head around; they have values and ethics underpinning them, but not in that context. This is more of a plea than a question, and it follows from what Dianne Guise mentioned earlier. On my laptop screen I have the five-page course outline for year-12 economics, which would be the equivalent of 3A and 3B economics under OBE. It comprises five pages and includes dot points. I know exactly what it means. Students who have done the course should know exactly what it means. If not, they know that they need to find out, compared with the 45-page document I have for economics which, admittedly, covers streams 1A, 1B and all the way through to 3B. We need user-friendly information to indicate clearly what we need to know; for example, what is the weighting and how it can be assessed. We need that sort of language to come through to all students.

**Mrs Temby:** That is certainly what we are looking at. I think there are four pages -

**Mr Axworthy:** I have details on one unit, the 2A economics markets course.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Is it year 11 and 10 semester-one economics? It is typical.

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes. It has study outcomes, but they are written with words such as “Economic Inquiry Operation of the Economy”. It requires students to understand that economic forces influence the operation of the economy and are affected by the actions of individuals and firms, and understand how domestic and international economic forces influence. It is that kind of language, in a learning context that refers to commodity markets and a foreign exchange market - financial market.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** There will be very clearly a process of auditing what is in the document on my computer screen back to what is in the OBE requirements.

**Mr Axworthy:** Exactly.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** That will reassure, and give comfort and meaning. It is not just because we are all too lazy to read the material; it is because it is indecipherable.

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**Mr Axworthy:** That is right. You can see the essential content. It jumps out and teachers can see what they have to do. I will be interested to hear your comments, but teachers can read it and know that they can teach from it.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** When we had finished the course and we had three weeks leading into the TEE, I would give the kids a quiz. Some of the questions would be unrelated to economics; then I would go back to these questions and the students could check their progress. Frankly, that is easy to do with four or five pages; it is impossible with 45 pages, which can be overwhelming.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Have you given any thought to the possibility that there might be a major shift in the number of students doing certain subjects or courses of study - whatever you want to call them? Which ones do you see changing dramatically? It will have all sorts of implications, for not only the Curriculum Council but also for examinations and schools in terms of availability of good teachers. Can you give us some feeling for what stage you have reached with that?

**Mrs Temby:** Over time there will be some shifts. The number of courses that a university-bound student could study was limited. They can now take that suite, so there will be shifts. Some students who wanted to do aviation can now study that.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Do you see fewer students studying science in the future?

**Mr Axworthy:** I hope not.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** We all hope not, but do you think that is a possibility?

**Mr Axworthy:** Everything is a possibility. I really do not see it, in that we have gone to some lengths to do a couple of things with the science courses. First of all, people can recognise the traditional science courses that were always there, so there is no loss in that sense. Physics, chemistry, biology and human biology are recognisable immediately. Integrated science is an opportunity to do something that physical science never really allowed; namely, to integrate across the various scientific domains. We have also been able to introduce content. For the past four or five years, there has not been the usual syllabus change in TEE because they were waiting for the new courses. In the science subjects, physics, chemistry and biology in particular, some subjects are not state-of-the-art science subjects. The biotechnology area is missing and nano-technology is missing from the physics area, which we can start bringing into the course. That is always tricky because when we bring in something new we have to drop something of comparable size. That opportunity to update it, and to make things more relevant to students and to be able to tailor the course a little more to the particular group of students opens opportunities.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Surely if there are 15, 16 or 14-year-olds making choices of subjects, they will be taken by drama, media or subjects like that and not really want to study physics. Or if they like physics but need to choose only five subjects for the TEE they will leave out physics. Some government schools do not teach physics and chemistry. If there are fewer than 10 students, they will say that they are not teaching those subjects anymore. I can see a gradual chipping away at the number of students who study physics, and it creating a huge problem for society.

**Mr Axworthy:** I take your concern about that. All I can say is that it is equally our concern. With subjects such as music, in year 7 many thousands of students study music, yet by years 11 and 12, there are very few. I am not trying to compare music with physics and chemistry. They are concerns for us. We must consider that perhaps it is because of students' interests, but also because of the particular course or the way the traditional course has been written.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** In some government senior high schools kids are studying science in years 8, 9 and 10 and not doing so in years 11 and 12. I want to be reassured that the Curriculum Council monitors this, and if it sees there is a problem it starts jumping up and down about it because it is really important to this community.

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**Mrs Temby:** A very detailed monitoring process occurs of the students and the subjects they do or do not sit for.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Is there anything you can do if you see a major shift?

**Mrs Temby:** The first thing we would do is go back to the sector heads and talk to them about it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** To some extent, in the face of the reality that Dr Constable has observed, the modifications that were advanced with physics and some of the disciplines in which students were dropping away, were the introduction of material that represented an appetiser to take people into the topic. The practitioners in the field have fought off those modifications and now the subject areas have been stripped of the appetiser back to the purist discipline and, consequently, they may find once again a continuing decline in the number of students studying a subject. Do you have any comment?

**Mrs Temby:** Physics now has a 1A and a 1B. At the moment physics is only for those who are university bound. Now that it is at a 1A and 1B level, other students can study it.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** There are physics in metal work and all sorts of things. It was once called metalwork, so there is a need.

**Mrs Temby:** Yes.

**Mr Axworthy:** The very point of the 1A and 1B was to provide that kind of appetiser or link, whereby kids may get turned on by physics. It is for the kid who had the ability all the time but was not displaying it and who would not have been able to make the jump from a low-level general science course in year 10 to physics in year 11, and would have been actively counselled away from it in the past. That kid can now step through the door and, if the lights get turned on at the right moment, can continue with that.

[2.45 pm]

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I suppose what I am getting at is what we value in this society. My husband is at a scientific conference in Singapore at the moment. He had dinner on Saturday night with a person who is in charge of a \$3 billion program in Singapore to attract students into university courses in science. If they cannot get students from Singapore, they involve students from other countries, especially India and China at the moment. This is another extreme, I know, but these students are put on a 14-year bond with the Singapore government, and they can choose to go to any university in the world as an undergraduate and as a postgraduate, because Singapore wants scientists, and knows that it is a really important part of its future. What I am concerned about, even at the school level, is that we might be turning kids off science. It is a plea, like Martin's plea. One country values science to that extent and sees it as part of its future. I do not know that we value science in the same way. We need to keep our eye on that ball, because it really is part of the future.

**Mr Axworthy:** There is one little thing that is maybe seen to be on the side: the course we have that is a replacement for geology, but is about earth and environmental science. Geologists, in a place like Western Australia that is so involved in geology, have been doing some work, and there are no students in the geology undergraduate program at the University of Western Australia who studied geology at school. That is because their prerequisites were to do with chemistry, physics and maths, probably, but not geology. So, kids were almost actively encouraged away from studying some geology in school in order to go there. The geology people are delighted that we have this course running and John Delaeter have come forward in recognition of the work we are doing and have said that the industry is prepared to underwrite some additional work to try to encourage students into studying geology. This is partly because they hope that those people will then go on into geology, but even if they do not, from the viewpoint of having a broadened educational knowledge of that will make them better-informed citizens when we have future debates in this state on a variety of things concerning resources, environmental issues and

sustainability. I think that is the kind of vision that we had in moving into these courses, to open up that capacity. However, they need to be monitored, as you said.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** It has been put to us that you will be looking at a couple of other subjects to undergo some refinements. I would like some confirmation that the weighting for music performance evaluation was seen to be too low. Is that something that the Curriculum Council is actually going to address? History is another subject for which teachers are crying out for more information on the content and context of the examination. Are these two examples of subjects that will undergo further refinements to give a bit more confidence to both students and teachers?

**Mrs Temby:** They are different issues. They are two separate issues.

**Mr Axworthy:** They are different issues. The answer to your question is yes. In addition, I think there has been a lot of mythology or misinformation about music. The current course of study of music has two outcomes to do with the performance aspect of music, and would have, as a matter of course, counted 50 per cent towards the total mark, so there is not a downgrading in the new course compared with the old course. The TEE course has always had the capacity for a student who does not play a musical instrument to display their composition skills rather than their musical playing skills. It has always had that capacity. It is not something that gets taken up very often at all, because most people learn to perform before they learn to compose. The performance has always been a major component of our music program, and will continue to be so. However, there is a bit of a let clause, if you like, for a situation in which a student would want to display their composition skills rather than their performance skills. So much has grown up around that, as if something had changed dramatically. It has not. We will rectify and clarify that.

**Mrs Temby:** We need to have more clarity around that so that people can understand it. At the moment there are two outcomes that relate to performance.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There are graduates of music courses who do not play instruments but who go on to be world-class conductors.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Conductors would have played at least one instrument and probably several.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I can assure the member that I have a real live example.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Really? That is amazing. It must be very unusual.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Unusual, but there it is.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** The other issue is about the breadth of a subject. Teachers want to know -

**Mrs Temby:** The exam context.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Yes.

**Mr Axworthy:** I think that is exactly the point. It is the exam context. Teachers are asking for two sets of things. Firstly, they want a narrower context because they want the freedom to be able to explore new bits. However, the fact that there is an exam at the end of the day means that we have to define the context in which the exam will occur. That is where we start getting into the notion that at the 1A-1B end of the course, it is less necessary to have such a rigid set of contexts. However, for those things that are going to be examined, to have a meaningful examination, the kids and the teachers need to know the content of what is going to be examined. We have undertaken to spell that out much more clearly in all of the courses.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** It helps to build confidence, particularly with a new system.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** I know it will not be possible for the current cohort of year 10s, but in future will there be opportunities for children to start doing level 1A and 1B in year 10 as a pathway?

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**Mr Axworthy:** We currently have some students doing that; 300 or 400 students across the state in about 12 schools have started.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Are those 12 schools targeted as pilots?

**Mr Axworthy:** No, it is their choice.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Are schools mandated to do that? There is a bit of an equity issue there. At the other end, what about year 13 - the kid that might start off in year 11 doing 1A and 1B, and then suddenly switches on and says, "Hey, I'm doing all right here," and gets into 2A and 2B? When year 12 comes around, can they go and do another year? Can they add another year on the end, do 3A and 3B and go to university at the age of 18 years?

**Mrs Temby:** They can do another year as well, if they want to. They can keep adding to it.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Until they are -

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Until they finish!

**Mr Axworthy:** The WACE requirements are not like that.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Presumably they would probably end up going to Canning College or something like that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What is on offer for TEE students who fail their TEE during the transition period? Are the TEE subjects still available for repeat or examination following the arrival of the full new courses through to year 12?

**Mrs Temby:** The subject is not. Once the subject is not available, it is not available. As a different example, students that might have done two former TEE subjects and then started doing some courses of study, the provision will be there for them to count both.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I did not understand that. I think what Tom was saying is that if students have to go back and do TEE maths, then once that course is finished they will not be able to go back and do that; they will have to do something else like that.

**Mrs Temby:** They would have to do a maths course of study.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** In the new maths?

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Will that create a problem for those students?

**Mrs Temby:** I do not believe so, because they will be doing study for it, and then they will be doing the exam.

**The CHAIRMAN:** This goes back to ancient history, but when the transition was made from the NSW leaving certificate to the higher school certificate, a failing leaving certificate student was able to then go back and repeat with the units available through the leaving certificate, prior to the arrival of the higher school certificate. I guess the difference there was the arrival of an extra year of study for the HSC.

**Mrs Temby:** We have not made that provision.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** So the assumption or knowledge is that the content of the new courses will have enough similarity for someone in that situation to be able to go back and pick it up?

**Mrs Temby:** Yes, it is not that different.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Is maths not scheduled for introduction for a while yet?

**Mr Axworthy:** That is right.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** To go back to when I did the TAE, it was maths IV, maths I, and maths II and III. It was a bit silly, because maths II and III was higher than maths I, which was higher than maths IV. Then they had other names. Basically, they had a really tough maths, a moderate maths

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and an easier maths. I think there is a logic to that, because everything has some reliance on maths. Even if it is the easiest maths and a student is not going on to do something science-based, or whatever requires difficult maths, it is still very good to have that opportunity. Is that the sort of structure we will see for maths eventually?

**Mrs Temby:** There are three courses for maths being developed at the moment. They are being developed in 1A-1B, 2A-2B, 3A-3B. They are different parts of maths that are being developed under 1A through to 3B.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Okay, but economics will have 1A through to 3B, and 1A-1B is probably year 10 business studies standard, from what I have seen and what I am familiar with teaching. The second level is year 11 and the third is year 12. However, maths is something different again. Maths IV was still an academically valid course, but it was pitched at a different, practical, hands-on sort of level. I am wondering if there is enough provision in 1A through to 3B? It is only the same as what you have for everything else.

**Mrs Temby:** There has certainly been a lot of discussion and talking with the maths community about this. There were two options that the maths community were looking at. Firstly, that there would only be two courses, going from 1A through to 3B. The other option was three courses from 1A through to 3B.

**Mr Axworthy:** There are three maths courses.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Sorry, I have missed the point.

**Mrs Temby:** There are three maths courses - three different courses.

**Mr Axworthy:** That is 18 units' worth of maths.

**Mrs Temby:** There was a huge amount of discussion in the maths community. It was a divided discussion about whether there should be two courses or three, but the majority came down in the end -

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** If you do 1A-1B, could you presumably do a tertiary entrance exam at the end that is structured around 1A-1B? That is what used to be done with maths IV, for instance. Is that how it will be, or have we not determined that yet?

**Mr Axworthy:** It is still in the action research stage at this point, but in fairness, although we have said that examinations can be taken by anyone, for tertiary entrance requirements we would expect the student to be performing around the 2A-2B level, rather than 1A-1B.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** So the difference in economics would be that you would presumably have an exam around 3A-3B, and that is all?

**Mrs Temby:** No, the exam would be around 2A-2B, 3A-3B, we believe.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Two separate exams, or one exam?

**Mr Axworthy:** Within the one exam there would be two separate partitions, so you would have a general part and specific parts.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** So kids can go off and attempt either that or that, can they?

[3.00 pm]

**Mr Axworthy:** It depends on what they have been studying. If they have been studying maths 3A and 3B, they will do the questions on 2A and 2B.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** How is that different for maths? How is the maths course structured differently?

**Mrs Temby:** Maths is structured in the same way, but there are three courses of maths.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Do those courses have different areas of maths?

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**Mr Axworthy:** Basically, calculus is here, statistics is here and algebra is here.

**Mrs Temby:** There are different areas of maths.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** This is not politically correct, but given the old language of maths 4 - easy, moderate and hard - is it that sort of division or is it calculus, statistics or something else?

**Mrs Temby:** It is more the latter part of the division. Let us say that statistics is one course in which there is a 1A as well as 3B.

**Mr Axworthy:** The expectation would be, and this is dangerous because I am generalising and it makes a nonsense of it, that the students who in the past may have studied maths 4 may well do a course that includes 1A, 1B and 2A, but they move across course disciplines. The kids who did maths 2 and 3 in the past, would do 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B in two lots, so they would still have the double whammy.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** If a student wants to go into business he would do stats, or if he want to go into engineering he would do calculus.

**Mr Axworthy:** He may do applicable calculus. What will be critical is when the universities view the courses - how they set them as prerequisites for courses. They will say that to study maths or engineering at university they would expect a particular combination of courses. If someone is studying social sciences they would expect a certain combination.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I will revisit a request that I made earlier. I asked if we could have all the changes and refinements - anything that has gone out to schools - by the end of the week.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We have your undertaking that by Friday you will give us the material that details this week's decision-making. Hansard will have a transcript of this afternoon's session available to you by lunchtime tomorrow. It will be made available to our committee clerk and he will, in turn, make it available to you for a quick turnaround. I am hoping that you will correct the transcript and get it back to us by the close of business tomorrow afternoon so that we will have a corrected copy for our use. Thank you very much for attending this afternoon.

**Hearing concluded at 3.03 pm**

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