

# **EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE**

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

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN  
AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 2005**

### **SESSION ONE**

#### **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**

**Hearing commenced at 9.25 am**

**DULLARD, MR RONALD PATRICK**  
**Director, Catholic Education Office, examined:**

**CICCARELLI, MR MICHAEL ANTHONY**  
**Assistant Director, Catholic Education Office, examined:**

**BARBER, MRS SHEENA MARY**  
**Education Consultant, Catholic Education Office, examined:**

**NELSON, MR JOHN EDWARD**  
**Post-Compulsory Education Consultant, Catholic Education Office, examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** The committee hearing is a proceeding of Parliament and warrants 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 contempt of Parliament. I am required to formally ask these questions: have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

**Mr Dullard:** I have.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are your colleagues also going to be giving evidence?

**Mr Dullard:** Only if you ask them.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I think it is likely that we will. Certainly in the case of Mr Nelson, I anticipate that we will ask questions. Do you understand the notes attached to the "Details of Witness" form?

**Mr Dullard:** Yes.

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

**Mr Dullard:** Yes. Could I also point out that John Nelson has another appointment at 11 o'clock? He will have to leave in time to get there.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We think we might get through this section earlier than the time allocated. If we find ourselves running short of time, I would like to bring forward the section that I know is within Mr Nelson's particular area of competence. Have the other witnesses completed the "Details of Witness" form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you understand the notes attached to it?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Have you received and read the information for witnesses sheet regarding giving evidence before parliamentary committees?

**The Witnesses:** We have.

---

**The CHAIRMAN:** Mr Dullard, we have your submission. Before I formally put questions to you, do you have anything you want to say to the committee by way of an opening statement or a quick summary of your position?

**Mr Dullard:** The submission was obviously put in before a lot of the developments that have happened, the most recent being today. It needs to be seen in that context. Some of the things that I have said in here need to be addressed have been addressed or are in the process of being addressed. In putting in the submission we recognise that there were areas in the implementation of the post-compulsory courses of study that needed addressing. I think we have highlighted that. All of us have also been working to try to address what we saw were the things that needed to be put in place. Many of those have already been addressed.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I take it that there is no major amendment that you are making to your submission, other than the fact that you have made a submission to us, events have moved along and the issues that you have referred to in your submission have largely been addressed.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Can we get some specifics about what has been addressed and what needs to be addressed, because it would put it into the context of your submission?

**Mr Dullard:** This submission came out of a meeting that I had with our principals on 5 May, when we addressed what we thought were the issues that needed to be addressed in the implementation of post-compulsory courses of study. Coming out of that were probably three main areas. One was the fact that the level of resourcing needed to be increased. The second was the amount of professional development time. The third was the assessment regime that had not been finalised. They were the three main things that came out of that meeting that would be reflected in this submission. In terms of the PD days, it was only a few days or a week ago that the minister indicated what she was doing. I had already circulated to our schools what our intention was with the PD days, which was slightly different from what the minister has done. The main thing that we have done differently is to have one day in the balance of this year to do day 1 PD. There would be a pupil-free day for that to happen, and the Department of Education and Training is not doing that. The second thing that we wanted is a day 2 pupil-free day next year in term one. That has been addressed and the Department of Education and Training is doing the same. It was more to get the message across in a cohesive way with the minimum disruption.

We also sought to have the money set aside to do days 1 and 2 to be reallocated for professional development to be conducted outside school hours for the courses of study in the remaining two, three or four years of the implementation stage. We felt that was most important because, firstly, it would recognise the extra work teachers were doing over and above what is normal - you are introducing something that is obviously extra work - and, secondly, it would cause the minimum disruption to students, because the work would be done outside school hours, teachers would be paid and, therefore, they could get on with teaching their students with the minimum disruption. As for the last part, I am still not quite clear that the money has been allocated for that, but I suspect it has, and certainly we would continue to push for that outcome.

As for the assessment, the Curriculum Council has now put out its assessment paper. We have been part of that. It also came out of the work of the task force that was established. We believe it is the right way forward.

**The CHAIRMAN:** May I turn to that in particular? In your submission you are saying that there were unanswered questions about the school management of external assessment. What were those unanswered questions?

**Mr Dullard:** It still has not been finalised. For example, teachers were saying that they wanted to know how long the exams were going to be and what the exams would look like. The undertaking from the minister, and what came out from the task force, is that it needs to be in place by the end of this year, and I believe it will be. They were real concerns raised by teachers that the task force

---

recognised and the Curriculum Council has also recognised. It was not seen to be as high a priority when the whole structure of implementing the post-compulsory courses of study was first envisaged. It was seen to be an action learning stage. The whole assessment - if you take it for English, it will be the exam - will be at the end of 2007. People want to know what that looks like even before they start. That is a fair thing, but it was not seen to be necessary until that feedback was coming from teachers. I think that if that can be achieved, and I think it can be, it will meet that requirement.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Your submission indicates satisfaction with the level of consultation. Is that still the general view?

**Mr Dullard:** Yes, it is. We have had extensive consultation over the years on different inputs, so I think that we as a system and an office have to own, as much as anybody else, what has come out of this.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In reference to the preparedness of your system, you have indicated in your submission the three to five-year range. Is it still the state of readiness of your system?

**Mr Dullard:** Yes, I believe it is. I need to point out to the committee that I meet with principals formally twice a year and informally another two times. Not everyone has to come to the other two meetings. At those meetings, before these forms were filled out, I stressed to the principals that they should be conservative in making those estimates. It is easier to make progress going forward; it is a lot harder to set yourself up and say you have all of these things and then come back. I see that as very much a conservative evaluation of their readiness - which I asked them to do.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In the reference to the mathematics course of study there is a lot of discussion about how it is being developed and its capacity to cater for students of varying academic ability. You talk about making changes to the mathematics course configuration. Have you any quick explanation of the changes that you are suggesting and why they need to be instigated?

[9.38 am]

**Mr Dullard:** I would be happy for either of the other witnesses to answer this question also.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am guided by you on who has the expertise to answer it.

**Mr Dullard:** I will give an answer and will ask the other witnesses to add to it, if the committee is happy to do that. The subject of mathematics has been a difficult issue because it is based on incremental knowledge; the mathematical content is built on the previous work. It must be recognised that it is quite a different subject from English and some of the social sciences. The difficulties associated with mathematics were recognised by the Curriculum Council, and sometime ago it moved mathematics into the second block of implementation. It will be rolled out in 2008 rather than 2007 to overcome some of the difficulties. The council has resolved - and the Catholic Education Office believes it is the right decision - that there should be three courses of study for mathematics. That was a big issue and is one that not everybody agrees with. We believe that that is in the best interests of all students. There is still work to be done to try to address some of the concerns that mathematics teachers have about being able to cover the background knowledge, or the building blocks, that allow students to continue on to the higher courses of work. I believe that work can be done and that it can be accommodated. It must be recognised - I hesitate to say it - that nothing in life is black and white. Nothing is so straight down the line that the adjustments that are required to meet the needs of individual children or individual courses cannot be made. That must happen with mathematics.

**Mr Nelson:** The maths courses probably needed two things. The council needed to look at the structure and the way a student could identify a pathway to move through it. That has been done with the proposed implementation of the three mathematics courses. The original idea to have only two mathematics courses narrowed those possibilities. I am convinced that broadening the number of mathematics courses to three has enabled all students of higher and lower abilities to be catered

for. The second biggest thing to happen to maths, which is happening, is to look at the type of assessments that best suit that area. That is a characteristic of the science courses also. A lot of work has gone into the use of numerical scoring points in maths and how tasks can be set that address a particular level rather than adopt the open-ended approach that categorises English, society and environment and technology courses. A lot of work has been done to look at that and a similar amount of work has been done in science. I am confident that we will finish with an assessment system for mathematics courses that is fairly similar to the current system, but which will obviously be based on levels and outcomes and which will preserve the sorts of assessments used by mathematics teachers. For example, it will be possible for them to set a level 6 problem that would be marked out of 20. A maths teacher could use that as evidence to show that a student was consistently performing at level 6, whether the student was from the low, middle or high range. A lot of work has been done on the structure and the pathways for mathematics students as well as on the types of assessments that would best suit them. A study is being conducted into preparing an examination paper that would consist of a very common core that the level 5 and 6 students would do. The level 7 and 8 students would do that core part and perhaps two other sections. The higher level students would do that part and the lower level students would do another part. There are other ways around the approach that is very much based on a platform and staged-learning process.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The issue of professional development has been raised. The committee has been informed that an average Catholic school with a year 11 and 12 population of about 300 students will require 180 days of professional development. Some of this data a bit of a moveable feast, and can be described as quite a dynamic area of study. Is the Catholic Education Office confident that there are sufficient numbers of relief teachers to ensure that continuity in the classroom is maintained when the teachers are involved in professional development?

**Mr Dullard:** That goes back to what I said earlier. The Catholic Education Office believes that the professional development should be conducted outside school time and that it should be paid for. That is the position we put to the Minister for Education and Training and the Curriculum Council. I told our secondary principals two years ago that they should put aside money to allow this to occur. The best way to implement it is to not use relief teachers but to pay teachers. It must be recognised that this work is extra work over and above the ordinary work they do, and they should get extra recompense for that.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Is one reason for that the shortage of relief teachers?

**Mr Dullard:** No. It has nothing to do with a shortage of relief teachers.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Is there a shortage of relief teachers?

**Mr Dullard:** I honestly do not know. I would be happy for someone else to answer that. It had nothing to do with that.

**Mr Nelson:** There would be a shortage if every school in the state wanted to conduct a PD on the same day, but if it is staggered, it can be covered. The provision of relief teachers is generally a greater problem in country areas. It is fair to say that if both senior colleges in Kalgoorlie, Geraldton or Karratha wanted to run a PD on the same day, it would cause a problem. That is why our officers pushed for a pupil-free day and models that do not require relief teachers.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** One of my concerns has been the effect these changes will have on less able students. I am receiving mixed messages about this matter. Some people have said it is great for those students and others say it is not. I open that up for comment.

**Mr Dullard:** We will probably not help you, because we would say it is the best model for the less able students.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Will you explain why you feel that way?

---

**Mr Dullard:** Yes. The thrust of the post-compulsory courses of study and the review into post-compulsory education was to look at better ways to make education more inclusive, flexible and open to everybody and did not have separate pathways. I hesitate to use these words, but with an “outcomes-focused approach” to education, thought must be given to each child in the classroom. A classroom of students must not be considered as homogenous and it must not be thought that all students can be taught one way and that that approach will suit everyone. We know that that is not the way children learn these days. The idea is to have classes that consist of students with mixed abilities who can move through at different levels and who will be supported by the teachers and each other, because students learn a good deal from each other. We must change the dynamics about the way children are taught and about our understanding of how children learn. I am aware that that idea has been firmly embraced by the primary school teachers in our system in particular. However, it is harder to implement that type of system for courses for which the education model has traditionally been content driven. We must change people’s mind-set to consider each child. Therefore, when that mind-set is in place, people will not seem to be disadvantaged.

**Mr Nelson:** I can give the committee a specific example in which that approach is catered for. The new Western Australian Certificate of Education is much more inclusive than the former certificate. An example is that in the current system a student is required to achieve eight Cs, four of which must be at year 12 level. In the new system, there is no such thing as year 11 or 12; students perform their first, second or third year or whatever. Taking away the requirement to achieve four Cs at year 12 has liberated many of the lower ability students. Another concrete example is that in the new WACE, up to eight of the 20 units can be units that are endorsed by the Curriculum Council. Therefore, students who are engaged in meaningful activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, the cadets, the Department of Conservation and Land Management Bush Rangers program, sports coaching and many other activities can count those towards the completion of their certificate. Another concrete example is the fact that to obtain the WACE requires an average of level 4, which means that some students who are achieving at level 3 in some subjects could equate that to a level 5 in others. A further example is that all the courses are written in a very flexible way. I will use the example of integrated science. A low-ability student and a teacher who address those needs could use the context of forensics, chemistry of the home or soil analysis, and at an agricultural college the student could be studying environmental education. Many different flexible approaches that are not currently available will be offered.

**Mrs Barber:** I will give a concrete example of a school. I was working at a school last week that had a large number of Aboriginal students from communities in the Kimberley. The students begin this school at year 10 and literacy is an issue. Those students are excited because now they have an opportunity to start the 1A and 1B units in year 10. The children are given three years in which to achieve their English language competency. They also have the option of repeating units under the new arrangement. That school believes it will be able to cater for its students in a much better and more concrete way than it has been able to in the past.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** I will ask a question about vocational education and training. Some subjects will be replaced. I would like to know, from a Catholic education point of view, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed courses, and what impact will they have on students in Catholic schools?

[9.50 am]

**Mr Dullard:** I will ask John to respond. He is our expert.

**Mr Nelson:** There has been a lot of debate that 300 wholly assessed subjects have been distilled down to 18 or 20 new courses. In answer to the question, I do not believe that anything has been replaced. I think the flexibility is there for a lot of things to be included; for example, materials design and technology. The course looks like a single course but could be used to deliver clothing and fabrics as a medium - metals, woods, plastics or whatever. Certainly, that is there for those

students in terms of vocational education. In terms of vocational education and training - VET - and units of competency, there are now three models that students can engage in: VET embedded in courses, which is what a lot of schools do now; VET in a stand-alone mode, which is being preserved and can be up to eight of the 20 units; and there is also a new category of subject called vocational education as a course of study. Nineteen to 20 of the 48 courses can be delivered in that mode. As Sheena pointed out, students can start their vocational education in year 10 and build up over an indefinite time period. It is my belief that, in this new system, there is no disadvantage to those students, in fact, you could argue that they now hold the option of perhaps doing physics or chemistry - I do not think many will - and the option of engaging in a range of other TEE subjects at the lower level, which they have never had before. Schools are very creative at the moment with school apprenticeship link programs, school-based traineeships - all those things. They will all continue and they will all count towards the WACE and for TAFE entry. It is not my belief that vocational education has been diverted or disadvantaged at all.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The committee has had put to it an honestly held point of view that is derived from looking at the same changes and is contrary to yours. Can you throw any light on why, this week, we can have someone articulating such a positive appraisal of the situation and its impact on disadvantaged or less able students but also have other professionals sitting in front of us giving us diametrically opposed viewpoints?

**Mr Nelson:** I may be aware of the sector you are talking about. I have read their submission. It is true that aspects like structural workplace learning have a different status. A lot of our schools have commenced planning. There may be one or two schools with small resource bases that might find it different. When you look at the WACE and the range of subjects and VET, on balance, you would have to say that students will certainly be no worse off with clever planning. A good example would be using year 10. Before, very few schools have used year 10. I am aware that a position has been put by the independent schools that it may be that some students will not graduate because if they were doing a traineeship, they would not be able to do another four lots of subjects. Clearly, a lot of schools are starting to look at year 10. The school to which Sheena was referring, Clontarf Aboriginal College, will commence offering the units of competency and a lot of the courses of study in year 10. It is not something that has been done widely before. Perhaps the contrary view might be - there may be a lot of substance to it - that when school starts to do some planning and some visioning of how they can use the system and introduce it in year 9 and certainly year 10, and how they can look at the post-compulsory cohort as being three years and not just two, and how they can look at combining classes to deliver all those things, they will actually find there is a hugely enhanced possibility in the system.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Does that mean that students will be making choices about their futures in year 9 that they are now making in year 10? Does it bring decision-making back to an earlier point for students and their parents and schools?

**Mr Nelson:** If a school were to offer a lot of units in year 10, that could be the case. Some of our schools will offer some units. It does not require them to make earlier choices. For example, instead of offering a school-based mathematics course, some schools may wish to offer the 1A and 1B maths units in year 10. It does not mean to say that the student has had to choose whether to do maths or not. I do not think it has led to earlier choices. In fact, I think the new system will allow students to hold their options open longer. One good example would be the fact that, at the moment, we have a dual system in which a student in year 10 has to put his hand up and say he wants to go to university or he is not able to go to university. He either chooses one of the 33 TEE subjects or he chooses a program that is aligned to a non-TEE program. With the new system, there is no such thing as TEE or non-TEE. It is simply: how high do I climb the achievement ladder? In that sense, there may be, if schools start to look at units in year 10, some early choices. The counter of that is that students will now have unlimited choice and there will be no such thing as the unfortunate situation we have at the moment of putting your hand on your heart in year 10 and

saying that you are university bound or, alternately, that you are TAFE bound or employment bound. I think that is one of the big positives.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** I have a series of questions about these issues. Before I ask them, I will follow up on that. Are there any timetabling implications? If, presently, students from years 10, 11 and 12 are sitting in the same classroom, how will that work in schools when you need to set timetables that will mesh subjects? Will it make the process more difficult?

**Mr Nelson:** I do not think that a lot of schools will necessarily have them all in the same classroom. They will still continue to offer years 10, 11 and 12. There might be some mixing with the years 11 and 12, in particular. I do not think there will be many schools that will combine the groups together and have years 10, 11 and 12 in the same class. I will use an example of a school in the country. One of our colleges in Broome, St Mary's College, has a problem at the moment of trying to offer TEE subjects for a very small cohort. They have class sizes of two or three. Invariably, they have to combine them, which is unfortunate. They then have to offer a range of non-TEE or wholly school-assessed subjects and a lot of VET. With the removal of that dichotomy, timetabling for country schools and small cohort schools will be much better.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** There seems to be a lot of consensus on a lot of issues here but there is a big question about matching ranking and levelling in assessment pieces. I think you talked about assessments at level 6 with a score out of 20. What do you then do with the score out of 20? Is it used to rank students and get a different level grading or do they all just get level 6?

**Mr Nelson:** It is a complex issue. Ranking occurs only for the purposes of university entry; it has no other purpose whatsoever. The example I gave of maths would be that, if a teacher wanted to use assessments that are currently working, he could continue to do that. What would happen is that research would be conducted to say that something is a level 6 item and that a particular piece of work, which might have come from a past TEE paper, is a good example of level 6. A maths teacher could do that. He could mark it out of 20 and then go back to the descriptors and standards and say that, having looked at the piece of work and the student having got it essentially right in all stages, it could be identified as a very strong example of level 6. The teacher would be able to record in his marks records that the student, on that particular assessment, was a level 6. The ranking at the end is undertaken only for the purposes of university entry and schools are not required to do that in the current system or in this system. That is done by the university system.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** But, as they go, students and parents want to know how they are going. If they are university bound or even if they are TAFE bound, they will want to know how they are going compared with others and whether they are on target if they want to go to university and study particular courses.

[10.00 am]

**Mr Nelson:** What will happen in the new system is that students - during a unit, which is typically a semester - will be given a minimum of two pieces of substantive feedback for each outcome, which will identify their level and fine-grain detail as first, middle or high. For example, a student might be level 6 and he will be assigned a level 6.2, 6.5 or 6.8. They will know very clearly where they sit against the standard. Alongside that - we are already starting to see this - when the new system is implemented and due to current research, we will be able to say that university entry for a current TER of 70 will be level 5.8 to 6. Therefore, you will be able to say to students, just as you do now, "Look, to get into medicine, you need to be averaging 77 after all the processes." We will now be able to say that to get into medicine, the cut-off equivalent is about a level 7.5, and students will know at any point in time during the year - year 11 and year 12 - just as they do now, whether their level and rating is the equivalent to get a suitable TER for medicine, law or -

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** If they are doing a level 6 assessment, how do they get a level 7.8 rating out of that?

---



**Mr Nelson:** They would not be doing a level 6 assessment; they would be doing an assessment that was capable of being open-ended enough to provide a profile of anywhere between, typically, probably level 6, 7 and 8. In the case of mathematics and science, it is not as easy to set an open-ended assessment that can elicit responses across that range of levels. Therefore, one of the types of assessment the maths teachers might use is to say, "Well, we're going to use a level 6 assessment." They might also in the same test have some level 7 items, some level 8 items and some level 5 items. There may be 50 of these items. It is being done now in multiple choice testing and a range of things. At the end of that, they would assess that and say, "On balanced judgment of all this, the student is level whatever."

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** You have different competency levels or outcome levels in the same test. However, what if the student gets the level 6 question wrong and gets the level 7.5 question right? Is that the assessment used to rank them, or do we just say, "In the end, you got 92 out of 100, and you got 51 out of 100, and that's how we rank"? Will the ranking go back to the old-fashioned way that we do it now, which is that you get a score out of 100, out of 10, out of 20 or whatever, and the higher the score, the better you are, or is there a matching of competency levels in how you rank?

**Mr Nelson:** People will not be marking things out of 100; they will be using evidence. That could be an open-ended task, or it could be a little levelled item, as we call them, or an item-banked item at a particular level, 6, 5 or 7. They will build up a profile of evidence over the year. For that student you mention who got the level 6 question wrong and the level 7 question right, that would be one piece of evidence. Perhaps in a subsequent test that student might get the 6 right and the 7 wrong, and in a subsequent test the student might demonstrate - using right or wrong is probably not a very useful term - 6 and then demonstrate 7. Therefore, at the end of the day the teacher will make a judgment.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Why can you not use right and wrong when you are talking about maths?

**Mr Nelson:** There will be some right and wrongness. However, in maths even now it is not simply a case of right and wrong. There are degrees of proficiency shown in an item. For example, in mathematics there might be an item that has three parts, and that might be worth 12 marks in the TEE. Yes, a student could get nothing and a student could get 12, but many students will perform certain parts of it at proficiencies, and might get seven or eight or 10.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** The kids get right or wrong.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is scaffolding.

**Mr Nelson:** Yes.

**Mr Dullard:** They still might not have the right answer. They might have the answer wrong but still pick up seven or eight marks.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** By getting just bits of it right.

**Mr Dullard:** Yes, by the process - by demonstrating knowledge and understanding.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** They get sequential bits of it right.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Mathematics is not my field, but I can understand a concept of scaffolding.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** So can I. Ultimately, you get to here, and then go from there to there. That mistake then took you off on that path and gave you that. It is getting a little bit of that process right. I am still fairly confused about that, but I will go on to the next issue. Teachers are supposed to cater for every child in the class. Teachers are supposed to pitch their tuition to every child. It sounds fantastic, but the reality is that you have 25 kids in a class, or whatever number of kids you have in a class, and you have one teacher. You have 45 or 50 minutes of an hour to do the work. I am just wondering how this will change teachers' practice. How will they find more minutes in the classroom to actually go around and tailor everything to meet the needs of every student?

---

**Mr Dullard:** Teachers do this - good teachers do it anyhow.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** I think they do.

**Mr Dullard:** There are many different strategies for how children learn. Certainly, when I was at school, it was all stand up the front, chalk and talk, and you took it down, you remembered it, you regurgitated it, and you got six out of 10 or whatever. The focus now is that we do know that children learn differently. That will work for some children, but it will not work for others. The teacher has, I think, a responsibility to find the button to press, if that is the right term, for all the students. Some of that will be with group work or project work. It could be assignment work. It is a whole range of things where you build up a picture. Nothing is new in that for good teachers, but not everybody uses those strategies. What has happened with the focus that we have had in the primary schools since 1998 is that there is a greater emphasis on gathering the data about every individual child, seeing where they are at, seeing where there are weaknesses and then addressing the weaknesses. That is really what needs to happen and will happen as we go through these courses.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** You said good teachers do it.

**Mr Dullard:** Yes.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** How is it different, though, with this model? Good teachers intuitively try to address the needs of every child. I am a former teacher and I will give you a practical example. When I was teaching in the classroom - perhaps it was a year 11 class or a year 12 class - we had a mix of abilities, and the students might be doing a TEE subject. The practicality of teaching is that you would actually try to explain a concept and an issue to students, and you would try to explain it so that the child of lowest ability in the class could understand. Then you would add levels in your teaching to aid comprehension, but the reality was that you were still one voice in front of 25 students. You did not have time in that 50-minute session to go around and individually identify where each child was. You did not have time to devise different processes for each child. The reality is chalk and talk. That is what classroom teachers who are in front of 25 students will do a lot of.

**Mr Dullard:** They will certainly have to do a certain amount of it. My thinking would be that there probably needs to be less of that. We are educating people to go into society, and part of that is working collaboratively together and learning from each other. In putting out the concepts, you would have had some way of finding out whether all those children in that class actually grasped the initial concept. It might be that they had a little assignment to do at home, or they might have had to do something in class, but you would have been able to say - I am sure you would have - "This child is struggling. This kid has got it. Let this kid get on", or maybe you would have got that child to help this child in their work. There are all those things.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** Basically, we would give them a lot of feedback around the one assessment piece. That was the reality. You would give them the one assessment piece, and then you might give them a model answer and give them a whole bunch of feedback on their response about where their response was strong and where their response was inadequate. However, it was still one assessment piece. Convince me that it is just not nice talk. That is what I am saying. Convince me that this will somehow change teaching practice.

**Mrs Barber:** I think there is a difference between assessment and pedagogy. In the new system, in an outcomes-focused environment - we see this happening really well in years 8, 9 and 10 in secondary school at the moment - you set a task for the class. You look at what is the typical level that this cohort of kids is working at. That is what we mean by data informed. At the beginning of the year you might give an assessment piece, and straightaway you analyse that assessment task to determine where the majority of kids are in the cohort. You then look at the range of levels. What we are finding across years 8, 9 and 10 is that in actual fact you have not got 32 kids - in fact, some

---

of our classes can be 33 or 34, if they get special permission if they have a need to have that many kids - all at different points on the learning continuum; they actually cluster, and they cluster pretty well. You have your group in the middle, you have your kids who really need extension, and you have your kids who need support.

The other good thing about outcomes-focused learning is that the target is set very clearly at the beginning. They get their rubric, which indicates exactly what they need to do to demonstrate learning at a range of levels. The kids are part of a learning culture where they are able to set their goals for learning and assess themselves against that rubric. The teacher is finding that as this culture is set up, the kids in the middle and higher levels are able to run with the task. There could be four groups in the class at the one time doing different things.

[10.10 am]

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** What is your attitude to streaming?

**Mr Nelson:** There is no doubt that under the new system, as it happens now, there will be differentiated classes to best meet the needs of students. A good example is the new English course that replaces three subjects - vocational English, senior English and English, which is TEE English. There is no doubt schools will offer a 1A, 1B unit for the vocational students with a particular context. Also there is no doubt they will offer a 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D unit for the senior English students. They will probably locate the university-bound students, who would probably be doing 2A and 2B in year 11, into a different group. I am sure that will continue in English and maths, but it would certainly not be a characteristic in most other courses.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I have a couple of questions: earlier you mentioned relief teachers in country Western Australia and also the cost to schools of accessing professional development. Would you expand on that? It is an area of concern that I have about country schools; for example, Narrogin is not as big as Albany.

**Mr Dullard:** I will answer the question and then ask someone else to comment further. It is hard to get relief teachers and we have tried to find a way to not have relief teachers.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** By going outside.

**Mr Dullard:** By going outside and having PD days when students are not at school and we can have all the teachers there to do it. That might have to work with clusters of schools too. It might not work with just one school. For example, with some of the day two PDs we will have to combine some of the schools. That group will have a pupil-free day - people will be told where to go - and we will send people to those schools to do the PD.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Do you see more PDs in the country?

**Mr Dullard:** We will have to do more PDs and find ways to actually meet the needs. In actual fact, a lot of the office resources go to the country because they are the most needy in that sense. I do not know if I have answered the question.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I think you have. The cost is something that is thrown at me because of the travel involved.

**Mr Dullard:** I will comment on that as it pertains to our schools. Part of the funding formula for our country schools is that they get extra money. In fact, many of our country schools would not survive if the funding was based on per capita funding and the fees they get from government. We have to substantially cross-subsidise.

**Mr Ciccarelli:** Principals are concerned about not only relief teachers but also that the more time relief teachers spend in classrooms there is disruption to those classes. You do not find teachers who are maths or chemistry skilled per se; in some instances they are babysitters. We have had a look at PD days. We have just conducted a PD day between schools in Bunbury, Busselton and

Manjimup. That is why we need student-free days and the money to pay teachers to do after-hours PD - whether it be when they are on holidays - to implement this.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** The recent announcements about PD days are a bonus?

**Mr Dullard:** Yes, and we have gone a step further than that. We actually have PD days for this year and the Department of Education and Training does not.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** At the beginning you said things have changed. I briefly read the article in today's paper about the syllabus. Did your comment refer to that? What are your thoughts on that? Do you think it is a good thing?

**Mr Dullard:** I think it is. Yes, it is a good thing, but it would not be a good thing if it became a mandated syllabus.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** It would be too confined.

**Mr Dullard:** I read the article in the paper this morning and I have been part of the discussions. It is important that we give the teachers the ability to feel comfortable to go forward. They have expressed a desire to have a more structured way to go forward. It would be a mistake if the syllabi became the be-all and end-all. They should provide assistance and the teacher can move within them. They can use parts of it and modify parts of it.

**MR T.K. WALDRON:** Are you saying that it needs to be at a level where it gives comfort to teachers, because it gives them an idea where they should be, but it does not inhibit them from being flexible?

**Mr Dullard:** It is there already, but it is not as overt. This is making it much more overt. We have our progress maps and curriculum guides, which set that out, but it is nowhere near as overt.

**MR T.K. WALDRON:** If the syllabus is applied strictly, could it inhibit what this is all about?

**Mr Dullard:** Yes, I think so.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Does your role as Director of the Catholic Education Office give you an ex-officio role on the Curriculum Council?

**Mr Dullard:** I do not know whether it is ex-officio, but I am appointed by the minister and I suspect I could nominate someone else. The Director of the Department of Education and Training is not on it. I do not know whether it is ex-officio, but someone from the office is an ex-officio member.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Have you been a long-term member of the Curriculum Council?

**Mr Dullard:** For two years.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I want to check something that is puzzling me. A number of people are members of the Curriculum Council - are they the decision-making body or advisory body?

**Mr Dullard:** They are the decision-making body as set up under an act of Parliament.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So they are the decision-making body. Over those two years of your experience, have you found the Curriculum Council to work by consensus decision making?

**Mr Dullard:** By consensus.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Over those two years have decisions been made and some people on that council have declared their opposition to what has been decided by the group? If it is by consensus, the answer is no.

**Mr Dullard:** The answer is that there is strong debate about certain issues and it is talked through. In the end, a vote is not taken but there is consensus. It does not mean that everyone agrees to the nth degree. I will give an example: the three courses of study was not a unanimous thought of the

---

Curriculum Council, but it was certainly - I do not know whether I am speaking out of turn here. I probably am.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are the minutes of the Curriculum Council a public document?

**Mr Dullard:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Therefore, whatever debates occur within the Curriculum Council are presumably minuted.

**Mr Dullard:** The outcomes are minuted. The papers are delivered. The discussion is not minuted.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Therefore, you have to think about the status of the information that you now want to embark upon. Think about it. Do it if you wish.

**Mr Dullard:** It is the same with any organisation. It is the debate that goes on and then it is the consensus that comes out of it that we should bring forward. That is the fundamental part of our democracy. What I am trying to say is that one should not think that at times there is not strong debate in discussion; that is quite healthy. At times we would not always agree that it is necessary, but you give over to the greater majority.

[10.20 am]

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am finding it difficult to imagine an organisation that has made decisions with a group of people who are the decision-makers and then to find so many of those decision-makers out in the public forum now with views that seem to be so much at odds with the direction in which the Curriculum Council is going. This is not something that I am used to in my public life. Can you throw some light on this?

**Mr Dullard:** All I can say is I agree with you. I find it quite amazing and I am really at a loss to understand.

**Mr Nelson:** Perhaps I could add something to it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**Mr Nelson:** I think it is very difficult in the council to provide a constitution of members that represents everybody. I will give an example without any negative suggestion. It is very difficult to put one representative on the Curriculum Council to represent the four public universities. That person would try very hard, but the universities themselves and different faculties would reserve the right to make comments. I think it would be the same with an industry representative: that person could reflect the perspective of the person's particular industry, small, large or whatever. However, there will be chambers of commerce and others that would have contrary views. It is difficult for some of the representatives on a council committee - I sit on the post-compulsory education committee - to canvass every view and to try to reflect every view. It would be fair to say that even the union representative would have a view but there would be some members who would share a contrary view.

**The CHAIRMAN:** But I think that is a different view from the view of a participant in the Curriculum Council's decision-making. You have not resigned because you are opposed to the direction in which the Curriculum Council is going and you participate in all the decision-making. Then suddenly the temperature is on in the public debate and, ignoring the fact that you were a decision-maker, you are out there criticising the decisions in which you participated.

**Mr Nelson:** Yes, I agree.

**The CHAIRMAN:** As I look at this area, I just do not understand that process. I also do not understand the process whereby people are getting away with it. They are the people who have been making the decisions and now they are criticising the decisions and are not subject to scrutiny for the role they have taken. I just do not understand that. I think I interrupted you.

---

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Just going back to the issue of curriculum flexibility, Mr Dullard, I wonder whether that is something that is more achievable at the lower levels of competency than at the higher levels of competency. Is there a trade-off between the flexibility and validity of external assessment for ranking purposes? In other words, when you are looking at the students that are university-bound and bound for various courses with various cut-offs, do you have to have a tighter curriculum than you do for those who are headed elsewhere? Are there opportunities for more flexibility at the lower levels of competency?

**Mr Dullard:** I think we have a set idea of the type of person we want to go to university ex-school. I do not know whether this answers your question, but now that I have started I will keep going. We have got to open up to as many people as possible the pathways that they want to take. That is really where this is coming from. To think that at any one stage in one's life that the door to university is or is not open is not really the case. We and universities are finding out, and you are well aware of it, that people are coming back to study at a different level of maturity, a different level of motivation and the whole lot. What we need to do, and what this does, is actually keep those doors open; it does not close it off. So, do you need to? I think universities are recognising that we can have greater flexibility in terms of their entry requirements. I am quite interested now in what the universities are doing about choosing people to enter the medical profession.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** I take your point. In fact, I think one of the problems we have with education in general is that it trains for compliance rather than creativity.

**Mr Dullard:** I would agree.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** That is probably a reflection of success in later life as well, but anyway we will not go there.

**Mr Dullard:** I missed that.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** The point I am making is that, in the end, someone needs to make judgment calls about who falls over the line and who does not.

**Mr Dullard:** That is right.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Maybe it does narrow down opportunities, but unless that process of comparability is scrupulous and fair, no-one will accept it. It will be roundly and rightly criticised. So how can you have, at that competitive level of classification, a very flexible curriculum? It seems to me intuitively not possible.

**Mr Dullard:** I will take the American example - I think it is the wrong example - where the whole focus is on the SAT test to get into university. That is what Americans seem to hang everything on, which is virtually a general aptitude test. They spend time studying it, they get tutored in it, and it is not that broad brush of education that we think everybody in our society should have. So there are many methods, I think, of choosing a way. I think the best way, or we believe the best way, is to have it as open to as many people as possible to actually access whatever, and for the universities to then put their label on it and say that they will have this or that student.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I will interrupt you, as I know that Mr Nelson will not be here for much longer. On the issues of Mr Nelson's particular expertise, did you want to tease any more of that out or do you feel that you have done that to the extent with which you are comfortable?

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** I would just invite general comment.

**The CHAIRMAN:** On the issues of assessment we have had submissions that have basically argued that it is mathematically extremely difficult.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Can we explore the moderation system while Mr Nelson is here?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes, thanks, that is what I was hoping would happen.

---

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Mr Nelson, I would be keen to know what your comments are. I understand that a paper was going up, I think from the task force to the Curriculum Council, about a new moderation system. It was put - I do not know whether this is an area in which you can comment, but if any of you can I would appreciate it - that there was a degree of difficulty that applied to the subjects. This is what Martin has alluded to in terms of how you rank them, and it was seen as a bit of a black box, because we are dealing with complex degrees of statistics. I know that you would go basically from a figure of 7.2 or 7.5 to a four-digit number. In terms of how these are comparable, at the end of the day it was going to make it more difficult for teachers because it was a judgment call that they were going to have to make, whether people would have confidence in that and how would it be explained to parents and students. Basically they were saying that they could not add up scales of achievement and divide them by a range of numbers. So that was going to create some difficulties. Has there been any further work in terms of your organisation and that paper? Are you familiar with it? It has gone up to the Curriculum Council. I am particularly interested in drilling down into that moderation system and hearing what comments you may have on it, and also what impact you think it will have on the teachers within your system.

**Mr Nelson:** It is a very complex question and people use the word "moderation" to sort of summarise all the terms. However, at the moment the system we have now has three statistical processes, which are very complex. The students sit an exam, the top score goes to 100 and the bottom to 20, no matter how good they are. It has a contrived mean of 65.6 and that is added to a school score, which is adjusted by an external thing called the exam. Some people object to using an exam to adjust a school score. Then the scores are added together and an average marks-scaling method is applied; very few people understand how that works.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** They do not like that either.

**Mr Nelson:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** But as we are about to lose it, Mr Nelson, everybody seems to be describing it as paradise.

**Mr Nelson:** That is right. I think people started to understand but they do not understand. I think people see the average marks-scaling method, having been in place for seven years and the whole process for approximately 20 years, as being reliable and transparent and that it is constant; they are probably right. In the new system there will still be an element of mathematical process applied. The moderation is the process that will look at trying to equate standards across schools. This system, as proposed, is far better than what we have at the moment. I mean essentially if you are going to give a kid a standard level 6, it is very difficult then to moderate that and say, "I'm sorry, you actually weren't that standard. You shot a 72 at the Royal Perth Golf Club, but it really was only a 64 or a 75, or something." So the new system will actually be much more up front, with a lot of effort put into visitation, work samples, samples of student achievement and meetings. It is hoped, therefore, if that is possible, that the use of the general aptitude test, which was a task force recommendation, is accepted by the honourable minister. I think that will lead to a far more reliable set of school results. The need for any statistical intervention would be minimal. It is proposed that it would be minimal and would not lead to the situation we have at the moment where sometimes school results can be changed by plus or minus 27. It is an untenable position for a student, when given 83 for a geography score, to find that it goes down to 56 or whatever. Hopefully in the new system there will not be anywhere near the need to move that.

[10.30 am]

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** There will be less shift.

**Mr Nelson:** In terms of equating courses, which is the scaling process, if we say we are going to add physics to drama studies we need to have confidence that they are on the same scale. There is a process called scaling and the universities have reserved the right to scale. It is a process that occurs at the end and is solely there to manipulate the marks for the purpose of university entrance.

That process, according to the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre, may continue and they would reserve the right to do that. There will be a black-box approach, if that is the term people are using, which is probably simpler and in some cases reasonably similar to what happens at the moment.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Can I just paraphrase what I think you are saying: that is, that the moderation will happen as you go?

**Mr Nelson:** Exactly.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** In the end, schools will get better at making assessments. They will not have the problem of having the over-optimistic teacher who sees the glass is half full and gives everyone 80. His behaviour will be tempered as you go through the process.

**Mr Nelson:** Exactly.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Hence, there will not be those huge variations. A good teacher with a good sense of the cohort in good schools in a good department pretty much gets it right, he does not miss the mark by much, but this will pick up those who are either too pessimistic or too optimistic as they go and the need for moderation will be lessened because you will do it as you go. You may still have to do some at the end.

**Mr Nelson:** Yes. I will add to that: at the moment when a teacher gives 62, the 62 is just a contrived paradigm that that teacher has. It bears no relationship to any standard whatsoever other than a 62 is a higher rank than a 61. In the new system, when a teacher gives level 6 and perhaps a high band - a 6.8 - it is tied overtly to very detailed and explicit standards and a very detailed explanation to students as to exactly why they got that level 6. At the moment the notion of a 62 or a 75 or a 73 really is something that builds up in a teacher's mind with experience, but there is no document he can go to which says that he will give a 73 when, dot, dot, dot. In this new system there will be an explicit standard that says you will give a level 6 when, and those criteria will be there.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** But at the end of the process there is still the capacity for moderation?

**Mr Nelson:** Yes.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** I mean, you might make it better.

**Mr Nelson:** Yes. It would be hoped that, as you correctly pointed out, if it all happened proactively, then the reactive statistical process would be far less intrusive and have far less effect on students.

**Mr Dullard:** Could I just comment on that, because this is an important part that we have put to the task force and the Curriculum Council, that the number of moderators needs to be drastically increased to do this. As you have pointed out, it really has to be working from virtually day one in those schools.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Over time you could probably -

**Mr Dullard:** It could drop off over time, but certainly in the next four years or so -

**Mr Ciccarelli:** I would like to add that we are doing a lot of work beginning with our year 8, 9 and 10 teachers, so it has to start before years 11 and 12, because schools that have been using levelling for the last few years are finding they are getting better at it. In other words, they are understanding what a level 4 student looks like in a learning area. We are starting to get more consistency across the board. The current situation is linked to another issue, and that is reporting. An A in one school means - and I am talking about eight, nine and 10 - what, compared to an A in another school? It is just the view that the teacher gives this A, whereas hopefully under this new system with the standards, level 4 means level 4, if that makes sense.

**Mrs Barber:** Could I just make a comment about the flexibility issue that we were talking about earlier. In actual fact, in the courses of study, the flexibility relates to the context in which the kids



do their learning. The scales of achievement, the essential content and the indicators of achievement are really quite explicit. In fact we are getting to the point now where our English teachers are saying, "Gee, it would be good if we could use these scales of achievement in year 10," not to do the course of study, but because they are so explicit. They do not understand that with the progress maps that are our other standards, if you like - the progress maps are a K to 10 document really - it needs to be much broader and much more flexible in terms of how schools address the outcomes, but with the courses of study, the units within a course are a semester long. Therefore, you can understand that it has to be much more explicit in terms of what the students need to do to demonstrate their achievement. The standards, as John rightly pointed out, are very, very explicit. The essential content is there, and that essential content is maintained throughout the course of study. It spirals in increasing complexity as you go up from year 1A right up to unit 3B, but the essential content is clearly stated, and the scales of achievement and the indicators of achievement are very explicit. The opportunity for teachers to make judgments about kids' learning is much tighter because the standards are much more explicit. The English teachers in particular are probably the best yardstick at the moment for us because we do not have many media or engineering courses being implemented in our system - English is the big one. The more teachers have engaged with that course of study, the more they have realised that the standards are there and their judgments about kids' learning will be facilitated because these standards are so explicit.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** I would have thought English was the course that involved less change than any other, because it is basically a process - I am looking for the right word -

**Mrs Barber:** Absolutely. The outcomes are the same etc.

**Mr Dullard:** You are right.

**Mrs Barber:** But the scales of achievement and the indicators of achievement are explicit through any course and the essential content in any course of study is clearly stated.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I have one last question about the pressures on your teachers in the system and how they are handling the proposed implementation. Are they feeling stressed, or how do you think they are handling it? Do you think it is getting better? I am just looking for an overview.

**Mr Dullard:** I would have thought that they were handling it well and that it is going well. When I have asked the principals - this is going back weeks now - it seems to be fine, but there seems to be a change. I am a bit like the chairman here; I am a bit aghast at times as to where things come from, having it come almost out of left field. Going back to that meeting I mentioned on 5 May, there was strong support from our principals that our teachers want this to happen, that they are ready, particularly if they are doing English and going forward. It would be a travesty, they were saying, and if that did not happen it would demoralise a lot of teachers who have worked very hard to make sure they have done well for their students.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There would be some expectation in the community for a committee like this to consider an interim report recommending deferral of the introduction of these changes. Do you have any comment on that?

**Mr Dullard:** I think that would be a shame. We have known about this lead-up for a long time. Many schools - I would say all of our schools - are in a position to move; some would obviously prefer more time, and I think at the end of next year they would prefer more time again, and that is the worry I would have. The second worry I would have about a deferral is the whole level of PD that would have to be done across all of those courses of study at the one time. It will logistically be a big effort for us to even do it for half the courses being introduced at the end of next year. I think that is reflected, in part, in our submission. It is a huge undertaking to do so much PD.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** You are saying that if it gets put back you have got more -

**Mr Dullard:** Yes, you will have to get twice as much PD, and how are you going to handle that? I think you would also have a sense that there would be a re-enforcement that we have won this

battle, we are halfway to winning the war and it has all fallen into a hole, which would be a travesty.

[10.40 am]

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am interested in other major changes in the education system in Western Australia. I have a recollection of what has occurred in this state from only 1977 on. I am not sure how many big changes we have had, but to your recollection have they all been accompanied by this level of temperature in the debate or is this a new phenomenon?

**Mr Dullard:** We have always had controversy when changes have been introduced; it has always been difficult. This is the most I have seen in that, from my point of view, it has certainly had the strong support of the media in trying to put it down. At times the media takes the approach that teachers are not doing the right thing and it blames the teachers. Here it is really blaming the minister, the Curriculum Council and everybody else - the bureaucrats. It depends a little on the slant that the media takes. I have been surprised by the level of opposition in the media to the introduction of post-compulsory courses of study. That opposition was certainly not present in my consultations with principals, boards and the like over the past two years. It has really just taken off. I had not noticed that in previous years. There has been a steady resistance to it. For example, the unit curriculum was trialled but not implemented. I thought that was a good system. With this one, there almost seems to be a very orchestrated campaign against it, which I have not seen before. I do not know whether anyone wants to say anything further.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much, Mr Dullard and your team, for being with us.

**Hearing concluded at 10.42 am**

---