

# **EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE**

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

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN  
AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2005**

### **SESSION TWO**

#### **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 10.30 am****ALBERT, MR PAUL STEPHEN****Director General, Department of Education and Training,  
151 Royal Street,  
East Perth 6004, examined:****AXWORTHY, MR DAVID GEORGE****Executive Director, Curriculum Standards, Department of Education and Training,  
151 Royal Street,  
East Perth 6004, examined:****JOLL, MS LOIS****Acting Director, Post Compulsory Academic Standards and Support, Department of  
Education and Training,  
151 Royal Street,  
East Perth 6004, examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** I alert witnesses to the fact that 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 a contempt of Parliament.

Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

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

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

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

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Welcome. Director General, in view of the gap between the receipt of your formal submission, which I received in July and the committee formally received in August - there have been a long series of events since then - feel free to speak to your submission and comment on any additional information that you feel is relevant since the preparation of this work.

**Mr Albert:** The main changes are those that have emanated from the years 11 and 12 task force report and the implementation that preceded the findings of that task force. They relate to assessment, moderation, external examination, scaling, professional development, support materials for teachers and the introduction of a general aptitude test. In our submission, we hinted at the areas that we felt needed to be addressed. The task force picked up those issues and significant progress has been made towards the implementation of them.

Rather than go through each of the task force recommendations, perhaps we could begin by speaking generally about the approach that we have actually taken and then we can get into some of the specific issues concerning the changes in years 11 and 12, if that is satisfactory.

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**The CHAIRMAN:** It will be. I have not allocated sufficient time to this committee on the basis of the early evidence. Try to be as quick as you can. We may have the opportunity for you to make concluding remarks if we are able to get through committee members' questions.

**Mr Albert:** Our approach in Western Australia is not a lot different from the approach taken in other states - that is, the adoption of an outcomes and standards approach to education, K-10, and the changes in years 11 and 12. It is quite interesting that the states have all signed off on the English learning statement. That is associated with the desire of the commonwealth and state ministers to have consistent curriculum outcomes across Australia. That statement does not vary with ours. In fact, ours is exactly the same. The maths statement is close to conclusion. Again, quite interestingly, there is not a lot of difference between the states. The only difference between the states is the emphasis that is given to maths content at particular years of schooling. There is a need for some alignment between the states if we are going to have consistency across Australia. One of the objectives is to enable easier movement of students across the states. We were reassured that what we were doing in mathematics did not vary that much from what the other states were doing.

In going down the path of an outcomes approach in WA, we see outcomes as defining what we expect students to learn in our schools. The outcomes are defined for each of the eight learning areas, which are English, mathematics, the arts, science, society and environment, languages other than English, physical education and health, and technology and enterprise. We assess whether students have learnt what we expected them to learn by using an assessment scale that covers eight achievement levels. They are not points, by the way; they are achievement levels, like a band, for each of the eight learning levels. Again, that is not much different from the other states.

This is very, very empowering. Each of the eight levels requires approximately two years for an average student to achieve. That two-year span was based on substantial research around Australia, including ACER. That is how that scale of achievement was derived. If a primary school student is not achieving in the level 3 band by year 7, that student will have difficulties with high school. Likewise, by year 10, if a student is not achieving around level 5, he will struggle. In fact, he would have great difficulty proceeding down an existing two-year course to obtain tertiary entrance. The reason for that is that all of our TEE courses start with the assumption that those students have actually achieved level 5 learning. An introductory calculus course assumes that they have achieved level 6.

It is very important that the committee understands what those levels of achievement mean because by also introducing the same scale of achievement to years 11 and 12, there is much greater clarity between what is happening in K-10 and what is happening in years 11 and 12. In effect, the outcomes approach is about introducing clarity for students, teachers and parents about what we expect students to learn and explicit criteria against which we will assess the students to see whether or not they have actually learnt what we expect them to learn.

In the past we defined what should be taught but did not define what students should learn and by when. Through this approach we have shifted the accountability from within the classroom and whether or not the teacher has actually taught a program, to what is actually learnt in the classroom. That is very empowering and very powerful and, from our perspective, offers a significant benefit to education around the world. In fact, all education systems have moved down this path.

Being accountable for teaching a program or a course of study for students is quite safe. As long as the program has been gone through, people will say that the job has been done. Being accountable for what students learn in the classroom is a real challenge. It is not sufficient to simply teach a program or a course. It means that teaching has to be adjusted according to how the students are actually responding to what they are being taught because the objective is to ensure that they learn what we expect them to learn. The assessment is structured according to what we expect them to learn. That is the fundamental nature of the changes in years 11 and 12.

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There is no doubt that it really does place pressure on teachers. When we specify the outcomes and standards that the students are expected to achieve, it means the teachers have to be very clear about what they teach and how they teach because they will be accountable for whether or not the students actually learn anything in the classrooms.

It is probably the major benefit of the approach and the major reason why education systems around the world have moved down this path. It is the major reason why the VET system adopted an outcomes approach some 15 to 20 years ago called competency-based assessment. It is why the military use the same approach and has been doing so for the past 25 years. The important thing is what a student actually learns. The other important thing is to make sure that the student has actually learnt. We can only do that if what they are supposed to learn is set out explicitly and there are criteria against which we can assess whether or not they have learnt what we can expect them to learn.

That is the fundamental rationale behind the approach that has been taken in Western Australia and other states in Australia, the UK, the US and most of the OECD countries. France has had a pretty prescriptive education program, which is in the process of being revamped. I could not say whether they will come out with the same system that we have but they are certainly looking at it. The internationally renowned program Baccalaureate is based on outcomes.

I wanted to take some time to indicate the benefits of the approach, why it is important and, of course, to indicate to the committee that we are not doing anything that much different from what is happening elsewhere in Australia and around the world.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I think the issue for us is not whether or not OBE is good or bad. It is fairly well accepted that it should be introduced. Our government initiated the process previously. The issue relates to the final model that we will end up with and whether it will be ready to start next year.

Unfortunately, I missed some of the committee hearing so my question may be out of date. We had a presentation by a mathematics lecturer who gave two examples of the problems he saw with the system proposed. He gave two Pythagorean theorems. One was simple and basic and the other more complicated. For the students who achieved the simple and basic understanding of Pythagoras and were able to complete their task, they achieved that outcome. There is no distinction between the student who achieved that outcome and those who are able to understand, interpret and use that same formula for a more complicated but similar theory.

[10.45 am]

The other example he gave was of Tiger Woods versus the local Pinjarra golf club professional. Each of them has certain tasks - the study of the back swing, the stance, the hold of the club, the follow-through - and each has a teacher who is assessing their ability to complete those tasks. Each of the teachers of Tiger Woods and the Pinjarra professional would give very high marks out of 10 for their student, yet there is a world of difference between the two. The point was: how are you able to compare in the system where both can achieve the task that has been set, yet there is a huge difference in standards, depending on who is doing the assessment. Could you just address how those issues are being resolved? At the time - it may have changed - there was no test for which one student could get eight out of 10 and the other could get six, but would allow a comparison between students in mathematics. I think the inherent nature of mankind is to develop through a competitive system.

**Mr Albert:** I could not agree with you more. I come back to what I referred to as scales of achievement; that is, levels 1 to 8. The person who could do the simple calculation in relation to Pythagoras, I would say, was probably achieving way down the scale, I believe at level 4 or 5.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I'm sorry, can I just interrupt for a second, because I want this cleared up?

**Mr Albert:** Yes.

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**Dr K.D. HAMES:** What he said was that if you understood Pythagoras, that was a certain level; that was level 6, say, for example. So no matter how complicated the question, once you have achieved the task of understanding Pythagoras, there were different ways to achieve that task, which was the outcome. The outcome was to understand Pythagoras. Once you achieve, you have achieved it.

**Mr Albert:** I am not clear on the specific outcome that you are referring to, but my argument would be that you could achieve Pythagoras at this level, in other words, convey a simple understanding like reading. A child might be able to read one book of very simple words, but it is a lot different from reading a book, let us say, containing a play by Shakespeare and then understanding what is said. Both are performing the act of reading, but one would not perform the act of reading and understanding to the level of the other. Without knowing the specific details, I would argue that that maths teacher has probably not really got his head around the scales of achievement. Perhaps my colleague on my right here might elaborate.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** He is a relatively senior maths teacher in Western Australia.

**Mr Albert:** Yes, but do not forget, they have not been using that scale of achievement. They have been using another method of determining where students are. In relation to our maths teachers, it needs to be also understood that until recently none of them has had an introduction to the changes in years 11 and 12, simply because those changes are not scheduled to be introduced until 2008-09. So there is a little bit of a myth surrounding the way in which the system will work. I am sure once that teacher has been through the professional development and has gained an understanding of the way it works, he may have a different view.

**Mr Axworthy:** I will just add a few points in answer to your question. Certainly, to clarify, there will be an external exam, as there always has been at the end of year 12. So any suggestion that there is no external examination that sets a particular standard - let us knock that out straight away.

The other thing is that I think with any assessment there is good assessment and there is bad assessment. An assessment task, whether or not it is a current TEE paper, a maths teacher who sets a question that enables a student with faulty learning to get the right answer is a bad assessment task. Part of the whole aspect of assessment, and one of the themes that the outcomes enable teachers to do, is to have a multitude of assessment tasks that allow students to show that not only can they, if you like, to use Paul's example, bark at the print, but they can have a deeper understanding of the concepts behind it and the applicability of it. In education we have a theme that we call Bloom's taxonomy, about the hierarchy of the various difficulties of knowledge, which runs from, if you like, simple recount at the bottom to the capacity to use information, synthesise it with other pieces of information and use it to solve fresh problems. Clearly, that is a higher-order skill. What we would be looking at, and what we believe the outcomes approach does, is open up the capacity for teachers to get to these higher-order skills, which are very similar to the Meyer competencies that we have heard about in the past that we want of students; not just to recount facts that they have gleaned, but to be able to use those facts and synthesise them with other pieces of information to analyse, synthesise and solve more complex problems that they will come up against that they have never seen before, to generalise the information from here to solve a problem over there. However, if I can reassure you in terms of external assessment, yes, there will be external assessment in the same way as there is now.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I am talking about more ongoing internal assessment by teachers as a method of developing an assessment of a child.

**Mr Axworthy:** Teacher assessment, right. Lois may want to say a little bit about the moderation and the way in which teachers' assessments are going to be done.

**Ms Jolly:** I think you could make some interesting comparisons with what has been happening in the last seven years in drama studies, which is already - you probably know that - an outcomes-

based and standards course for the tertiary entrance examination processes, and the issue of whether you can actually get that delineation, increasing the degree of difficulty, has been well proven and students can, in fact, address a task at a less competent level, if you like; for instance, the students have to perform an improvisation. If I just tease it out for a moment, in that improvisation a student who is less skilled at using space or using vocal quality will be judged according to the very clear, in this case, performance criteria, but it could be scales of achievement. That judgment on increasing sophistication, ability to use body in space and verbal communication skills will absolutely clearly differentiate; and recent studies by Bob Peck show that that was the case. So the concern that you raised about the first example, the maths, can actually be transported to other disciplines and there is not a great concern that that is feasible. In terms of moderation and of being sure of standards, as you are probably aware, the council is in its last initial stages of working through an appropriate moderation structure, which will ensure very strong delineation of standards within courses across the state and acknowledgement of those through PD and so on; and ultimately, in the processes for the exam, a system which will ensure that students are ranked appropriately. In the end, for university entrance, it is a ranking exercise that is so crucial that those students with more ability to enter into a university environment have that opportunity. So everything has been focused on ensuring that, firstly, teachers, through professional development and so on, are supported to make sure that their application of standards is appropriate and, secondly, that between courses that work has been done to ensure that as well.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Mr Albert, I have had a lot of letters, e-mails and discussions with teachers in government schools - usually they have been constituents but not always - over the last year or so about the implementation of the new system, and they have outlined a number of concerns. I would regard all of those people I have spoken to as good, hardworking, professional people. These are departmental long-standing teachers, not fly-by-nighters. The sorts of concerns that they have outlined to me are about standards being lowered. Music is an example; there are grave concerns about what is being proposed in music. There are concerns about experienced teachers planning to leave the service of teaching, particularly in science and maths because of the changes. Professional development has come under a lot of fire in the discussions I have had as being inadequate. In fact, one head of department in a government school told me just last week that his school had stopped going to professional development days. They are very concerned. I read in your submission to us a couple of key points and I will touch on those. I quote -

Adverse media attention and resistance to change has created a sense of unease in some sections of the education . . .

The committee needs to take into account the effects that adverse media attention have on the process of change and investigate whether the changes are indicative of deep seated concerns.

Could I ask: do those comments from your submission suggest that the media is leading the criticisms and the unease, or is the media responding? My view, from the people I have spoken to, is the media is responding, not leading at all. I think that is the role of the media, to respond. It is also the role of the media to have comment and need to air comment. That is how the system works. I have also had teachers tell me that they are working with people who are fearful that if they are critical in forums such as professional development days, then that will adversely affect their careers. Now, these are really serious people making really serious comments about this. So I would like your further comment on why you think the media is leading the criticism and how you respond to the sorts of issues that I have very quickly touched on. I do not expect you to respond to any one of them, but just in a general sense.

**Mr Albert:** No, just fairly briefly, I think it is generally recognised, and we certainly recognise it, that the communication about the changes has not been good. Some of the critical issues - which is why the years 11 and 12 task force was set up - concern how external assessment is going to work;

how moderation is going to work; how scanning is going to work; what quality of professional development is being provided; and where the teacher support materials are. They are all very serious issues, and certainly many teachers in our system who are strongly supportive of the general thrust of the changes were very concerned about those sorts of issues. What we were trying to say in our submission is that you have to really distinguish between, I guess, criticism that is based, if you like, on some myths about what outcomes are and what outcomes are not, and really get to the heart of some of the critical issues concerning the proposed changes to years 11 and 12; and they are to do with assessment, with how an external exam will work and the quality of professional development. Certainly a number of our teachers who did attend early workshops with the Curriculum Council found that questions were not being answered by the presenters, and we were very concerned about that. A lot of work has since been done on all those areas. Perhaps I might get Lois Jolly to talk a little bit about the work that has been done since, because certainly we were aware in the department of the tenor of those concerns that have been expressed to you. However, I think now significant progress has been made to address some of them.

**Ms Jolly:** Firstly, on the issue of PD it has been acknowledged that in the English course of study in the first wave of courses that came on board, particularly initially, the lack of clarity at that time for the council about such things as final WACE requirements as assessment protocols for school-managed assessment, particularly final details of how the support would be provided, did lead, without question, to a period of anxiety for many. As a result of the work of the task force, of which I am a member, quite a lot of change occurred quite quickly in terms of clarifying. So, for example, on school-managed assessment, which was one of the most concerning areas over the three months or so period, various papers were developed, written and tested. Ultimately, by the end of August, schools were given the information about how that process would unfold, and one that is based on all systems and sectors having a lot of input and feeling very comfortable. We are finding that the systems and sectors have taken over offering of day one for the next 20 courses - if you understand where I am coming from - day one is the first day of PD, the overall view of what the courses of study are about.

[11.00 am]

Initially, only the first four courses had day one, so people in schools were hearing only bits and pieces. This goes back to communication issues. Obviously if they are only hearing bits and people come back from meetings frustrated because questions are not answered, you will clearly get an environment of unease, as you would expect. That was certainly something the task force highlighted as crucial to bringing about change. As a result of that, the recommendation was that rather than wait until each phase was ready and have day one iteratively and have all teachers do day one, as it is called, of PD so that they got a really clear understanding of what their courses looked like, they looked at accredited versions, if they had been accredited, and certainly final drafts, assessments and so on. That is happening as we speak, and across the AISWA and Catholic schools that is what they are doing. In terms of PD, we believe that has been addressed. We are seeing it slowly absolutely, because as people meet the opportunity to engage, they are becoming more confident and certainly less anxious. In terms of the support materials and the readiness, was that part of what you wanted?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** No.

**Ms Jolly:** What else did you want?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I did not expect you to go into detail on all of this.

**Mr Albert:** Could I address one issue that you have raised? It is an important issue.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did you want to move on to another question at this stage?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** We will see what Mr Albert wants to address.

**Mr Albert:** The fearful and adverse.

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**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Yes.

**Mr Albert:** It is simply not true. We encourage our teachers to make statements, and they do so in public forums. We have meetings with teachers. The post-compulsory directorate that we have set up has meetings with teachers. They allow e-mail exchange and interchange. I challenge anybody to find one teacher who has been, if you like, adversely affected because they have stood up and expressed concerns about particular aspects of the changes that are taking place in post-compulsory education.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I mentioned the issue about experienced teachers planning to leave or leaving teaching. That to me is of grave concern, especially where there are areas of shortages of teachers, such as maths and science. Is there any evidence at all that that is happening?

**Mr Albert:** No, there is no evidence that it is happening. The big issue there, of course, is that we do have a lot of older teachers who are in science and mathematics. That is one of the reasons we have introduced the scholarship program to try to get more new graduates into that arena. I guess the second issue that is associated with people saying that they might leave is the one that Lois Joll drew attention to, which is that only a small section of teachers have actually had exposure to what the changes were all about. Sure, once we have taken all our teachers through the first day of the professional development, you will get a change of view. I would go to a comment that I think Audrey Jackson made; that is, that if teachers have in their own mindset reached a stage where they do not want to teach any more, it is probably a good thing that they leave.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** We must breed them differently in the northern suburbs because the teachers who have come to me who have gone through PD have been quite vocal about their opinion of how it played out. First, I am glad to see that has been addressed, because I asked a question of the Curriculum Council about the quality or lack thereof in that initial PD. It is good to see that has been addressed. I understand that the Curriculum Council is putting out a detailed plan in two to three weeks. I am quite looking forward to seeing it. It is interesting that as we visit our schools and speak to teachers who are newly trained, who do not know any different, if I may put it that way, they do not have any problem at all and wonder what the fuss is all about. Equally, I guess that if we looked at years 8 to 10, the same would apply. I will link this in a way to the concerns with some of the more experienced teachers. It is a change, and some of us adapt better to change. I do not want you to look at this in an aged way, but I think that all of us share a concern that we will lose good, experienced teachers. I do not want this to reflect back on teachers. It is not a bad thing if people seek additional help. I do not think it should be any reflection at all upon the person. Apart from the basic PD, if I may refer to it in that way, has the department given consideration to the fact that rather than see people walk, there may be an additional need, above and beyond what is there, for any teachers who put their hands up and say that they need extra support for it - have you considered that above and beyond the usual five days and how you would factor it in? The sheer logistics - this is why I am interested in seeing the plan - of delivering a PD, particularly in some of our country and remote schools, I still think is a challenge for you, but I will wait to see the plan. There should not be any reflection on people who say that they need some additional support for it. Have you thought about how you would deal with that?

**Mr Albert:** Yes, we have. We will actually be putting \$12 million over the next four years into providing that additional support. The first component of it was setting up the team in central office, and the second critical component, which I think will go a long way towards addressing the issue you have raised, is the establishment of teacher development centres in a number of our schools throughout the state. Those centres will play a key role in providing over and above the professional development that will be provided through the Curriculum Council.

**Mr Axworthy:** If I may say a few words, without going into fine detail, in general terms, the whole point of the teacher development centres is that these are rolled out and developed synchronically with the rollout of the courses of study, so that we establish a teacher development centre in the

same discipline, if you like, as the next course of study that is rolling on. These will be placed so that we can free up experienced, capable, classroom teachers who can buddy up with other teachers in the neighbourhood in a less formal way than two days professional development when you all come out and sit in a room. They can actually be at the shoulder of those people. At the same time, we will be developing a whole raft of support materials and teacher aids that will include electronic means and things that will support the introduction of the courses of study as these roll out. One of the problems that we have had is that in our secondary schools, which are very discipline-oriented and subject-based, because the maths teachers sit over here and the English teachers sit over there, generally speaking, and because the courses of study are rolling out differentially, with English coming out next year but maths not until later, the English teachers may be doing some work over here finding out about this, but the maths teachers are not. When the maths teachers come to the very first bit of professional development, what they are expecting is that they will get all the answers. Instead, they get a consultation brief about what they think about this or that, because there are still three or four years down the track to refine. Whereas we are bringing in teachers to refine the course of study in a first draft point, they are coming in expecting that all the answers will be there and leaving very frustrated that no-one knows what is going on. That is unfortunate. I think it is something that has happened because of the way of the rollout. A certain amount of it is inevitable when things operate in the system that we have and the way that secondary schools operate. Lois may want to say more about the teacher development centres.

**Ms Jolly:** Very specifically, because I am conscious of the time, in the first four courses of study, which will come out next year, we have set up teacher development centres that will support all the new courses that are on line next year. What that means - just using the initial example - is that we have put out for expressions of interest and had some superb people apply for the positions. They get time in their school to become, if you like, the key mentor to a group of schools. That will include country schools. We will be working throughout the whole state. Those people will work over that year this term, and then next year and the following year they will be working on their own research in their own classroom. They must be teaching the course so that they have an understanding of the realities. They will then share best practice in their group of schools. They will put together ideas that will then come back to us. We will make sure that it fits the courses and then we will share it throughout the state, so that we have a kind of cyclical event. They will roll out for the next 20 courses. The teacher development centres will be set up next year for the following term. As for the point made earlier about experienced teachers, we have been delighted at the number of very experienced teachers who have put their hand up and are very excited about the opportunity, and they are already working on what they are going to develop with the schools.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Dr Constable raised a specific issue about the need for greater incentive and the music rollout.

**Ms Jolly:** We had a VET committee meeting this morning, and music was raised. One of the important issues seems to have been the lack of communication initially in that across the state there are many specialist music teachers who travel from school to school to teach the violin, piano or whatever it is. They have not been a strong group for outcomes and standards education. They have been meeting the needs of TEE students in a one-to-one, isolated situation. As a result, the first course of study certainly did not seem to be addressing the needs of those elite music students, those who would go on and do music as a profession and those top kinds of musicians. When you say "communicates arts ideas", unless you really have been working in an outcomes world, you do not make an automatic link that means you will be teaching top-level piano students. One of the biggest issues is absolutely that, which is currently being addressed. We are working very hard with the School of Instrumental Music people to really work through outcomes and standards understanding, but also to get strong feedback about what has to be mapped out underneath, so that these are the ways that you will do it. Certainly today the feedback was much more positive with the work that has been done very recently for music. AISWA schools said that their music people

are very happy with it, and the Catholic Education people are the same, and from my point of view, working closely now with SIM, we believe we are getting there with our council to make important changes or clarification. It was absolutely an issue that needed to be urgently addressed. After today I have confidence that that is happening.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I have just a quick question on what I think this conversation illustrates. The Curriculum Council and the department have on the one hand been accused of being dictatorial and on the other hand of being overly consultative. I do not suppose you really want to comment on that, but I do not see how you can be both of those things.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The point on the media that Dr Constable raised concerns me. There was the comment that we need to be aware that the media are driving it. The media can on occasion drive things, but mostly they respond to things. It is our impression that in this case they are responding to issues; in fact, this committee would not be here if it were not for teachers making complaints to us in the first place. There was nothing from the media that led to this committee being formed. It was the result of concerns. Here we are now in October, nearly at the start of the next year. It pleases me to hear what you are saying about the things you are doing to address those concerns, but only just now are they being addressed. Here we are nearly ready to start the next year, and only now are things being got right. In my year we did the old maths A and B to junior school, and then in the final two years it was switched over to maths 2 and 3, which I think was an absolute disaster for all of us. It concerns me that you are still hell-bent determined to start it at the time it was proposed, when I think that just sitting back and easing off a little bit and still following the same program would give you a lot more time and give the teachers a lot more time and would make sure that you had all those issues resolved and in place. A slight delay would cause nobody any harm. I would just like your comments on that.

**Mr Albert:** Could I just say a couple of things in relation to the media? I suppose our comment was that we wanted you as a committee to dig deeper than some of the surface comments that were being made.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** That kind of assumes that we are not.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That assumes we are not doing our business.

**Mr Albert:** In fact, what we were saying is that you needed to sift through the comments that were being made.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** We do.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

[11.15 am]

**Mr Albert:** I suppose that is what we were meaning there.

The second point is that we have had a lot of e-mails from concerned teachers and principals who have been trying to get letters published. I do not want you to leave with the impression that we are trying to blame the media. We want to work through the issues that on the surface seem to be this, but when you dig down might be that. That is all.

In relation to the question of readiness, I guess the changes that have been developed have been in train for a long time. The process of the change actually started in 2000 and it is now five years later. The actual implementation then, one could say, is the nature of phase. Change is never easy. It is always difficult for a whole variety of reasons. Some states change more quickly than others. The complete revamp of the New South Wales years 11 and 12 courses was over a three-year period from, "Yes, we will revamp them", to implementation. Our time frame has been a lot longer.

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In relation to the Curriculum Council, we take a strong stand: we are not prepared to support the introduction of a new course if that new course is not ready for introduction. We have made that very clear to the Curriculum Council. One of the benefits of the years 11 and 12 task force has been that, firstly, we have been able to have a person directly involved in ensuring that issues that we felt needed to be addressed were being addressed and, secondly, we have been informed first-hand and have an idea about how courses are being developed and whether they are ready for introduction on the date they are scheduled to be introduced. If they are not introduced we will certainly make our views known to the Curriculum Council and the minister, because no course should be introduced if it is not ready.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** One of the reasons this committee was put in place was that I was a very keen advocate of it because I have a son in year 9. The initial information that came out several months ago left me very concerned. I am somewhat more comfortable now. I like what I see in the task force recommendations. As a former classroom teacher, I urge you to put as much resource as you possibly can into giving teachers assessment pieces that they can use. I know that the assessment pieces are the end point. When teachers can see that, they get a picture of how the whole system works. Yes, professional development is important, but if it just emphasises the philosophy, it will turn people off. What they want to be able to see as quickly as possible is practical assessment pieces. I welcome the appointment of experienced teacher representatives to assessment panel reviews, moderation panels, etc, and I welcome the extra resources going into support materials. I also urge you to consider making the process even easier for teachers in the earlier implementation by offering schools off-the-shelf assessment pieces. It will ease their workload in a time of change, it will allow them to concentrate on teaching, given the new framework, and it will ensure consistency of application.

**Mr Albert:** As you are aware, we have SIDE, the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education. It works in conjunction with WestOne to develop materials for those students who are isolated or are in areas where they cannot access an expert teacher. One of the advantages today is that those materials are developed electronically. They can be interactive and connect through video-conferencing and video-streaming to another school. We would be very keen for the committee to perhaps explore this a little bit. Our view is we would like to see those materials made available to all schools. Just because you have an expert teacher in place in a particular school does not mean it would not benefit from the extremely high-quality materials that I have seen that so far have been developed by WestOne.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** When you say “all schools”, do you mean all government schools or all schools?

**Mr Albert:** I mean all schools. We must understand that no child in the state should be disadvantaged and every teacher, whether from a government or non-government school, needs to be appropriately skilled. There is quite a bit of toing-and-froing of students and teachers within the system and it is very important that everybody is equipped. We would be quite keen for that to go across. Perhaps David or Lois may like to comment.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That is fair commentary as long as they are quick and their comments deal with one of the resource implications of that suggestion.

**Ms Jolly:** The directorate I am involved in has been working with WestOne over the past 18 months for the materials to be used by all public schools. We have suggested that, in the next stage, the materials which are being developed for students in isolated areas should also be used as parallel support for teachers. That material is already available for geography and English. Some good work has already been done. Next year, 18 people will be working full time on 18 courses of study. The quality of the material is quite outstanding. We have been talking through the department to the Curriculum Council to suggest that there should be a way to ensure that the material goes out to all schools.

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**Mr Axworthy:** The issue of resourcing is basically one to do with copyright. Because some of those materials are currently produced for a limited client group and are not on-sold or made available to the wider public arena there are restrictions on copyright. To move to a broader distribution raises some issues about some aspects of purchasing copyright for some bits of material. That is the only financial impost. For the courses of study that have not yet been developed, the copyright arrangements have to be entered into at the outset. For those already in place we have copyright for limited distribution and we would need to renegotiate. That is the only major financial consideration for making this material available.

**The CHAIRMAN:** My experience has been with teachers operating in isolation and I am always puzzled about whether there is an online environment for teachers to have their questions answered. This would apply to not only isolated teachers, but also every teacher. For example, a teacher in Mt Lawley may be wrestling with the task of rolling out the English program and could feel isolated from his colleagues. Is there an online environment where they can ask their questions and receive assistance?

**Mr Albert:** Absolutely. We have developed something specific with post-compulsory and perhaps Lois can answer the question.

**Ms Jolly:** That is one of the issues we are facing. There are a lot of experimental models in some of the school courses. The latest development, which is in its final stages, is called centra, which allows a teacher in a classroom at an isolated school to, with the aid of a laptop, watch what someone is doing in a classroom in a completely different school and ask questions. That is the model that SIDE has developed and we are seriously looking at the possibility of using it in development centres. Where someone is attached to someone in an isolated school, it is not a matter of seeing them once a term or semester, but rather an easy way to interact.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I refer to the teacher development centres in the country. Are you confident that what you said will be the case?

**Ms Jolly:** We have already assigned the first four teacher development centres and have started training. Every school across the state has been assigned to one of the mentors.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In reference to the regularly articulated claim that we are adopting a system that has been discarded in other environments, do you have any additional comments?

**Mr Albert:** Nothing further to what I said in the beginning. Certainly in the late 1980s there were problems in particular states in the United States because they were not specific about what children should learn by when. What they did was a straight K-12 framework and there was no indication by when they should have learnt this. What we have done in WA is introduce a standards approach for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 and in years 11 and 12. We test in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. We randomly test the other areas to ensure there is no dumbing down or slipping in standards. We expose our students to international tests and so far they have shown to be up there with world's best. It does not mean to say we cannot keep improving and that is why I am very keen about and have welcomed the government's decision to allocate the department additional resources. In my view, the bit that was missing was what to teach and when to teach it. The resources we now have will enable that to occur.

**The CHAIRMAN:** On that point, I do not think the committee has formally received from government its response to the task force report. I ask that you make it available to the committee. Presumably it has been done by way of ministerial staff.

**Mr Albert:** It has and also there is a statement to be made in Parliament.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is that statement to Parliament comprehensive of the complete suite of responses to the task force report?

**Mr Albert:** I must admit I have not perused *Hansard*.

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**The CHAIRMAN:** Would you do that? If there is any additional information, would you make sure it is available to the committee?

**Mr Albert:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Representatives from the Catholic Education Office came before the committee and, in response to a question I put to them about the suggestion to delay the introduction of this system, said it would be a shame - they said it in more forceful words than that. Do you have any additional comment you want to make about the calls for a delay in the introduction of these changes?

[11.30 am]

**Mr Albert:** As I said in response to a question from the member, a general delay does not make sense because there is no rationale for a general delay. It makes sense to delay a specific course of study that is not ready. Our department's view, and my strong view, is that if a course is not ready - that is, the assessment materials are not ready and there have been some delays or whatever with the schedule for the development of teachers - the readiness factor would apply. That is the issue and that is when you would delay. If you caused a general delay, I think the momentum would be taken out of the change process. I think it would also be problematic, because many teachers, for example in English, have gone ahead with the changes. They would start to wonder why they were being delayed when they were implementing these changes and others were not.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I ask for an example of what you mean by "not ready". If a course is to be introduced in 2007, when would you expect all that information to be available to enable teachers to be ready?

**Mr Albert:** I will perhaps get Lois to comment.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I would like to know what you think, Mr Albert, because you made the comment.

**Mr Albert:** I do not have the criteria with me, but our view is that there must be sample assessment materials -

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** But by when? If a course is to be introduced in February 2007, when in 2006 do you want all those things to be in place so that teachers can be prepared and ready?

**Mr Albert:** It is a phased-in schedule that has applied in the past. I understand that the Curriculum Council will apply the same schedule to the changes that are planned for courses of study. They apply to the TEE. There is no simple answer to your question, because this needs to be ready by this particular day and that element needs to be ready by that day. If you like, there is a schedule.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Can we have a copy of that?

**Ms Jolly:** I will comment on that, but only because I am so deeply involved. Somebody earlier mentioned the PD schedule that I think Greg Robson mentioned.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Yes; two to three weeks.

**Ms Jolly:** Basically we presented the systems and sectors to the task force the day before yesterday. They have taken it on board and we worked through those issues. That means that if it is approved in the next week or so, with finetuning, day two for the next 20 courses of study will include a lot more detail than English teachers were given this year and will include the beginnings of looking at assessment. You will see that it is specifically set out to make sure that we meet those needs. Our question was: what do I need to teach and when do I need it by?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** You seem to be merging my question about when the Department of Education and Training thinks something will be ready, which is what you were saying; that is, you would not want a course to be introduced unless it was ready. Then you are saying that the Curriculum Council is driving that. I want to know when you would be satisfied that your teachers

had had time to be prepared; that is, when would they need the assessment materials and everything else by to prepare for February 2007? By when would you want them to have the materials and everything that they need?

**Mr Albert:** I would want it at least a year beforehand.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** So by February 2006 they would need examples of exams, questions and all those things available to them?

**Mr Albert:** Teacher development centres in place, the sample exam papers available, teacher support materials available and so on.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Thank you; that is what I was looking for.

**Mr Albert:** Can I just elaborate on what I have just said? That is day two, which is in term one next year.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That is what I understood you to be saying.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Could you just repeat that? What was the answer?

**Mr Albert:** A whole series of things need to happen for day two PD to be held. If it cannot be held, that course cannot go ahead. There are a number of issues. I do not have the detail here.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Were any subjects that are proposed to begin this coming year not ready, say, by July of this year?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** English. There are subjects starting in 2006 that were not ready.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** How many subjects are starting in 2006 for which everything was not ready by July 2005?

**Ms Jolly:** That goes to the heart of why we are here. Some of those answers were not available earlier this year. There is no question that they were not ready. They are now. My understanding is that English has put out a sample exam paper and that all of them are now ready.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Are you saying that English is the only one that is being started next year?

**Ms Jolly:** Aviation is already in its first year. There has never been an issue with media; their readiness is absolute. Engineering studies are in a similar position. English was the one subject in which there was debate about the nature of the exam paper. They have recently distributed samples of what the paper will look like to all schools.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The point being made is that next year we will see the rollout of courses -

**Ms Jolly:** That did not meet that time line.

**The CHAIRMAN:** - that did not meet the timetable that is now in place.

**Ms Jolly:** Absolutely. There are two courses - religion in life and integrated science - that at the moment are listed for 2007. At the meeting today it was indicated that they will not be ready for accreditation until February, but that everything will be in place ready for day two, as it is called, to roll out later in that term. They would certainly be examples of courses for which a request for delay would be made if they were not ready.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you have any comment to make on the suggestion that most of the teacher associations remain committed to the call for a delay? Is that a correct claim?

**Mr Albert:** I understand that the English teachers' association supports the introduction of the English course of study.

**Ms Jolly:** My understanding is that the science teachers have already set up significant funds to support the development of support material and are very proactive in that way.

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**Mr Axworthy:** I think you will find that the professional associations were very concerned when there were no time lines and no set things. Given that we have now established this as a set time line, I guess they are basically cynical about whether, in some cases, those time lines will be met but that they would say that if they are met, they will proceed. I guess all people would say that it is fine to provide a time line, but would ask whether it would move, switch or whatever. We are saying absolutely not. If we do not meet that time line, it is not ready to proceed. Teachers need that much time.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** So from next year on, you will virtually have a full year lead-in to each subject?

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** You were saying that that did not happen with English, but in realising that, you have now set that in place.

**Mr Axworthy:** Absolutely.

**Ms Jolly:** In fact, for many of the 20 courses that will come in for PD next year, at least 12 have already been approved and are in their final version. Anyone who was very keen could now be working on many of those. Four more were approved today. The last seven are coming up in November. By the end of this year, bar the two I mentioned, all the 2007 courses will be on the web and in schools, and, in our case, we will be presenting them to all government schools. In the next three months when we do day one, teachers will get in their hands either the all but final version or the final version. That is what the Association of Independent Schools and the Catholic Education Office are doing as well.

**Mr Albert:** That time schedule of readiness is exactly the same as the one used for the introduction of new TEE subjects - information systems, drama studies and I was trying to think of another. It is a schedule that has been used in the past.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Director General, I will take that to be your concluding comment, if I may. There is a set of questions that we will position to you through the research team, and I would like a quick turnaround on them. They will remind you of some of the issues we have flagged. I propose to recommend to the committee that we accept your offer to go to the site facility to explore that issue with some on-site inspection. I am particularly hopeful that someone can describe to me the online environment through which teachers can have their questions and concerns dealt with. On that basis, I will ask the witnesses to now leave the room. The committee hearing is now finished. I thank you for your presence here today. We will be in touch with you.

**Hearing concluded at 11.39 am**

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