COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SENATE

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference: Developments in adult and community education in Australia since 1991

SYDNEY

Friday, 7 February 1997

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

SENATE

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Members

Senator Crowley (Chair)

Senator Carr	Senator Stott Despoja
Senator Colston	Senator Tierney
Senator Forshaw	Senator Troeth

Participating members

Senator Bolkus	Senator Bob Collins
Senator Brown	Senator Denman
Senator Chamarette	Senator Margetts

Substitute member:

Senator Sandy Macdonald to substitute for Senator Troeth from 12 July to 12 August 1996

Matter referred by the Senate for inquiry into and report on:

The developments in adult and community education in Australia since the 1991 report of the Senate Employment, Education and Training Committee entitled *Come in Cinderella: The Emergence of Adult and Community Education*, with particular reference to:

1. Describing the structural and policy changes at Commonwealth level in adult education since 1991, and assessing the impact these have had on the delivery of adult education in the community;

2. Examining any significant changes in the patterns and level of participation by adults in education and training over the last five years;

3. Describing the range of provision of structured adult education by community-based providers (including that provided by organisations such as libraries, museums, galleries);

4. Identifying those technological, demographic and economic trends which are likely to influence significantly the nature and extent of adult education provision in Australia, with

particular attention paid to the impact of the rapid expansion of computer-based resources such as the Internet;

5. Examining the extent to which the training, professional development and role of adult educators has changed since 1991; and

6. Proposing guidelines for the nature and level of contribution which Australia should make to the forthcoming Asia-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education Conference to be held from 1 December to 8 December 1996 and UNESCO International Conference on Adult and Community Education to be held from 14 July to 18 July 1997.

WITNESSES

SENATE

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Developments in adult and community education in Australia since 1991

SYDNEY

Friday, 7 February 1997

Present

Senator Crowley (Chair)

Senator Carr	Senator Ferris
Senator O'Brien	Senator Troeth

The committee met at 9.02 a.m.

Senator Crowley took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open and welcome you all to this public hearing of the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee. Today's hearing will examine evidence on the committee's inquiry into developments in adult and community education since 1991.

THOMAS, Miss Sam, Director, Adult and Community Services, PO Box 847, Darlinghurst, New South Wales 2010

CHAIR—I welcome the witness from Adult and Community Services. The committee prefers that evidence be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will give consideration to your request. I do have to point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may indeed be made public subsequently by order of the Senate.

The committee has before it submission No. 81. Is it the wish of the committee that the document be received as evidence and authorised for publication? There being no objection, it is so ordered. Is there any further material that you would care to table at this time?

Miss Thomas—Yes. I have a document entitled *Overview of the New South Wales Board of Adult and Community Education*.

CHAIR—If you would like to make some opening comments, we will then ask you questions.

Miss Thomas—As outlined in the submission, there is a Board of Adult and Community Eduction Act in New South Wales, which was enacted in 1991. The board is located within the New South Wales Department of Training and Education Co-ordination. I am the director of ACE Services, which is a branch within the Department of Education and Training, and I am a member of the board. ACE Services' role within the department is policy, planning, resource allocation, quality assurance and consultation in relation to the New South Wales ACE sector. That is the context in which I am speaking today. I am employed by government as a senior bureaucrat with responsibility for adult and community eduction in New South Wales.

We made an extensive submission to the inquiry. I will briefly highlight some of the salient features of that submission and also, since that was made last July, update it where relevant. You will note in the submission that one of the highlights of the New South Wales ACE sector's work over the last five years has been the very valuable contribution of the sector to the vocational education and training agenda. I think it is important to highlight that in New South Wales the sector seems to have embraced the agenda, with over 60 out of 75 providers now being registered as eligible training providers for nationally accredited courses.

It seems that the accredited courses are sitting very comfortably alongside the general adult education courses. I believe this has partly been due to the excellent attitude of the New South Wales providers—their energy and the initiatives they have taken—but it has also been supported by the board's initiatives in a developmental program in assisting them to get to the stage where they could be part of this agenda. That included resources to get registration as

providers, professional development for tutor training and assistance in developing accredited curriculum. So all the infrastructure surrounding the delivery of the EET was supported by the board and the opportunities were really well grasped by the providers. That, I think, has been a very strong feature over the last five years.

I think we have developed a culture of quality and accountability, and we have rigorous policy frameworks to ensure probity in the allocation and acquittal of government funds. I think that is a very strong feature of New South Wales ACE.

Since the submission was made in July last year, the New South Wales government has developed the first state policy on adult and community education. This is recognising the value of lifelong learning for all. I would like to table this document before the committee. The board's strategic directions can be summarised as assisting the ACE sector to position itself to be recognised as a sector that can really contribute with great value to the post-compulsory vocational education and training agenda.

We are concerned that the profile of ACE that has emerged from our research reports shows that many sectors of the community are not participating in ACE and we are keen to diversify that profile. We are also keen to enhance the quality of ACE. We have initiatives, policy and strategy to encourage the use of technology for both the more efficient and effective management of ACE and the delivery of ACE through flexible delivery modes. We are putting considerable effort into raising the profile of ACE, marketing ACE in New South Wales, so that there is access to awareness of information on ACE within every community in New South Wales.

One of the challenges for the board in the near future is how we allocate resources so that these strategic directions can be achieved and, in particular, how we diversify the profile. We have recently completed a study, `The economics of ACE delivery'. From this study, which is about to be released, it is evident that in those geographical areas where there is an ACE centre, where there is a high income—defined as over $50,000 a year—and where there is a density of population, ACE is well attended and the participation rate is what could be expected of such a community; that is, between six and seven per cent overall in New South Wales.

The particular challenge is: how do we use the board's resources, the government funds, to get quality outcomes and increase participation by those groups who are currently underrepresented in ACE. Those groups currently underrepresented in ACE are, obviously, the usual equity groups: Aboriginal people, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people without post-school qualifications. Interestingly, certain sectors of the male population are not well represented. It is about using our funds in a way that encourages greater participation. That is a major project of the board, working with the sector, over the next year.

You will notice the growth in New South Wales. We have put some figures to you. There was a 28 per cent increase in the participation rate between 1991 and 1995 and a dramatic increase in literacy enrolments of 73 per cent.

CHAIR—Is that because no-one else is doing it?

Miss Thomas—Not really. It is the availability and the demand from the community, increased awareness for the need for literacy. Just to get the vocational accredited training in perspective, there were six million student contact hours in board supported ACE in New South Wales in 1995. Of those six million hours, 500,000 hours were in accredited courses. It is still a relatively small proportion.

I highlight that because, nationally, there is a view that the tension for some ACE providers in offering accredited training—or the suggestion that they might—leads to some philosophical tensions and a view that the general adult education, the leisure programs, will be affected. That has not seemed to be the case in New South Wales.

We commissioned a research report by Kaye Schofield to evaluate the implementation of accredited training in the ACE sector. That report showed that the sector really grasped the opportunity and was making a significant contribution. I have already sent that report to you.

I think at this point it is really interesting to stress that the New South Wales ACE sector is very different from some of the general perceptions of ACE throughout Australia. Often, the perception of ACE is that they are small organisations in rural or metropolitan areas and obviously with a large volunteer component. While there is a spread of the size of organisations and the location, predominantly in New South Wales the organisations are large, particularly in the metropolitan area, and in each rural area there is a large community college.

These community colleges range from 16,000 enrolments. They are really very solid educational institutions. Their managers have postgraduate qualifications. They have—whilst not lavish—a professional infrastructure to support the delivery of ACE. I think it is really important that we recognise the range of ACE organisations and not get fixed in our mind, when we talk about ACE, the small neighbourhood learning centre, but also the WEA, with a staff of over 20 highly qualified, highly professional people with a volunteer management committee rather than the organisation supported in its work totally by volunteers. It is a distinction, I think, that is not always made well and it is an important one.

CHAIR—Anything further, Miss Thomas, or can we start asking you questions?

Miss Thomas—I am fine. I have a bit of a summary of what I think the issues are but that could come following our discussion.

CHAIR—If you wish to make it now, that is fine.

Miss Thomas—All the terms of reference have been addressed in the submission. One of the main issues that we are facing in New South Wales at the moment—and you will be hearing from a range of providers through the day and this will add to the picture—is the sustainability, viability of ACE. Many rural communities are experiencing extraordinary hardship and it is becoming extraordinarily difficult for ACE organisations to be viable.

However, the majority of them, with good planning and financial management, are doing an excellent job in the community.

We must be aware that the changes in the federal government policy in relation to labour market programs have seriously affected the New South Wales ACE sector. Some of our providers were playing a major role in offering programs such as LEAP special intervention programs in literacy. That meant they were having an income in excess of $4 million and they had a staffing structure to support the delivery of those programs, and that has been reduced, in the case of one college, to $500,000. That was a very severe drop.

It is a great challenge now to re-engineer and place the sector and position the sector in relation to the employment initiatives which are actually replacing the training initiatives. That is a great challenge facing the sector. But, again, they are resourceful; there is a huge amount of skill and expertise in the sector and it will be interesting to reflect on this time how many of them play a very large role in the federal government's new agenda of focusing on employment outcomes.

I mentioned that the economics of ACE and the implications of participation rates where there is high income and high density populations is a challenge for the board to create funding models which address the differences across New South Wales. We have an agenda in terms of demonstrating the quality. We know we have quality and we now have a very good quality strategy.

I think there is a challenge to make ACE available throughout New South Wales. We find where there is ACE the community participates really well. I was in one community last week with a population of 67, and 30 of them are enrolled in ACE. So when ACE is there, people tend to participate well. It is our challenge in the board to make sure these opportunities are available for all people throughout New South Wales.

I would like to mention here the role of the Commonwealth. The report *Come in Cinderella* had a significant nationally for ACE and some of the initiatives that have flowed from that have had a significant and dramatic impact on New South Wales. I would like to therefore ask the committee to translate, in the writing of this report, some of the current rhetoric of lifelong learning into reality and into an agenda that is not purely vocational and that convinces governments to convince organisations, enterprises, industry, communities and individuals of the value of lifelong learning, of the need for learning societies, of the need for learning communities and of the need for organisation and to recognise the value for learning for all.

I think this committee can play a significant role in providing the intellectual stimulus, steering the discourse and providing the vision. I hope in your report that this vision for lifelong learning and the role of adult and community education in that come through very strongly.

CHAIR—Can I just follow with a question before I ask my colleagues whether they

have any questions. I like the challenge to us that says, `Look, can you make sure when you write the report that you point out how important adult and community education is.' It should be something more than just vocational education and training, but along the lines of the emphasis that is in your New South Wales policy document. I have not looked at it thoroughly, but it looks most encouraging. How is New South Wales getting on with the Commonwealth vis-a-vis shaping the new national policy on adult and community education? I understand that process is under way at the moment. Could you tell us how it is going from the MCEETYA contribution. There might be some pointers as to how we how we might take note of your last comment.

Miss Thomas—I have another hat. I am actually chair of the MCEETYA ACE Taskforce. My responsibility is to manage and coordinate the review and revision of the national policy. As part of that process there are consultations in every state, so people from New South Wales will be asked to contribute. We had a two-day session in Melbourne where the AAACE and representatives from each state and territory really brainstormed what we felt should be in the new policy. Some of the issues that have come up by the shore have been issues that have been raised with you. I will just quickly run through some of them.

Ageing is looming as a big ticket item for adult and community education—not my words. Retraining: there is a constant need to be involved in learning; multiculturalism: ACE should be inclusive. Providing more training for the group who already have post-school qualifications is a very valid role for education and training. Also, getting individuals who have had unsuccessful learning experiences recognising the value of learning is a big challenge.

Youth policy: I do not think we actually do enough in our policy work to focus on youth; families: the roles in creating more cohesive networks within communities, including families in that network; language and literacy, the needs of small business and the intelligent use of IT. We should not forget the great contribution that adult and community education makes to the quality of life.

I touched on rural and remote issues—the decline of some rural committees, our reconciliation work with Aboriginal communities, how ACE can contribute to people coping well with the world of work, how providers deal with competition policy in the training market, tendering, the sector's role in unemployment, the large area of learning pathways, the intersection of different sectors, the streamlining of pathways, and the recognition of previous learning, RPL.

So those are lots of the issues that were put out on the table. They are now being massaged into a framework which will go up for consultation, which will be shaped and reshaped. I would be very interested to do some sort of matching between the issues that were before you and the issues of those groups as there will probably be some commonality.

CHAIR—When will that draft be available for discussion?

Miss Thomas—Next week.

CHAIR—I wonder if it would be possible for the committee to have a look at that?

Miss Thomas—Certainly. We actually involved Brenton in our planning so that we could have excellent communication between your group, the work, the messages that you are hearing and our perception of the needs of the sector. Hopefully we will have some cohesion in the views and some common vision and add weight to each other's agenda.

Senator CARR—The issues that you raised, I think, are obviously comprehensive, and they would cover many aspects of the education industry. They seem to be the common themes running right throughout the various sectors, but one item that I did not catch was the issue of funding. How is this to be funded? I am just wondering: where does that fit within the policy framework that you are discussing? Has there been any discussion about funding?

Miss Thomas—One of the areas I believe that there should be, for want of a better word, is a key result area or a goal, which is a phrase I used earlier on the sustainability—what does ACE need in order to be viable? As you are aware, the funding of adult and community education is a state responsibility but with the national role in the development of ACE and the enhancement of ACE I think there is a strong role for DEETYA and there also is a strong role for ANTA in supporting the development within the ACE sector.

Senator CARR—It is just that every other sector of education has a substantial Commonwealth funding contribution. It may well be argued that the schools are in fact funded to the tune of some 46 per cent of operating costs of the state school system from Commonwealth sources of one variety or another, given that the normal claim is that only 12 per cent is from tied assistance. Universities have some 97 or 98 per cent of funding; TAFE I think is very substantially Commonwealth funded. What is the present situation with regard to Commonwealth funding through ANTA and why, in your opinion, is there such a discrepancy between that funding allocation and the other sectors of education?

Miss Thomas—It is interesting to note that the situation at the moment in New South Wales in relation to Commonwealth funds is that, since the department in 1991 moved into the Department of Training and Education Co-ordination—before that it was in the Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs—it has been very directly involved in the policy stream and the resource allocation stream of vocational education and training. The ACE sector in New South Wales has a direct grant, from ANTA growth funds, of a base funding of $4 million, which is a reasonable amount of money for an ACE sector. It probably matches, if not exceeds, Victoria. So that is a base. We actually could use a lot more but in terms of being a line item in that Commonwealth budget it is really a very pleasant situation for ACE in New South Wales.

CHAIR—That money remains the same?

Miss Thomas—It has had incremental growth over the years and this year is the last year of incremental growth. The growth funds to ANTA, I understand that there is some

discussion on whether they remain at their current level. We also get some Commonwealth literacy funds; we get about a million, which is 40 per cent of the state allocation. Of the Commonwealth funds that are available to ACE I think New South Wales ACE has had a reasonable share—through some very tough negotiating to get that share.

But the quantum available is the issue. This is not ready for publication yet, but soon will be, *Think Local and Compete*, which is the Kaye Schofield report on ACE's contribution to VET and the role of ANTA. The strategy following this is for ACE to be part of the ANTA national strategy and to be named in the new business arrangements. We are working hard through MCEETYA to work with ANTA on including ACE. But as to your point about the relative amounts of school or TAFE, the adult and community education sector has never received significant funding from Commonwealth sources.

Senator CARR—I come back to this point: in terms of the new policy framework, what is the direction that you would anticipate the review following?

Miss Thomas—Again, we have had discussions with DEETYA since your last Senate inquiry. DEETYA is considering ways of assisting the ACE sector. However, when we talk about a national approach, it is extraordinarily difficult to define the scope of ACE in each state and territory, as you must be finding, or establishing a core funding program for ACE, when, for example, in Western Australia and Queensland their ACE sector is defined mainly as the stream 1000 offerings in TAFE. It is going to be extraordinarily difficult to design a national approach to the funding of ACE that comes from the Commonwealth.

Senator TROETH—Just following up on that, what is the percentage of funds flowing to ACE providers from ANTA funds as a percentage of your whole allocation?

Miss Thomas—It is 50 per cent at the moment.

Senator TROETH—From Commonwealth funds.

Miss Thomas—Sorry, not 50. The state budget is just over $8 million and the Commonwealth budget is $5 million.

Senator TROETH—So that is a little more than half.

Miss Thomas—Yes.

Senator TROETH—In your overview statement, speaking about rural main providers, you said:

While all program funds are currently administered centrally in the metropolitan area, there is significant devolution through Regional Councils.

How does that occur?

Miss Thomas—We have nine regional councils of ACE throughout New South Wales, but the metropolitan region does not have a regional council. The regional council is supported with a grant from the board which allows the employment of a regional officer. There is a voluntary regional council. The regional councils do excellent work in coordinating and managing small grant programs, supporting providers and being the link for the board and the rural communities.

CHAIR—Can I just go back for further clarification to the money? You told us that something like six million hours in 1995 were ACE hours, if we can call them that, and about 500,000 of those were accredited courses. Can I just be clear? Of the $5 million from the Commonwealth, how many of those dollars go to accredited courses and how many go to non-accredited courses, if any?

Miss Thomas—Of the $4 million, it is all accredited courses.

CHAIR—So $4 million out of $5 million goes to accredited courses.

Miss Thomas—Yes.

CHAIR—And the $1 million?

Miss Thomas—The $1 million goes towards literacy provision, which need not be accredited.

CHAIR—Where does the money come from for 5½ million hours contact time for non-accredited courses?

Miss Thomas—It is mainly user pays. The grant from the board allows a contribution to the infrastructure of the college of the centre or the WEA. The proportion of funds to the total revenue of the organisation that that represents is very interesting. For some of the larger colleges government support is about two per cent. For others it is over 50 per cent. However, it is important to realise the benefits of being supported by government. The core grant can be $150,000 or $180,000 for a large college. There are benefits in having direct access to the $4 million for growth and literacy funds and also the benefit of the use of schools on a cost recovery basis. Increasingly in rural areas they also have relationships with TAFE. There are benefits in being under the ACE umbrella but the accountability requirements actually are pretty high too. Some people, when making that decision to be part of the sector or not, feel that although the government support, in terms of dollars, can be relatively small, the other aspects are a great benefit.

CHAIR—If there was any cutback in Commonwealth money through ANTA to ACE in New South Wales, what do you anticipate would be the impact of that?

Miss Thomas—The community, if they still wanted to come to accredited courses, would have to pay full cost recovery. So it is the community that would bear the cost. The

organisation would have to decide whether this was viable, whether the withdrawal of, for example, a subsidy of $5.60 per student contact hour for accredited courses meant they could viably run them or whether they would be too expensive for the community—whether the community could pay. The impact would be very much more expensive courses for the community or a withdrawal of those courses.

CHAIR—Of the $5 million how many of those dollars get to regional councils and how many of them get to local community groups?

Miss Thomas—In terms of local community groups, if you mean ACE organisations, the budget for regional councils is about $800,000 and the actual grants that go to main providers are over $5 million. That is directly to the ACE organisations, over $5 million.

CHAIR—So, quite a few of those dollars are actually getting out into regional rural New South Wales.

Miss Thomas—Yes.

CHAIR—You seem to indicate that if such dollars were cut back this would have an increasingly negative impact on a fairly pressured community. Can you comment a bit further about that? What role do these dollars play in contributing to those communities feeling as though they are still alive?

Miss Thomas—The feedback from rural areas on services—and these are not necessarily related to government, they are more related to banks for example withdrawing their services from rural communities—is that some rationalisation of services means that communities are feeling very isolated. Some of them feel that their heart is taken out of them. The role of ACE is increasingly important and we are finding, in rural communities, when people have been unemployed and they have access to both leisure courses and training that they see ACE as making a very valuable contribution to their life and their family life.

CHAIR—Is that an argument that you think will persuade the minister for education federally to continue to fund? It seems to me that there is a very good case to be made, but is it a case to be made for funding under DEET dollars?

Miss Thomas—I think a case could be made and I think is being made for support for education and training in rural areas. I suppose the argument is—and I touched upon it in my summary where I asked you to provide some sort of vision—that the dollars are not only for pure training, but that we recognise the value of learning as a first step to a whole range of pathways. It is about government taking a broader view of what is really useful and valuable, and not whether it just leads to a qualification—and I think that is the role of ACE.

CHAIR—Have you had much conversational contact with local government? Certainly, along the lines of what we have just been talking about, local government has been saying to me that a number of them got involved in getting adult and community education

dollars, particularly ANTA dollars and particularly through LEAP programs and so on. They were finding that enormously useful in helping vitalise their communities. Has your MCEETYA group been talking to local government about the impact of those changes in LEAP programs, for example, and cutbacks in dollars to the community?

Miss Thomas—At a national level we have been exchanging views informally. However, we have done an analysis in New South Wales of the impact of the withdrawal of those dollars and where contracts were not able to be renewed for teachers, for example, and where students had no access to education and training. We are carefully monitoring the situation in New South Wales and looking at ways to get the strategic alliances you mentioned with local governments, regional development boards and a whole range of avenues for funding that can replace the programs such as LEAP.

CHAIR—It is hardly for the committee to tell MCEETYA what to do, but the strength of the feeling from local government might imply that more than an informal report from that sector might be very useful in shaping your policy. You tell us that half a million hours are accredited courses and 5½ million are non-accredited—and the money goes all to the accredited courses. What is therefore the case for a dollar commitment to lifelong learning and a learning society if nearly all of your dollars are going to accreditation and training, and anyone who wants to be involved in lifelong learning really has to pay?

Miss Thomas—In an ideal world it would be excellent if lifelong learning were available to all at very low cost. The reality is the government dollar has to go where it is of greatest benefit. The current government agenda is that Australia will be more productive and communities will be more vital if there is more employment. In order to raise employment levels people need to have their skills levels raised. That is where the majority of—

CHAIR—It is a hard question for me to ask, Miss Thomas, but wasn't that also something of the emphasis of the previous Labor government?

Miss Thomas—Yes.

CHAIR—And you are suggesting that it is a less than ideal world?

Miss Thomas—I think the challenge is to get governments to understand that the person is a whole person and we need a holistic approach to funding educational training for a range of purposes. But it is a question of limited resources and the best use of the resources. I suppose I would like to say that in relation to the adult and community education sector quite small amounts of money go an incredibly long way when we are talking about TAFE sectors and schools sectors. If you think of a state-wide system producing the outcomes and the achievements on that level of funding, we are actually not talking about huge amounts of money. I am really saying that a moderate amount of money could make a large difference.

CHAIR—Some of those infrastructure dollars I presume are benefiting the lifelong learning end as well as the accredited training end.

Miss Thomas—My understanding is that the benefits do flow throughout the organisation.

Senator TROETH—I wanted to ask you how community providers are coping with the data collection end of the—

Miss Thomas—It varies enormously, but it is an enormous challenge for them. They rose to this challenge in New South Wales and we were able to get limited funding to support their entry into the data system. All New South Wales providers provided their data to AVETMISS standard last year. For the first time there was an ACE data collection from New South Wales in the national statistics, which is a tremendous achievement, but I think at a cost to the sector. My personal and professional view is that it is important for the ACE sector to hang in there with data collection, which must become easier over years. The amount of data that we now have on New South Wales used to inform planning, policy-makers and funding bodies is such a powerful tool that I am very committed to encouraging the sector to stay with the data collection. But I do know that that view is not shared by all providers.

Interestingly, the MCEETYA ACE task force considered one of the recommendations of Kaye Schofield's report that only accredited courses be subjected to the AVETMISS standard. The MCEETYA ACE task force rejected that because our first argument is to please recognise the value of all learning and then that which gets counted is only the accredited. Those of us who know where decisions are made know what gets funded and what is counted. The demographic data, the analysis of the data, is going to be useful for a range of purposes. But it is a huge strain on the ACE sector. I believe if the ACE sector says we cannot do it without money the decision would be not to do it—and I would not like to see that happen. I think it starts with the thread of your *Come in Cinderella* where you said the sector really needs to be quantified to determine what it is doing. There is no decent data collection. We worked very, very hard to get included in that data collection and I think we should maintain our data collection.

Senator TROETH—I did start to ask you about the regional councils. What is the composition of those regional councils?

Miss Thomas—They have actually just been reviewed. The new model is going to be up and running in July. The previous model had over 50 per cent of providers and people such as TAFE, the Department of Agriculture—whichever was the dominant interest of the region—and local community members with skill and expertise. The new model will have nine to 10 people, three providers or representatives of providers, three community members and three agencies that have strong connections with the ACE sector.

Senator TROETH—What would be the average geographical catchment area for those regional councils?

Miss Thomas—They actually follow the TAFE boundary of western New South

Wales and include Orana, central west and far west. We have three separate councils there and similarly, in the Hunter, we have a Hunter Regional Council and a Central Coast Regional Council. There is one that straddles the north coast and one for the Riverina, one for the south. So there is quite a large boundary, quite diverse needs and interest.

Senator TROETH—How many regional councils in all?

Miss Thomas—Nine—and a metropolitan structure which is not a council.

Senator TROETH—Do you anticipate you will have any difficulty, given the harsh rule conditions that you have mentioned, in getting the community representatives onto those councils?

Miss Thomas—It has been mentioned, because one of the offshoots of rationalisation of government services or withdrawal of banks and other agencies is that the personnel go, too, and those who actually have the skills and experience to make a contribution are leaving these communities and because of the pressures on rural communities the capacity for people to respond as volunteers is declining. That is my feedback from the regions. So it will be very interesting to see what sort of response we get.

CHAIR—Can I just follow up on that. Where is the Riverina council based?

Miss Thomas—It is actually in Griffith, but meetings are held around the region. They can be held in Balranald, Wagga or wherever.

CHAIR—It is a long drive from east to west of the Riverina, isn't it?

Miss Thomas—Absolutely.

CHAIR—I guess you may have a large catchment area to get your three community reps from.

Senator TROETH—Yes.

CHAIR—But some of them could expect to do a lot of travel.

Miss Thomas—Yes. They currently meet every two months.

CHAIR—They do a lot of travel, only infrequently.

Miss Thomas—Yes, and they try to move the meetings around so the travelling is shared.

Senator FERRIS—Miss Thomas, I was very pleased to see the continued growth in enrolments in New South Wales and particularly this figure that in 1995 there were 500,000

people in accredited courses. I noted your comments on fee for service. I suppose the steady growth in enrolments would seem to reflect the view that people's commitment to lifelong learning is greater than their objection to fee for service.

Miss Thomas—It seems to me that, for some people, it is a choice they make to spend their money on ACE. It is fascinating to look at some of the profiles of people who attend. Whereas other people choose theatre, cinema or sporting interests, some people really believe that their leisure and disposable incomes are best focused on ACE.

Senator FERRIS—And it is nice to see that there are more and more of them. I am interested in the links between your organisations and your networks, if you like, and small business and, in particular, businesses in smaller rural communities and regional centres. Is there any attempt made to perhaps link the requirements of those companies and businesses with courses that are offered in a sense of a flow-on into the work force?

Miss Thomas—Very much so. Some of our organisations have specific arms that respond to the needs of local industry and local small business, and many of them have set up computer training rooms and will do customised training. Individuals from small businesses come into ACE courses. So they are actually developing links with small business and the traineeship in small business is really well suited to be supported by the ACE sector. So we have some excellent case studies of ACE organisations responding to the needs of business on a fee for service.

Senator FERRIS—It would be very helpful to us if you had any of those we could have a look at—I am very interested in that linkage between training and work.

Miss Thomas—Yes, I have got something here that you could have.

CHAIR—Will you be able to provide that to the committee today?

Miss Thomas—Yes.

Senator FERRIS—My final question, Miss Thomas: I was interested in your comments about competition earlier in your preamble and also this commitment to lifelong learning. When you describe a program or a course as successful, could you tell me how you evaluate that? Is there a data collection at the end of it based on surveys or is it by numbers of enrolments, the next course or the last course? Is there a process for that evaluation of success?

Miss Thomas—It depends on the individual organisation what means of evaluation it is. If it is an accredited course, it will have a range of data that needs to be provided, module, outcome, et cetera. It is quite structured. In general courses, organisations seek feedback on the quality of the course, the content, whether it was delivered well, the skills of the teacher, the organisation of the course. It is usually analysing those areas and the questions asked: would you re-enrol, et cetera. It is customer feedback.

We have just undertaken a customer satisfaction survey. We will then make this tool available to the sector for customising in terms of their own organisation. We firstly started with several focus groups, saying, `What are your expectations of ACE,' and then the survey asks, `Were your expectations met?' The results coming out so far show that the people who go to ACE are highly satisfied with the quality of teaching and they are very satisfied with the resources, interestingly. They seem to accept they are getting what they paid for. We were interested in the responses on the facilities, the resources available—which are pretty challenging sometimes. People were satisfied with the third area of organisation, too. I think that being highly satisfied with the teaching in ACE is borne out in another of our reports.

Senator FERRIS—And in these enrolments, of course.

Senator O'BRIEN—Your organisation is doing some demographic data surveying. Are you linking the user pay issue with that survey with a view to discovering where there are groups within the community which are resistant to the concept, perhaps for economic reasons or for other reasons? When do you expect that data to be available?

Miss Thomas—We have two very useful sets of data now to respond to your question. This is an analysis of all the New South Wales data by equity target group, by participation rates and throughout New South Wales. That is linked to the ABS data so we can make comparisons. We have now got the economics of ACE which has done some analysis by postcode of income and participation in ACE. We are able, through this report, to make some comment on the reasons why certain groups in the population are not participating in ACE. I think the picture is becoming clearer and is quantified in a better way through these two pieces of important data. Does that answer your question?

Senator O'BRIEN—The committee may like to have access to that data.

Miss Thomas—This will literally be delivered today and I will send you a copy. I will discuss with Brenton whether all of this would be useful or parts of it. It is really hefty and you would be deluged by it.

Senator O'BRIEN—We can look at that. There may be issues that arise about which we may be able to correspond with you.

Miss Thomas—Certainly.

Senator O'BRIEN—You did touch on some funding deficiencies which were being experienced by some of the providers in the sector and which seemed to arise out of cuts to the Commonwealth labour market programs—you mentioned LEAP, for example. You gave us, I think, some startling examples of cuts. Do you know whether those providers were delivering accredited programs to those labour market program participants or whether they were just the type of user-pays courses that are not accredited generally provided by the ACE sector?

Miss Thomas—They were subsidised courses, they had no fees and, in fact, for LEAP, there was a work allowance—a wage—paid to participants. There were elements of most courses that were accredited.

Senator O'BRIEN—When you say they were subsidised courses, were they subsidised, for example, out of the literacy program?

Miss Thomas—No. They were totally paid for by government.

Senator O'BRIEN—That is what I am trying to get at. They were paid for by, I guess, the government through brokers as part of the training component?

Miss Thomas—Yes. They were per capita allowances to providers.

Senator O'BRIEN—So, in effect, the sector was receiving some funding through the Working Nation program.

Miss Thomas—Yes.

Senator O'BRIEN—Is there any data for the New South Wales sector which might quantify that?

Miss Thomas—In terms of their previous involvement and current involvement, yes. We do not have it, but we can get it.

Senator O'BRIEN—I would like to see that. It would be interesting—I do not imagine the figures would be kept—to have a look at that in the context of demographic data as well. You said in your main submission that the board has resourced all main ACE providers with hardware and software—computers that is. How big an undertaking has this been? Is it primarily to provide an administrative resource, or for program delivery? You might want to take on notice the last aspect of this question: is there some data on the average cost per provider of this funding?

Miss Thomas—I can forward to you very quickly a sum total of the overall cost to the board in terms of equipping computers, modems and funding for Internet connection and training. We believed that it was very important that if ACE was to be managed effectively each organisation should have one computer. In answer to your question, it was for administrative purposes. We have had two annual equipment grants which, in many cases, have assisted providers to establish computers for teaching.

Many of our providers now have dedicated computer rooms. One good initiative is where schools and ACE share buildings—the ACE shares the school building. The ACE will buy the computers and put them in the school lab; students have them by day and adults have them from 3.30 p.m. That is one model which we think is a good cooperative model.

Increasingly, ACE providers are having their dedicated training rooms and are winning some excellent training contracts for universities et cetera in terms of their training for their staff.

Senator O'BRIEN—So the ACE providers then are competing, for example, with private sector providers in some areas?

Miss Thomas—Yes, and winning contracts.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am hesitant to ask whether any of the competition policies have been considered in the context of what might be said to be a subsidy of these bodies to compete against the private sector.

Miss Thomas—I think in relative terms the subsidies to ACE are really very small. ACE is not classed as a public provider in New South Wales. I would think their non-for-profit status is the key factor there. I think they compete on a pretty even playing field with private providers.

Senator O'BRIEN—You are not aware of any complaints from private providers about that competition?

Miss Thomas—No. I think it is more against the public provider than ACE.

CHAIR—One last question if I can. Miss Thomas, can you elaborate a little on the crown copyright curriculum arrangements? Does that mean the New South Wales government is establishing a new process so that people purchasing and acquiring material under certain headings are entitled to a tax deductibility?

Miss Thomas—I am not sure about tax deductibility.

CHAIR—You elaborate on it with `removing of licensing fees and so on'. Could you please briefly explain that?

Miss Thomas—It is not tax deductibility. Rather, the Department of Training and Education, the Adult Migrant Education Service, TAFE and ACE all sit now under one director-general. There is a curriculum committee which is looking at making curriculum accessible at a low cost, if it is developed with public funds and has crown copyright. This is obviously the national curriculum. The state based curriculum developed with public funds is going to be available at low cost to providers.

CHAIR—We have many more things that we could put to you, but we have come to the end of our time, plus a little bit more. You are very welcome, if you have nothing else to do today, to stay for the rest of the hearing, like everybody else here. Thank you very much for your contribution and for some quite splendid material—including *Recognising the Value of Lifelong Learning For All*, which I suspect is probably the only adult and community education policy of this sort.

Miss Thomas—The ACT is close but I am not sure they are there yet.

CHAIR—That last lot of material that you provided in answer to questions from Senator Ferris is just nifty and will be very helpful to the committee in its deliberations. I think we thank you for the challenge to make sure we include a piece of vision in our Cinderella report. I never did find out what happened to Cinderella after she met the prince so it will be a very big—

Senator FERRIS—Did she meet one?

CHAIR—Maybe we should talk about what happens when you put your foot in a glass slipper. I do think, metaphorically, we have got a lot of wealth. Whether we will produce the report, I do not know. The committee is enormously assisted by a challenge like you have given us—which is not just the information, the data from New South Wales and the story of what is good and what is not so good in your territory, but also reminding the committee that adult and community education has got a toehold in policy considerations, but it is hardly a strong foothold. Maybe what we need to do is make sure we continue to challenge and look at that proposal that you put up to us about the thing called vision for lifelong learning.

You have touched on a lot of things and thank you very much. As Senator O'Brien said, if there are any further questions that we would like information about, I am presuming—but I should ask formally—that we may contact you and seek any further assistance.

Miss Thomas—Certainly.

CHAIR—Thank you. We have not got terribly much longer because we have a time line where we need to try and get this report finished in the next month or so. We do appreciate very much your help.

[10.11 a.m.]

BAIN, Ms Donna Marie, President, New South Wales Council of Adult and Community Organisations, 170 Phillip Street, Sydney, New South Wales 2000

CLANCY, Mr Michael Graham, Executive Officer, Evening and Community Colleges Association, 127 Parramatta Road, Camperdown, New South Wales 2050

PINDER, Mr Richard, Assistant Executive Officer, Workers' Educational Association Sydney, 72 Bathurst Street, Sydney, New South Wales 2000

CHAIR—I welcome the witnesses from the Evening and Community Colleges Association of New South Wales, the New South Wales Council of Adult and Community Organisations and the Workers' Educational Association Sydney. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I do point out that evidence taken in camera, however, may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate.

The committee has before it submissions Nos 51, 69 and 13. Is it the wish of the committee that the documents be received as evidence and authorised for publication? There being no objection, it is so ordered. Is there any other material that any of you would like to present to the committee at this stage? If not, I ask each of you to make a brief opening statement and then we will have questions from the senators. Who is opening the batting?

Ms Bain—With the committee's indulgence, I might open and simply provide an overview of these organisations that are giving evidence today. The ACE Council was established in 1990. Its member associations are the Community and Adult Education Centres, commonly known as the CAECs; the Evening and Community Colleges Association; and the Workers' Educational Association, commonly known as WEA.

The role of the ACE Council as a peak body for ACE providers in New South Wales is to do these things: to further the development of adult and community education; to represent the common interests and concerns of member bodies to government and other authorities; to promote and foster support for adult and community education in New South Wales; and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and concerns of its member bodies.

There are 74 adult and community education providers in New South Wales which the ACE Council represents. I will give you a synopsis for 1995. The 1996 figures are not available at this stage because they have not been audited, so if you will indulge me I will just give you figures for 1995. In 1995 there were 74 centres providing adult and community education in New South Wales scattered throughout this state. They provided approximately 233 courses to over 300,000 students.

We estimate that the turnover in 1995 for this sector was $41.1 million. That is the

totals for CAEC, WEA and the Evening and Community Colleges Association. You should bear in mind, of course, that that figure includes substantial government funding, particularly the labour market programs in 1995. But in terms of the gross turnover, it was $41.1 million.

CHAIR—Can you tell us how much of that would be direct government money?

Ms Bain—For example, in labour market programs in the evening and community colleges sector it may be up to $16 million. That is a rough estimate; I cannot give you audited figures. It is also worth while bearing in mind that the majority of that income is provided by the students themselves through a user pays system. Sam has given you detailed figures for Commonwealth funding and state government funding.

It is important to note that the features of adult and community education providers are that they are run by volunteer councils consisting of students, members, affiliated clubs and interest groups. So although they have a very professional management structure, a key feature of these organisations is a very strong involvement of volunteers like me, with volunteer committees of between 10 and 12 people scattered throughout New South Wales.

I will give a brief outline of what the ACE Council has been doing since the Senate committee was last in New South Wales. It has been strongly involved in professional development. The ACE Council considers that it has a strategic role in providing professional development opportunities to the professional managers of ACE providers and volunteers.

Since 1994 it has run a New South Wales conference involving between 280 and 330 people from throughout New South Wales. The point of the exercise is to bring providers up to date with major government initiatives, best practice throughout the state, and to provide them with a forum to exchange ideas and get together. They do not do that very often. You quite often get the feeling from providers that they are working in isolation. This conference is designed to bring them together.

Another significant development since the Senate committee was last in New South Wales is development of the ACE quality strategy. Some time ago, the ACE Council decided that it needed to make a commitment to its students and the communities in which it worked to develop a strong strategic alliance with the quality movement, and it has done that. The ACE quality strategy—this is a document which came out in 1996—commits the sector to adopting sound quality principles; I will leave this document with you to look at.

It is designed to: provide providers with measures to ensure community and client involvement in the full range of ACE programs and services; provide a means for identifying and further developing good practice and best practice; and provide a mechanism for self-assessment of operations and services, together with a means of external validation. So in addition to a provider going through a rigorous self-assessment process, there is also a strategy to involve assessment by your peers and a more substantial external validation. It also provides a means of providers satisfying funding and certification requirements in terms of acquittal of grant funds and just ensuring that all the paper work is above board.

This is a significant document for New South Wales. It is on a par with the New South Wales policy for the adult and community education sector. I think that New South Wales has led the country in this particular initiative.

The ACE Council and its quality subcommittee is now working with the Board of Vocational Education and Training on their quality principles so that we can get some synergy between what they are doing for that particular subpart of the ACE program and the general ACE program.

In addition, since last time you were here, we have developed the ACE policy. That was an initiative of the ACE Council. We lobbied vigorously. The government and the opposition said, `Well, you go and develop a policy for this sector', simply so that the government would articulate its commitment to adult and community education in this sector.

The other thing to note is that, in the five years since you have been here, the sector has not only grown but also matured. It is an increasingly sophisticated and professionally managed sector. As Sam mentioned earlier, we have highly professional and qualified managers who run their organisations. They are running, on the whole, very large organisations that take an active commitment in communicating with their local communities and the local business and industry sectors. These are not organisations that are just flying by the seat of their pants. They develop business plans. They develop comprehensive budget statements. They acquit funds properly and on time. They run their paperwork. They got AVETMISS up and running. We think they are doing a sterling job, running on the smell of an oily rag essentially.

There are some issues which the ACE Council believes need the attention of not only the New South Wales government but also the Commonwealth government. These issues include technology. As Sam mentioned, the New South Wales government has been generous in providing funding for hardware and software for office use and also for teaching purposes. Unfortunately, that does not take into account that the basic telecommunications infrastructure in the country areas is not particularly good. So although you may have the latest modem and the latest hardware and software, if your telephone line is still based on 1960s technology it takes forever to get a fax message and it takes forever for your modem to connect. This is not an issue just for education ministers and education departments, it is actually an issue about providing technology infrastructure to rural communities. Providing all the hardware and software is only ever going to be as good as the ISDN connection line with city offices.

The other issue is equity funding. As Sam mentioned earlier, there are significant proportions of this community that do not participate in ACE, for a whole host of reasons to do with cost, accessibility, and the types of programs that are available. This deserves greater attention. For example, in relation to literacy, we understand that rural providers did not get the funding that they had anticipated, because the funding went to metropolitan areas.

On a scan of what ACE provided, it was found that ACE providers do not do a lot of

literacy programs in the metropolitan area simply because there are a whole host of other providers who do literacy in the metropolitan area—AMES offices, et cetera. Unfortunately, the net result of that was that the rural sector got less than its fair share because it was seen that the metropolitan area was not pulling its weight in terms of literacy. That is a small example that you cannot evaluate the ACE sector purely on a particular area: it is a very complex, very large, very diverse sector. Simply doing calculations based on metropolitan provision does not take into account what rural providers need or what rural communities need. The other issue which Sam touched on earlier was the labour market programs—

CHAIR—Excuse me, Ms Bain, I do not wish to criticise, but for the record, when you say `Sam', could you also say `Miss Thomas'. We all know who she is, but it is for the benefit of those who may read this record in future, perhaps in 100 years time, for historical purposes.

Ms Bain—Certainly. In terms of the training needs for the unemployed, Miss Thomas mentioned the reduction in labour market program funding. It has had a significant impact on the provision of adult and community education, simply because funding is not necessarily quarantined to those particular activities. Providing that sort of funding allows an organisation to, for example, run an office, provide staff members and answer the phone. When that funding disappears literally overnight you jeopardise not only the training requirements for the unemployed—the ACE Council firmly believes that they will still need basic training in literacy and numeracy and perhaps reskilling and readjusting to the workplace to get them to the employable stage—but also ACE provision generally.

The ACE Council firmly believes that ACE providers are an integral part of their local community. They are not just there to provide adult and community education; they are a centre for people to meet. One of the telling characteristics of ACE is that people find it a friendly place to go to; they make friends at ACE. When the funding disappears, so does that community fabric.

I think it is a challenge for government. Although there is a strong drive to get people in employment, that is not just the net result of ACE. ACE is much more than that. ACE is about giving people living skills; it is about giving them skills to participate in their local communities; it is about preparing them for work. In some cases, it is going to take longer than 12 to 18 months—which are the rules of the current scheme. In the case of a person who is 50 and who is going to need to be reskilled and retrained, trying to find a suitable job for this person in a remote community in which the employment prospects are next to nil is going to be a challenge which may take longer than 12 to 18 months. Government policy needs to reflect that sort of challenge, particularly in rural and isolated communities or communities that are undergoing massive industry restructuring. They do not always run to time, unfortunately, and ACE providers are very good about putting in the time with their local communities, about taking the extra step, about designing a program for their needs.

The other challenge for the ACE sector is to provide professional development opportunities and training for their staff and volunteers. In an increasingly sophisticated and competitive market where we are being called upon to provide much more diverse and

challenging programs, we need to make sure that our staff and volunteers have the skills to do that, to properly manage the finances of their organisations, to be involved in innovative course curriculum design and delivery. That sort of exercise, unfortunately, takes money and commitment by government to support it in the long term.

Probably the core issue from the ACE Council's perspective is this idea of the government supporting the core activity of ACE. As we have mentioned, accredited programs only provide a relatively small proportion of what ACE is all about. The ACE Council and its member organisations firmly believe that adult and community education is much more than that. It deserves not only the government's funding attention but, more importantly, political and policy attention.

It provides education for education's sake and gives people some sound living skills so that they can participate in their local parent and friends' association, help with the local school tuckshop and do some volunteer work themselves. They can not only do an accredited course or go on to TAFE and university—which of course some of them do and do wonderfully well at—but it is also about having a vibrant learned community who know what their political rights are, who are encouraged to vote in local council elections and actually participate as full citizens.

That is where the ACE sector sees its most vital role and traditionally that is where its students come from and what they do. They are interested in art, literature and culture and they will do an accredited course. That is fabulous, but they are interested in a whole range of other things. I think it is a challenge for government to recognise that it too has a vision for its citizens which is not only about accredited training and getting them jobs, but also about having an informed citizenry that is actually able to participate properly. It is probably now worth while passing over to our two organisations to provide their own synopsis.

Mr Clancy—The Evening and Community Colleges Association has 24 members. It represents 24 colleges across New South Wales that enrol about 200,000 adults a year in short courses at about 400 venues around New South Wales. Colleges have a commitment to a society where everyone has access to lifelong learning. In seeking this vision they have had a lot of successes and experienced a lot of tensions over the last five years.

I would like to briefly address two of those dominating pressures or influences over the last five years. I believe they are the influence of government policy and the introduction of marketing policy and practices. Arising from the *Come in Cinderella* report, the sector certainly has come in from the cold. Through stronger recognition at state and federal level, the profile of the sector has increased dramatically. In New South Wales that is most strongly seen in the strengthening of the New South Wales Board of Adult Education and in its secretariat, which is now called ACE Services.

This department over that time has pro-actively supported the development of a national policy on ACE in the support of the recognition of ACE at a national level, for example, especially with ANTA. It has strengthened government administration and

accountability of the sector and it has also initiated a broad spectrum of research that Miss Thomas referred to earlier. It has increased government funding of the sector, it has integrated the sector with other education providers such as TAFE and it has promoted the ACE quality strategy.

Other government departments, such as the old DEET or DEETYA, have opened funding programs to ACE over that time especially in the areas of language, literacy and labour market programs. In each of these areas, the sector has responded strongly to these initiatives and has won recognition for its capacity to tailor and deliver government programs to local communities.

The other major influence on the sector in the last five years with our members has been the increasingly sophisticated use of marketing practices by our members involving identifying target markets, quality promotion and customer service. This has seen many make great leaps in participation rates, the range of courses, the range of venues and the range of government contracts they been successful in bidding for and delivering locally. One measure of marketing success is of course increased income and the evening and community colleges over a three-year period have doubled their income. A lot of that has been the labour market programs, which are falling away now.

To sum up the current status, I would say that we are seeing the sector as a reflection of these two dominant forces. It is remarkably flexible and responsive to any adult education activity which will pay for itself. It is likely to continue to provide governments with an excellent channel for the delivery of programs at a community level and provide customers within those communities with a broad range of short, relevant courses.

Our association is committed to supporting further tailoring of government policy and government's partnership with the sector and increasing the marketing successes of our members. This association and its members are committed to lifelong learning for all and as part of that we need to address some of the gaps that we see in current practices. I would like to take a few minutes to address some of the issues for the future.

CHAIR—Can you take one minute, otherwise the committee will not have a chance to put any questions to you?

Senator CARR—You could incorporate any remarks that you felt needed to be made into the *Hansard*, if you have a written statement.

Senator TROETH—I would like to hear Mr Clancy's thoughts on the future.

Mr Clancy—I will make them very briefly. One of the problems facing ACE providers and the one we always hear about as an association is the increasing amount of red tape. A lot of providers are finding that that is interfering with their traditional assets of flexibility and responsiveness. In the development of the sector, we have to try and ensure that happens without further increasing red tape and threatening this flexibility and responsiveness.

Many providers feel that there needs to be a stronger emphasis on industry bodies so that the industry itself is seen as providing leadership for the sector. The long-term vitality of the sector requires committed and astute leadership from the sector itself. If we look at the gaps in the sector, they probably can be identified by the general term of `market failure'. In other words, where the service is required by people who cannot pay for themselves or services that do not pay for themselves. If we look at groups who cannot pay for themselves, we are looking at pensioners. We do not offer a broad range of pensioner discounts. Older people lack the disposable income. Also in New South Wales, with evening colleges which use schools, we also lack daytime venues.

There is also a broad range of groups who require outreach activities. Just putting on programs and expecting people to turn up does not work with a range of groups. Some of those groups are the disabled, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, migrant groups and a lot of manual male workers. Other barriers to specific groups are single mothers with child care or mothers in general. Increasingly, there is more focus now on economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods as the polarisation is accelerating between the rich and the poor and the educationally rich and the educationally poor. I am sure that the research is emphasising that more and more and the long-term effects of that polarisation accelerating. A lot of ACE providers see themselves as wanting to make a difference to that, but marketing practices say you go where the market is, which is in our case is younger, female, better educated people. In those areas the ACE sector is flourishing, but in some of these other areas there are certainly gaps in the services. So for our members there is a tension. With a commitment to lifelong learning for all, they find themselves lacking the resources to provide services for the whole community.

I think there is also another area where there is market failure, and that is programs. Some of those we might think about are the study circle programs. People do not usually buy them. They are an important part of promoting lifelong learning in a community, but there is not the cash turnover. So a lot of the providers are not promoting them to the extent that we would hope that they would. These are environmental programs, citizenship programs and things like that. For our members this creates a tension where they lack the staff to promote such programs and to become strong agents of lifelong learning despite their commitment to lifelong learning. I was going to sum up, but I will leave that summary and reiterate those points.

CHAIR—We are very pleased to have heard from you, Mr Clancy. I am sure we will have a few questions that might allow you to elaborate on some of those points that are really very useful. It is only fair too that we give the WEA a chance to close the batting.

Mr Pinder—I will try to make my statement brief. WEA Sydney is a fairly large adult education organisation operating out of its own premises in the city and enrolling some 16,000 to 17,000 students each year—some 2,000 of whom are enrolled in country based discussion groups throughout New South Wales. There are about 200 discussion groups still operating around New South Wales.

WEA is an organisation which has sought to maintain the tradition of a broad, liberal adult education program in an age of training, as I hope is evident from our submission. WEA remains concerned about the way adult education is increasingly viewed in instrumental terms, essentially as a preparation for jobs, and the way in which government agencies have, in the wake of *Come in Cinderella*, tended to see ACE merely as a vocational vehicle worthy of extra funding only to the extent that it is prepared to dance to the VET tune. However, it must also be said that WEA Sydney has also been pleased to participate in the national training effort, as I hope our submission indicates.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Pinder. We will allow the high ground, but take the dollars.

Mr Pinder—In fact over 400 students successfully completed accredited courses in 1995 and over 900 students completed accredited courses in 1996. I also think it is worth reminding the inquiry that WEA set up its own computer training facility in 1989, without government funds.

WEA is even more pleased to be able to report to the Senate inquiry its continuing success as a provider of a humanities based liberal adult education program, as I hope the figures on page 3 of our submission indicate. This is a program which is now almost unique in Australia and, I would say, almost unique in the world, in its breadth and commitment to the concept of the well-educated citizen. The WEA passionately believes in the development of the reflective citizen—one who walks out of the classroom open to new ideas.

WEA believes adult education is much more important than VET. I would also like to draw the inquiry's attention to a study which was reported in the *British Medical Journal* of April 1995 and in *Adults Learning*. This report indicated that there was a research study in Rotterdam in 1995 that suggested that a low level of education was associated with a higher prevalence of dementia, particularly Alzheimer's disease. The authors of this study came to the following conclusions:

> . . . not only previous education but also continued mental activity may be important for elderly people. Adult education programmes and stimulating mental activity may help improve coping skills and strategies for solving problems and in turn these may help offset the cognitive effects of normal ageing and delay the clinical symptoms associated with Alzheimer's disease.

Of course vocational skills are not always appropriate for the elderly, yet they can still think, discuss and participate in broad-based liberal adult education programs.

I would like to make a final point to the inquiry about the nature of adult and community education organisations and about WEA's in particular. Some other members have also hinted at this. ACE organisations are independent, voluntarily managed bodies with active participation from their students and tutors. The WEA's community of interest comprises a council of representatives of students, tutors, members and affiliated organisations. The submission that you have in front of you was put together by a subcommittee of three

volunteers and me.

Each month over 30 people meet to create a council which governs the WEA. Some members have been active in that council since the 1940s. It is often said that when you chop wood for the fire, you warm yourself twice. I believe that active WEA students learn twice by sharing the responsibility for their own organisation as well as following syllabus with agreed learning outcomes.

Public monies provided to such organisations go further because of this voluntary input and, in an age which is against excessive reliance on the state but still, we hope, in favour of caring and cooperation, the WEA and other ACE organisations which combine that voluntary statutory partnership with modest, and I stress modest, public resources—WEA does receive only a mere eight per cent of its revenues from government agencies—offer a model which are worthy of continued support. This support should be broad, not narrow and utilitarian.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Pinder. In fact, thank you to all of you. You have given us a huge amount to think about, both in your submissions and in your contributions today. I know I have about 20,000 questions, but I will pass over to my colleagues first.

Senator O'BRIEN—Mr Clancy, you talked about the labour market program aspect of your organisation. Would it be fair to say that those programs gave access to areas of the community, perhaps disadvantaged sectors of the community, that are otherwise limited in terms of the access your community has to them?

Mr Clancy—Absolutely.

Senator O'BRIEN—Do you know about the labour market program experience of this sector in other states?

Mr Clancy—Not in detail, no. I have heard anecdotes of what is happening in Victoria, but not in a detailed enough way to answer specific questions about it.

Senator O'BRIEN—Ms Bain, just following through on that, did organisation members of your council tend to be brokers for labour market programs or training delivery providers?

Ms Bain—Both. A significant part of their work is actually as providers of training as part of their labour market program delivery.

Senator O'BRIEN—So some of the organisations will arrange the employment, monitor the placement and provide the training, but some would only provide the training?

Ms Bain—The majority of their involvement was in training because that is what the ACE sector is about. It would be fair to say that, on the whole, their involvement is in training

and education.

Senator O'BRIEN—I think you were saying that somehow there was a spin-off in assisting the administration of the overall program through that funding?

Ms Bain—Yes, for some organisations it would no doubt make up a significant part of their income. Although the income is not involved in the design and delivery of those programs, if somebody answers the phone and somebody does the administration work and they not only do that for the labour market programs but also do it for the other aspects of the organisation's delivery, then taking away what is a significant part of an organisation's small funding base for a labour market program makes a big difference to their bottom line.

Some of these organisations are not in a position to re-engineer their finances that quickly. We are not talking about organisations that in most instances have large reserves or money to quickly re-engineer their programs. That effort sometimes takes time and they do not have reserves to do some research and development to quickly move into other markets. The removal of the labour market program has made a big difference very quickly to organisations that were relying for the most part on the labour market programs as part of their provision.

Senator O'BRIEN—So those programs in the main are gone?

Ms Bain—Yes, or are in the throes of going.

Senator O'BRIEN—Yes, or being phased out. Is there any material that your organisation can produce which shows the effect of that on the ACE providers that you represent?

Ms Bain—Yes, I can probably choose a representative sample and provide some information to the committee. It will take some time, but if you can leave it with me, I will make some inquiries.

Senator O'BRIEN—We have a fairly short reporting time, as I understand.

Senator FERRIS—Mr Clancy, could I draw your attention to comments in reference 5 on page 3 of your submission under the heading of `Resourcing' and then `Funding policy'. Could you give me an idea of your organisation's feelings about who should fund adult education—should it be from the state or from the Commonwealth—or is your concern basically with the quantum of funds rather than where they come from? If that is the case, would you have any comment to make on that aspect of it?

Mr Clancy—There is an absolute concern about the quantum of funds. Where it needs to come from, I guess, is not an area that our members have developed very strongly. However, when we look at some of the capital funding for child-care centres and non-government schools and so on, we find that a proportion of it comes from the federal

government. If we look at interest free loans to particular organisations, they often come from the federal government.

Interest free loans and some of that potential for capital funding would really make a difference to addressing a lot of those issues, because it is the venues, the cost of venues and the lack of access to daytime venues that is the critical problem.

In terms of funding more generally, clearly, to reflect what Donna Bain said, we are looking at funding for professional development. We are looking at funding for outreach to these different groups in ways of doing that much better than we do at the moment.

Senator FERRIS—I am interested in the comment that you make in the submission that says that the sector:

. . . has a demonstrated capacity to fund many of its own costs. However it does have some basic minimum requirements of government.

Mr Clancy—That is very much part of our approach of our association. We are very pleased to be in the marketplace attracting funds but we do need government support to do it much better than we do. We are talking about quite a small additional government investment to make a significant difference—as it is at the moment, a small proportion of overall government spending.

Senator FERRIS—Can I refer you to the same page. Under the heading `Funding policy', it says:

It is most unusual at this time in history for a government monopoly provider to receive 98% of all government funding, soaking up the funding that is necessary for a more diversified and competitive training market.

Would you see that the impact of competition policy on that sector would offer opportunities for government savings, or are you suggesting there that the amount should be the same but it should be more effectively diversified through the sector?

Mr Clancy—I think it depends clearly on a policy. On the one hand, a lot of our members who have no facilities feel a certain inequality when they look at the public provider and see that that needs to be addressed in a sector of competition. On the other hand, I think a lot of our members would see that our role is much broader than that public provider. We have a need to address much broader education needs than the public provider. An example may be older people, the examples that Richard mentioned. To lock ourselves into that sector is not the best way to go. Like the old schools of arts we had across New South Wales half a century or more ago, perhaps we should be saying that there is a place for community adult education to have a centre, even if it is just a training room, or a strata title training room or an office front in a shopping centre. Without those, the sector is hamstrung.

Senator FERRIS—We have already had some quite fascinating evidence from the University of the Third Age in relation to some of the points that Mr Pinder made. Do Ms

Bain or Mr Pinder have any comments to add to that question that I asked Mr Clancy?

Mr Pinder—The position of the Workers' Educational Association, Sydney, would be as I have stated it in that we remain concerned that the increasing VET funds into the sector would, I suppose, so colour the public perception of what adult and community education was that we might end up becoming a cut-price TAFE rather than addressing that broad educational role that I think we can have.

Ms Bain—I think it is important not to underestimate the fact that students have a history of paying for their own adult and community education, and at the moment they pay the lion's share of their own. As has already been stated, there are those who do not have the capacity to pay. If government priorities are going to ranked, then untied funding to enable the provider to find the best means of designing a program for those people who traditionally do not participate and spending the time and the money to get those groups into ACE or take ACE to them is perhaps where the money ought to be directed, but not in a tied fashion. The providers have shown that they are responsible, they acquit funds properly and they can be trusted with government funds in a manner that the community demands they be funded.

So if Aboriginal education is a priority of government—and I believe it ought to be if it is not already—then give the providers the mandate to spend that money as the community demands they see fit. I think that is where a government priority funding decision can be made. But bear in mind that these organisations are independent and community managed. Although government funds will be coming their way, how those moneys are spent in many ways is driven by the community decision on what the community needs.

Senator FERRIS—As Mr Clancy notes in his submission, there is a certain inevitability about that in competition policy. I have just one more question. Do you have any statistical evidence, any of your organisations, that indicates what proportion of participants in adult education use the courses to gain skills which lead on to employment, either part time or full time, as opposed to what could loosely be described as lifestyle reasons or leisure reasons, or, as Mr Pinder's submission describes it, `education for education's sake'? I think you say that on page 102 of your submission.

Mr Pinder—I think it is very difficult to draw a boundary around what may well end up being a vocational outcome anyway. What appears to be a lifestyle choice could be a flower arranging course; somebody might end up running a florist shop.

Senator FERRIS—Yes.

Mr Pinder—It is very difficult to draw a boundary around adult and community education activities in that way.

Senator FERRIS—Has any attempt been made to define it, though, in a statistical sense?

Mr Pinder—Yes, there has been a report in New South Wales which has looked at the vocational scope of ACE.

Senator FERRIS—It might be useful if we were able to have a copy of that report.

Mr Clancy—The vocational scope of ACE is one of the research programs undertaken by the New South Wales Board of Adult Education. I am sure they would be happy to submit it. It does look very carefully at that whole issue of what is vocational, what ACE is doing, and what are people's intentions in coming along to ACE.

CHAIR—I think Senator Carr wanted to follow up.

Senator CARR—First of all, could I indicate to you that I acknowledge the quality of the submissions that you have put here today. I think they are of very high standard. The issue that I think perhaps needs further clarification is the relationship between the ACE sector and the public sector. You may have gathered from the questions I asked previously that it seems to me it is appropriate for the public sector to become more involved in this arena, in this sector of the industry. I take it you would welcome additional public funding. I take it from what you have said that that is the thrust of what you are saying, that you would welcome additional public funding?

CHAIR—For the *Hansard* record, everyone smiled. I am just waiting to see if they were agreeing.

Mr Clancy—Of course.

CHAIR—Do you wish to say yes on the record?

Mr Clancy—Yes.

Mr Pinder—Yes, but without compromising the essential community nature and independent nature of the organisations.

CHAIR—And Ms Bain?

Ms Bain—Likewise, with qualification.

CHAIR—Okay. I think we do need to get that on the record. Thank you, Senator Carr.

Senator CARR—This is very much the point that I am coming to, the question of the quid pro quo for public funding. The issue here from where I sit is the issue of public accountability. For instance, if there are public moneys provided to this sector, should the public, through the parliament, have a say about the quality of teaching? Should it have a say about the qualifications of teachers? Should it have a say about the rate of pay of teachers?

Should it have a say about the quality of the curriculum, the professional development of managers and participants in the industry? What do you say to that? Is there a trade-off in terms of accountability, and where should that trade-off end?

Ms Bain—I think you can look at accountability in terms of inputs or outputs or a combination of. As previously stated, the sector has a credible record in professionally running their organisations. We acquit grants very well in terms of providing detailed information about student enrolments, who they are, where they came from, what they look like, and where they might go. I think it is perhaps a policy decision for government to decide to what extent it is going to get its hands dirty in the administration of a very large sector.

This is an issue which providers debate all the time: you get money from this side, you have a board that wants to run a particular program in this way, and you have a government which is demanding a report at the other end. The issue is how much do we trade off our independence every time we get a check from the government. It is an issue that all of us deal with every single day, and it comes to a head in November when we get our funding agreements from the board and there are all these compliance clauses.

But I think government can achieve its objectives by writing a very clear policy vision for where you see ACE and what role you see for ACE providers; making general or particular statements about the quality of provision and the outcomes of ACE without being involved in the minute detail about the qualifications of tutors, how many desks, how far apart they are, whether the windows are properly shaded and what the airconditioning facilities are like.

CHAIR—Ms Bain, do you see there is no difference between the geographical allocation of desks and the qualification of tutors and staff?

Ms Bain—I believe that there are decisions which can be made at provider level which can still provide the government with assurance that its money is being well spent and that you are getting the sorts of outcomes that you want without necessarily sending out flying squads to check whether providers are indeed doing their provision in a way which you see as fit. I think the issue that Mr Clancy alluded to earlier is that every time we layer a bureaucratic requirement we also restrain providers from responding flexibly and quickly to an urgent or a particular community need.

CHAIR—Do Mr Clancy or Mr Pinder want to add anything further to Senator Carr's question?

Mr Clancy—Yes. I think the first thing we have got to say is, as Donna alluded to, that there are lots of accountability measures in place currently. That is one of the things that this New South Wales board has increased dramatically over the last number of years, to the disconcertion of a lot of our members, of course. But the accountability is certainly in there, even to the point of them going in and doing audits of providers and things like that requiring a lot of feedback.

The other important accountability measure in there is that, whenever there is targeted government funding such as VET funding, the accountability is quite clear. If you are running an accredited course, there are quite specific quality requirements coming out of the fact that in your licensing agreement to run that accredited course. But I think there is a broader question; that is, how do you enhance quality across a sector as diverse as ACE and one that is independent. It is not a government department where you have a whole lot of individual providers.

You can put in your accountability requirements—they are already there—but ultimately you have to get a commitment from each of those providers themselves that they will be committed to quality, to a structure and to a process for managing and viewing that. That is precisely where the sector is up to at the moment in New South Wales with the ACE quality strategy. All providers in New South Wales are in the process of implementing the ACE quality strategy. It is a very rigorous process that providers take on voluntarily and pursue themselves. We could certainly give you a lot more information on that if you wish. Does that answer your question?

Senator CARR—Not precisely, but I—

Mr Pinder—Just to add to what my colleagues say, WEA Sydney fully supports the ACE quality strategy and has actually been in a position of being in receipt of government funds since 1913, when it was first established through the New South Wales government. I think it has always fully acquitted itself, and that is obviously a matter of record. As regards specific tutor qualifications, for a long time it had a joint program with the University of Sydney, which had specific tutor requirements.

I suppose one of the drawbacks that the WEA sees in the ACE quality strategy is its lack of attention perhaps to the educational outcomes. That is one of the reasons why the WEA is undertaking a learning outcomes strategy following on from the successful strategy in the United Kingdom which WEAs have undertaken there. We are undertaking quite extensive record keeping of learning that is taking place, even in just general interest courses.

Senator CARR—I appreciate the WEAs' record on that matter. We heard evidence in Queensland, for instance, that a TAFE teacher would be earning some $45 an hour but a teacher in an ACE program might be earning $11 an hour. Clearly, there is a massive discrepancy there. I cannot understand any argument that says paying $11 an hour is justified when a person doing the same work in the public sector is paid $45 an hour.

Mr Pinder—I cannot comment on the situation in Queensland, but I can say that WEA Sydney pays its tutors the university repeat tutorial fee rate and higher rates for computer training course tutors.

Senator CARR—Public funding is an issue when it comes to questions of community standards. Surely you could not expect public monies to be allocated for activities which were

way below community standards. For instance, very large allocations of Commonwealth monies were allocated to the child-care industry. In return, there was an expectation that the level of service would be improved. That had profound industrial implications for that industry. Would there not also be a consequence in this industry?

Mr Clancy—I think your question is based on an assumption that standards are very low already. There is no evidence to support that.

Senator CARR—What do you pay your teachers?

Mr Clancy—Evening and community colleges pay their teachers in some of the more remote parts of the state as little as $22 an hour for general courses. In the eastern parts of metropolitan areas, they pay more like $30 an hour. For special courses, depending on levels of skill and availability of teachers, the pay is often higher.

Senator CARR—Are they the sorts of rates that you—

Mr Pinder—Somewhat in excess of the figures just quoted at WEA.

Senator CARR—How much in excess?

Mr Pinder—The university tutorial repeat fee rate is currently just under $40 an hour. For a computer and a training course tutor doing a full day activity, we pay somewhere in the order of $60 an hour.

Senator CARR—So the situation that we heard in Queensland of $11 an hour would not apply here?

Mr Clancy—It certainly does not apply in the WEA evening college. I think a lot of our members would be very happy to increase tutor rates. I often speak with college principals about this matter. I spoke with one recently who wanted to make tutor rates more reasonable by increasing them by $2 or $3 an hour. However, his end of year bottom line was dead even. He was not able to do it because that hourly rate was beyond him. For social justice and a whole lot of other reasons he wanted to increase it, but the money was just not there. His annual grant from government to run the centre is $100,000 to $120,000. That covers the salary of the principal and the rent of the building. All the rest comes from surplus from the community. The tension our members in is trying to balance things and meet all of those obligations in a fair way to all parties.

Senator CARR—I accept that, but I come back to this point: if there is an expectation that the Commonwealth will provide assistance, would it not be justified for the Commonwealth to also expect that community standards are actually being maintained? Even the rates that you are quoting are substantially below what we heard the sector is actually paying and substantially below what would be regarded as community standards.

Mr Clancy—I believe the evening college would be very happy to pay those rates if government were able to supply them.

Senator TROETH—You have mentioned several case histories of access to surplus TAFE and school facilities being a major limitation on the growth of the sector. I gather that colleges regularly have their request for access for surplus classroom accommodation in schools refused. On what basis is that refusal given?

Mr Clancy—We hear a lot of interesting anecdotes on that.

Senator TROETH—Perhaps you could give a couple of examples to illustrate the point.

Mr Clancy—Absolutely. In one town they asked to use the TAFE college to run an accredited course. After a huge amount of negotiation, the TAFE came back and said, `Sorry, that is competing with one of our courses. You can't have that venue.' They went back again to run a general purpose course in the TAFE, and they came back some months later and said, `We're very sorry but, because you run a general purpose course there and you can run your accredited course somewhere else, you will be competing with us—no.' That is one example.

If we look at a number of schools in this state the decision is often delegated to a local school principal level. It is very much to do with the quality of relationships there and the level of cooperativeness. It covers the full spectrum from school principals who are totally committed to supporting adult and community education to those who put up the most arbitrary barriers.

Senator TROETH—Ms Bain, in your opening remarks you mentioned red tape and the barrier that that poses. Could you give us some examples and any idea that you might have of solutions?

Ms Bain—Probably the most recent example is the AVETMISS project, that is, the collection of data project. As Ms Thomas pointed out earlier, it is an effort to collect comprehensive statistical data about the sector. Although most providers have been in the habit of collecting basic student information just to carry out their enrolments, it involved a massive effort to collect all this additional data and comprehensive demographic profile information about students. It meant not only staff time to actually put the data in, but set up the computer systems, run the software, test the software and make sure it downloaded to the board in Sydney correctly. For a small provider who perhaps has only a part-time coordinator with maybe a couple of hundred students a year, that is an enormous effort.

No doubt it will get better as people become more familiar with the systems, the systems get easier to use and people are more familiar with them. I think the sector has recognised the value of data collection but, nonetheless, initially it is a big ask. There are numerous funding grants to read through and acquit each year, not only a provider funding grant from the board but, if you are involved in running particular delivery programs on behalf

of government departments, community services and health, there are also funding grants to acquit. All of that takes staff time. In organisations where somebody is wearing two or three hats—not only the coordinator but they might be a part-time tutor and they are actually working only on a part-time basis—that is a lot of paperwork to get through. There must be a means to make that more efficient, yet still discharge your accountability requirements.

Senator TROETH—Yes. That was going to be my next question. Do you think that it would be possible to have high accountability standards without going through the sorts of problems that you have just recounted?

Ms Bain—The board has taken steps to do that. They have reviewed their funding paperwork and tried to consolidate funding together where possible, so that you are only acquitting one grant. There must be ways in which you can do that without the cumbersome paperwork and the effort that that takes on the part of the coordinator. Every time they do that they are stepping away from an operational task or a strategic planning task.

Senator TROETH—I did ask some questions earlier about rural areas. I would like to ask you about the provision of courses by your organisations in those rural areas. How do you go about deciding what courses to offer? Is it as a result of testing the water by asking for expressions of interest, or do you undertake it in some other way?

Mr Clancy—None of us are country providers. We are speaking on behalf of some country providers. I think all of the above is the answer. Traditionally, the method has been try it and see, but increasingly more sophisticated providers are doing market research, identifying needs, carrying out community consultations and those sorts of processes.

Ms Bain—Perhaps another thing that the sector is certainly picking up on now is building up a relationship with the local small businesses and industry. There are examples throughout the state, and most recently I was talking to a coordinator at the Central Coast whose primary task is to establish a rapport with small business. His job is to go out and find out what the businesses in his area want. In terms of that particular market, the sector is becoming much more sophisticated about tailoring programs to those particular needs.

Senator TROETH—What is the general reaction on the user-pays principle? Most people accept that, if they want to do a course in X, Y or Z, they will need to pay for it.

Mr Pinder—I think they would have no choice but to accept it really. WEA Sydney has made an effort to publicise quite clearly in its course guides the full fee rate, the concession rate and the seniors card fee rate. So we are trying to be as equitable as possible in that regard.

Mr Clancy—Up to a point. In the eastern metropolitan areas it is not a problem. As you to other areas of the state it is a major problem. I was talking to one principal who was saying that the only way she can run ACE is to subsidise it from all her other programs. The adult and community education program in this whole region of the state is running at a loss.

Even with the current government funding, it is running at a loss. The only way she can maintain it is by running a range of other courses, getting those economies of scale and actually subsidising them from those other courses.

Senator TROETH—You have referred to the government monopoly provider receiving 98 per cent of all government funding and your own sector receiving very little. Could you comment on a proposition that I would put to you: should TAFE move more to a user-pays system, which may address some of the inequality at present in the system?

Mr Clancy—That is certainly happening. They are moving to a user-pays system. However, if you are competing with TAFE for a tender and they have buildings and you have not, and they have full-time submission writers and you have to pay someone to come to do that, the comparisons are most inequitable from our members' viewpoint.

Senator TROETH—So it lies partly in the already established advantages that they have?

Mr Clancy—Absolutely. Their building stock alone, their staff and the consultants that they have on staff.

CHAIR—I will try and close this session with a couple of questions. How much of your difficulties—the modest difficulties that you spelt out—are sheeted home to the New South Wales government? Are there things you would like to tell Ms Thomas about difficulties and so on, and how much would be ascribed to the Commonwealth?

Mr Clancy—One of the things that stands out in the funding of the ACE sector—that is apart from the VET funding—is that there is no Commonwealth funding for the sector. The running of general purpose adult education courses is funded by the state government. There is an ideal opportunity for the federal government to come in and make a very modest contribution. By modest I am probably talking $10 million to $30 million a year in some sort of interest free loans to providers to actually purchase buildings. There will be no risk whatsoever to government because government would have the mortgage over those buildings. They will get the money back so, in view of the fact there is so little federal government funding to support lifelong learning in its broadest sense, it is highly appropriate that it be considered.

CHAIR—I will certainly take note of your comments. I am not at all sure that the minister would, given that the minister has established a record of cutting every education sector that there is. It is not a good time to be bidding for Commonwealth funding where Commonwealth funding has not been before, but it is a worthwhile point to note. Did you wish to add to that, Mr Pinder?

Mr Pinder—Only to the extent that even WEA's educational program does not pay for itself, even though it obviously approaches user pays for full fee students. The educational program is subsidised to a large extent by tenants in the building that we own in the city and

other more commercial activities such as computer training.

CHAIR—Given that WEA was set up in the 1910s because of a huge gap in educational accessibility for workers who were expected to be out of school and into the work force very early and therefore denied access to educational opportunities, and given that the world has changed now, why should WEA continue?

Mr Pinder—It obviously does have that historical background, but people still have learning needs. They still wish to continue learning to find out about the world. I think that there is still the concept of citizenship, I hope, and people participating as fully as they can.

CHAIR—That is all true, but why WEA? Why, for example, should not the government take over adult education and do away with all the people who have led the way?

Mr Pinder—Because WEA almost uniquely remains one of those organisations where ordinary people, volunteers, can still take part in educational deliberations, away from bureaucrats—apart from me!

CHAIR—Poor bureaucrats. I hope there are some here to defend themselves shortly. Can all of you comment on this bizarre notion that there is a war between the different sorts of education? For example, you have already said that WEA has a number of students who are there for general education, that there is a value for education in itself and that learning about Keats's poetry or mathematics can be equated to learning to manufacture something or produce something. Do all of you speak for no war between certain sorts of learnings or government funding equally for all sorts of learnings? For the *Hansard* record, everyone is nodding. We need yeses on the record.

Mr Clancy—Lifelong learning—the government needs to support the full range of learning for all ages.

Mr Pinder—I do think WEA has a concept of there being a series of ladders—that somebody might start off doing a pottery course but they might move on to something else.

Mr Clancy—There is a user-pays principle, of course, but there does need to be government support just to get it up and running, to get it accessible and to make it affordable.

CHAIR—Would you say, Mr Pinder—if I can go back to fighting the WEA—that, if government were minded to take over the concept of lifelong learning or adult and community education in a much more fulsome way, one of the best models might be a WEA model? It is accessible, it has mini-barriers to people and they feel comfy with it.

Mr Pinder—I think it does still provide a model. Obviously, the creation of WEAs was historically determined, as you have indicated, and stemmed out of a need to educate workers to stave off revolution or whatever. I think it still does provide a useful model of voluntary input and, to some extent, the evening colleges in New South Wales were

established on a similar sort of principle by the previous director of the old board of adult education, John Wellings. I think he was using WEA as a model, perhaps not including its faults but just the best parts of it.

CHAIR—Could I just ask a couple of things of you, Ms Bain. I got the sense that there is a bit too much demand for accountability and that this is a bit of a distraction—certainly a reallocation of precious resource dollars away from the delivery of courses to producing info. Do you anticipate that the data collection by computer systems will in the not too distant future be a much more efficient way of delivering that information?

Ms Bain—Absolutely. It gives the sector for the first time an opportunity to record all the work that it does, not only part of it, which is the VET accountability. So this provides a very good opportunity to get all the work on the record. No doubt, over time and as the systems settle down, it will become much easier and much less cumbersome and time consuming. But there still is a cost. Every time you send a staff member down to do the work, there is a cost involved to the organisation, and in some instances that cannot be underestimated.

CHAIR—Were you going to agree or disagree, Mr Pinder?

Mr Pinder—I think I may have misunderstood your question. I thought you were asking about the delivery of education by computer means.

CHAIR—No. I am very interested in your comments, particularly in answer to Senator Troeth's questions. We did some research in the child-care area when I was responsible for that area and we found that there was a reduction in time for staff—a six times reduction in time—in assembling data, for instance, if you move from manual to computer. Once the systems were in place—which was a big pain to get up—the benefits to the local provider and to government in terms of getting that information backwards and forwards was massive.

Ms Bain—I suspect that might be the case, but we will have to wait and see. It is a little too early to tell yet.

CHAIR—There has been no research done to see if that is going to be the case?

Ms Bain—Not that I am aware of, but it would be worth while our having a conversation with the board and setting up the means to do that counting.

CHAIR—Lastly, we are about to write a report which is five or six years on since *Come in Cinderella*. I appreciate your being here today and your submissions, and clearly you are in the business of promoting adult and community education. But do you have a one- or two-line message to the committee that you would like to stress that we take note of in considering our report?

Mr Clancy—I hope your report is as successful as the *Come in Cinderella* report. We have seen major changes over the last five years. I hope you do not just report on those, but you actually put in place some recommendations for the next five years.

Ms Bain—Without being facetious, I suspect Cinderella is still sitting in the vestibule waiting to get into the main ballroom. I think there have been some significant developments and, as Mr Clancy said, growth in the sector since the initial Senate inquiry. But there is a vision which the Commonwealth government needs to articulate about adult and community education and where it sees its role and, following up on that policy commitment, a commitment to fund the sector. The ACE sector is an extraordinary resource. The ACE Council strongly believes that it churns out not only economic benefits for New South Wales but also very sound social benefits. It is a sector which deserves much more recognition and attention.

Mr Pinder—I would draw the inquiry's attention to our conclusion on page 7, which is:

On the basis of our submission we urge the committee to acknowledge:

a. that liberal adult education programs make a valid, socially and economically justified contribution to Australian community.

b. that the decline in availability of liberal adult education programs for large sections of the Australian population is to be deplored and limits the opportunities for many citizens to offer their most creative contributions to society;

c. the intrinsic civilizing value of liberal adult education programs by maintaining and developing funding priorities for this sector of adult and community education and by stressing that the richness and diversity of liberal adult education provision should not be lost under the weight of pressures to fund the VET system.

CHAIR—Thank you all. Ms Bain, you have just made us realise that it is not called `Do we get onto the ballroom floor?' but `After the ball is over'. Thank you all.

[11.36 a.m.]

SCHMIDMAIER, Mrs Dagmar, State Librarian, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney, New South Wales 2000

CHAIR—I welcome Mrs Schmidmaier from the State Library of New South Wales. The committee prefers that evidence be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific question in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I have to point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate, as has happened in a few recent cases.

The committee has before it submission No. 31. Is it the wish of the committee that the document be received as evidence and authorised for publication? There being no objection, it is so ordered. Is there any other material you would like to submit to the committee at this stage?

Mrs Schmidmaier—No.

CHAIR—If not, would you like to speak to your submission and then we will have some questions from the committee.

Mrs Schmidmaier—I thank the committee for this opportunity to appear.

CHAIR—You are on page 70 of the *Come in Cinderella* report. Is this not right?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I would like the opportunity to stress the role of libraries, public libraries in particular, in the role of education. I have a couple of very simple messages today for the committee. I will take New South Wales as an example. The public library network in New South Wales is a very strong and cohesive infrastructure which is electronically connected to the state library and to the world at large. It is very important in the communities, particularly in non-metropolitan areas. Libraries are a very strong community focus and a community centre. They play an important infrastructure role in all aspects of education, from beginning literacy programs to adult literacy programs to supporting formal education.

The other important factor is that, because of the network that already exists, I think it would be very useful to use that network and to build on an existing infrastructure if any more resources are considered to support adult and community education. The libraries generally are part of the general infrastructure for education. I think the barriers are breaking down between the different types of libraries. Students, when they want information—this is certainly our experience—are not bound by walls or institutional boundaries at all. They go to where they can find the information. I think that is something that really does need to be recognised. Funding of public institutions of all sorts requires some recognition of this fact. Particularly in the area of adult and community education, there is really no infrastructure at all

to support the curriculum in terms of libraries and technology infrastructure. So a lot of that has fallen on the library sector. They have had great difficulty in attracting funds to support that. I might just leave my opening comments there.

CHAIR—We will certainly get some more comments from you as we go through with the questions. Where does most of your funding come from?

Mrs Schmidmaier—The state library is New South Wales government funded. The state library also runs a number of commercial activities and has a foundation and a friends' group where it attracts a certain amount of private sponsorship and funding. We are looking to maintain that, to grow it if we can, but it is a very difficult economic climate to do so.

CHAIR—What percentage is state funding and what percentage is things like the Medical Benefits Fund of Australia, the nurses association and your funding through to law provisions, et cetera?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Government funding is about 90 per cent. The other services, which were established on a needs basis, were then established with the direct funding of those outside organisations.

CHAIR—How much discussion and support versus antagonism happened when you looked to take funding from outside organisations? What kind of discussion or criteria did you set, for example, if you were looking at the Medical Benefits Fund of Australia?

Mrs Schmidmaier—That initial arrangement occurred prior to my assuming the position of state librarian. What we do is discuss these matters with the library council. I have an advisory council which is appointed by the state government. Those sorts of independent funding matters and where we go to raise funds are really done through the library foundation and a separate board of the foundation. We seek to target companies, organisations and individuals which have similar interests to the library in terms of access equity and information provision generally. We would seek to associate ourselves with organisations where we feel we have some common goals in organisational terms.

CHAIR—The Medical Benefits Fund of Australia is a large private health insurance company, is it?

Mrs Schmidmaier—It is. In its charter it seeks to provide information to its members, and that is one of its major targets at the moment. I understand, as they sit on this advisory group for our health information service, that they field a lot of inquiries from people who are not members of their organisation. One of the reasons they were interested in supporting a more general, plain English access to information about medical matters is that they felt there was a community need. I guess they were seeing that as a good citizen approach.

CHAIR—Do the dollars that those organisations, for example, the Medical Benefits Fund of Australia, provide fully fund the Health Access Service or is it just a top up to the

library's program?

Mrs Schmidmaier—No, it does not fully fund it. They fund the staffing and the purchase of the resource materials that go into that. We provide space, technology, infrastructure and also the richness of our collections and access to international databases and so on.

CHAIR—This is the last question from me at this stage. Do you think libraries ought to be mainstream adult education and, for example, brought under the adult and community education funding vote from state or Commonwealth or do you think it is better that they stay as they are but negotiate their place in the adult and community education sum?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Libraries are under different funding umbrellas, but if we talk about the public library system that is under the local government jurisdiction at the moment. Since the libraries actually report through local councils, I think that is an appropriate source of funding.

I think that the links to other portfolios such as education, TAFE, adult and community, and technology—if that is separate—need to be made in a more formal sense. At the moment that does not occur. The state library reports to the Premier and is in the arts portfolio. These things tend to change from time to time. I do not think where they report is really a major issue, but the linkages across are the things that concern me.

As I said, when the education systems were set up and libraries really began to be developed in the 1970s, particularly the tertiary libraries, those boundaries certainly met a need. But now students with the access to information electronically go where they get the best service. If the state library happens to provide a good service, we get flooded and that is the reality of it. Some of the larger regional public libraries are also very client focused in the way that they do business and they attract a very large number of students, both adult and tertiary.

CHAIR—And you are saying that you enjoy no education dollars for all that excellent work.

Mrs Schmidmaier—That is right.

CHAIR—Can you just make clear to me what you mean by funding through local government.

Mrs Schmidmaier—The libraries in the public library system are funded predominantly—I think it is about 85 per cent—through local councils. The state government provides approximately 15 per cent of their funding through a grants and subsidy scheme, which we administer on behalf of the state government.

CHAIR—Is that through the arts program?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Yes.

CHAIR—So 85 per cent of the state library money comes through local government.

Mrs Schmidmaier—No, 85 per cent of public libraries. We are talking about two separate systems—the network of public libraries in New South Wales, of which there are 95 central libraries, and approximately 300 branch libraries attached to those. We have a very strong liaison with the public library system because we see our role at the state library as providing back-up, infrastructure, consultancy and advice to that library system so that they can provide access to any information, irrespective of whether they have it locally or whether it needs to come from a distance.

CHAIR—Is the state library not part of the public library system in New South Wales? Is that what you are telling me?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Structurally it is not. It is different from Western Australia, where it is very much part of the one system. It is under separate portfolios.

CHAIR—Is it because the public library system funding comes through local government that there are poor interconnections with education votes or is it just because it is a different portfolio?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I think it is just because it is a different portfolio. It is historical and perhaps those approaches have not been made strongly enough across the different portfolios.

CHAIR—Do you take steps to try to strengthen those ties? Have you contacted directly, for example, the minister for education, people in that area or politicians about better connections?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Yes, I am working on that.

CHAIR—Are you prepared to share with the committee what that line means?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I have started to set up a series of meetings with the vice-chancellors. My particular concern at the state library here is tertiary students. I am very keen to set up some closer relations and negotiations with them to talk about how we can provide better libraries and information service to the student community, particularly in the metropolitan area. Through our advice through our minister and to government, these matters have been drawn to the attention of the government. We will be raising them again through my council and taking them to government again this year as a major issue.

Senator TROETH—I am unfamiliar with the New South Wales system, so if we could just clear up that one point again. Libraries in other parts of New South Wales are under

the provision of local government. Is that so?

Mrs Schmidmaier—That is correct—public libraries.

Senator TROETH—And you do not have any input into that from your particular position?

Mrs Schmidmaier—We do, on an advisory and consultancy role. We have no line relationship with them, but we do have a very close working relationship with them and operate very much as part of a network. But we are different from the situation in other states where the public libraries are directly funded and in some cases run through the state library.

Senator TROETH—Do you consider that in the next 10 or 20 years there will be the possibility of the development of a networked Australia that is truly accessible for users wherever they are in Australia, on an equitable basis—that is, a person who wishes to do further education will be able to walk into a library and access the information that they need? Is this possible, from your professional viewpoint?

Ms Schmidmaier—I think people will be able to access a certain amount of information because, in spite of the paucity of funding from various levels, the professional commitment has been such that in a lot of areas those networks have been established and priorities have been given to put some infrastructure in place. I think a certain amount of information will be accessible.

The reality is that print publishing is not diminishing. Electronic publishing is continuing and growing, and that will be accessible. However, I think one of our major challenges is how to provide a mix of access to that information and to do that effectively and equitably across the states and the nation.

Senator TROETH—You also mention in your submission the library's involvement with the University of the Third Age. Do you have any projections about the growth in demand from that section of the population which is engaged in that?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I have not got any more accurate figures but, if we take the client base here in Macquarie Street and some informal feedback that we have had, there is certainly a growth in interest and use by more mature age people accessing all sorts of things and wanting to undertake a whole range of programs. One group that comes to Macquarie Street is people who are interested in tracing their family history. They come from all over Australia and they make pilgrimages to the state library. That is one area that is always full. I think that interest in history and in where we come from is going to grow, particularly up to 2000 and Federation.

Senator TROETH—I noted the numbers that you mentioned had participated in those courses. Are those sorts of courses free or are they user pays?

Mrs Schmidmaier—No, there is a charge.

Senator TROETH—Could you give us an idea what that might be?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I think it is about $10.

Senator TROETH—So it is reasonably accessible.

Mrs Schmidmaier—Yes.

Senator CARR—The arguments that you present to us are very similar to those that the museums have put. Would you agree that there is a similarity between the needs of libraries and the needs of museums in terms of adult education?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I am not exactly sure what issue the museums have put to you.

Senator CARR—Money and support. The fact is that you are performing a service for a large group of people and, effectively, are not being recognised for it. In terms of providing community and adult education, you play quite a vital role in this sector, but you are essentially saying that there is no real financial support for that. Is that the thrust of the argument that you are putting?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I am saying that there is a direct relationship between adult and community education and the use of libraries. I think that is demonstrated by users coming in with work on which they want to undertake research for their particular courses at the library. If that is the same case with the museums, then, yes, our cases are similar.

Senator CARR—I would have thought it was a self-evident argument. The question arises: what can we do to assist? I notice that one of your recommendations is that the report of this committee acknowledge the role of public libraries. As I say, perhaps that should also include museums. The second recommendation on page 81 of your submission states:

> Federal funding for public and state libraries be allocated to support the technological infrastructure . . .

What is the present allocation from Commonwealth sources for library services?

Mrs Schmidmaier—There is not any.

Senator CARR—None at all?

Mrs Schmidmaier—No. The government in its policy statement—

CHAIR—Which government?

Mrs Schmidmaier—The federal government, prior to its election, made a

commitment which equalled the Labor Party in that they were going to allocate $11.2 million, I understand, to infrastructure to roll out a network using the public library system. Since that time there has been a review of that, and my understanding at the moment is that an amount of something like $2.2 million is now to be allocated on a competition-type basis with dollar-for-dollar funding. So from the original promise the amount has been reduced, and it has been spread more widely to, I think, include museums and other organisations. I guess the argument that we were putting at the time was that the library system is an existing very strong infrastructure and network that could be used very cheaply and effectively by the federal government if they wished to create some sort of rollout of technology to support both the economy and education, and social issues as well, in the communities.

Senator CARR—Essentially, you are talking about on-line services through computers.

Mrs Schmidmaier—In that second recommendation, yes.

Senator CARR—That is in the second recommendation, yes. How far does $2 million go in this environment?

Mrs Schmidmaier—It does not go anywhere.

Senator CARR—Across Australia what do you think the impact of that would be, for instance, if we were to allocate $2.2 million for libraries, museums and other institutions—public learning institutions? I am assuming that means art galleries. They would be the three main areas, would they not? What would that mean for New South Wales, do you think?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I do not think it will mean anything at all. I do not think it will have any impact whatsoever. They are talking about submissions and projects in terms of $100,000. That is just not going to make an impact.

Senator CARR—What would $100,000 get you for a particular project? I presume they mean $100,000.

Mrs Schmidmaier—I do not know. If Tamworth regional library were to put in a submission it would depend on the scope of that submission and what they went for.

Senator CARR—It would be a limited service, presumably, for a library such as the library in New South Wales. Would that be the case?

Mrs Schmidmaier—It just would not have an impact in New South Wales, would be my view. One of the things that we did at the state library was to make a very strong case because of the commitment of the Commonwealth—of both sides—that this $11.2 million was to be forthcoming. We made a very strong submission to the state government to supplement that, and we were successful in that bid, so we now have an amount of money which will in fact be going to assist in the rollout of the technological infrastructure in New South Wales.

But in effect we are not going to have a matching approach at the Commonwealth level, which I think is very disappointing.

CHAIR—What do you mean by a rollout of information?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Of technology.

CHAIR—Does that actually mean that all the libraries—the public libraries and the state library—would be internetted or—

Mrs Schmidmaier—Yes, that is what it means.

CHAIR—So that means that you could go punch, punch, punch, in the heart of downtown Wyong, and you would be able to bring up information that is down there in the state library?

Mrs Schmidmaier—That is correct.

Interjector—We have not got a library.

CHAIR—For the record, a wonderful witness from Wyong assures us that they do not even have a library in Wyong. We will note that for the *Hansard* record.

Senator CARR—I am interested in what we can do to assist. You are suggesting that that is an area that this committee should be examining in its report, the question of the adequacy of existing Commonwealth funding and recommendations in relation to additional moneys.

Mrs Schmidmaier—There are approximately 1,400 public libraries throughout Australia. The original proposition was that perhaps an amount of something like $8,000 to $10,000 per library would in fact seed-fund a technological infrastructure—that is, you would get access from all of those 1,400 sites then.

Senator CARR—That is your third recommendation?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Yes.

Senator CARR—You are saying there are two aspects to it. In fact, there is the general rollout and then there is the particular seed funding required as well.

Mrs Schmidmaier—Yes.

Senator CARR—And do you think that would make a big difference?

Mrs Schmidmaier—That would make an enormous difference if it were uniform

across the country and were taken as a national policy. I think it would get enormous support at the state level as well to support that rollout and to provide appropriate services.

Senator CARR—We are all conscious of budgetary restraints that governments face, and certainly claims that governments make about the nature of that restraint. What do you think would be an adequate sum to meet these recommendations that you are proposing? How much money do you think would be involved?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I think something of the order of $12 million to $15 million would give a very good boost.

Senator CARR—That is a national program?

Mrs Schmidmaier—That is a national program.

Senator CARR—And that would cover the issues that you raise in recommendations 2 and 3?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Yes.

CHAIR—How many of the people who come into your library are people who are more likely to strip cars than to study Monet? Can you tell us about the background or the demography of the people who use the library?

Mrs Schmidmaier—The State Library of New South Wales?

CHAIR—When I say strip cars, I mean strip down the engine, not any mischievous behaviour.

Senator FERRIS—I am glad you clarified that.

CHAIR—If you have got those skills I guess you have an optional—
Senator CARR—A very worthy occupation, motor mechanics. That is what she was referring to, wasn't she?

Mrs Schmidmaier—We get an enormous cross-section of the population. You were asking the proportion between?

CHAIR—I am just interested to know if you can tell us—and I think you are about to say you can—what is the background and the range of interests that bring people into the state libraries? I am interested that a lot of the adult education seems to suggest that people from the eastern suburbs who are well educated are people who are very likely to continue to use adult and community education. We have been told there is a very big gap of people from the lower socioeconomic area—particularly people from more trades oriented than, say, liberal educated. I am just interested to know whether that gap is filled, at least in part, by people

who use the library.

Mrs Schmidmaier—I think our location here, our demographics, attract more people from the eastern suburbs and the North Shore. That is a general statement. But if, for example, you were to look at Campbelltown, where I was recently, the public library there has an enormously broad range of its population—of that greater Campbelltown—visiting that public library. So I think that in terms of networking the whole system there is a very broad use of public libraries.

A recent report last year that was done by Griffith University called *Navigating the economy of knowledge* indicated that 69 point something of the population used public libraries—more than attending any sporting event: cricket, football, anything, or any other cultural institution. The library was seen by those people as an important part of their community, as being a non-threatening environment and a place where they could go to find out about a whole range of things. Even those people who did not use the library said they thought it was a good thing for their community and thought that it was good for youth access and so on. I think that report actually contains some very interesting statistics that show that libraries do in fact bridge at least a percentage of that gap.

Senator FERRIS—I must say that I was reassured by the statement in your submission that providers should ensure that developments in telecommunications and information technology are applied equitably at reasonable cost to all subscribers regardless of where they live in Australia. Flowing on from that comment, you referred in your preamble to cooperation and consultancy with the regional network of libraries. Could you explain to me—and I guess we were struck by the informal evidence from the supporter from Wyong down there—is it possible for those regional libraries to be able to use the resources of your central system here in Sydney at present through any sort of technological link?

Mrs Schmidmaier—At the moment most of the libraries have a low-speed link—

Senator FERRIS—This e-mail system you refer to in here.

Mrs Schmidmaier—Yes—to the state library via a network which the state library established about 10 years ago called ILANET.

Senator FERRIS—Yes, I have seen that.

Mrs Schmidmaier—What we are seeking to do with the money we now have is upgrade those links so that they can have better image access via that link. They can also get into the Internet via ILANET.

Senator FERRIS—Can I, as a South Australian, assume that PLAIN is a similar system which would enable regional South Australian libraries to have access to the same central system?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Yes.

Senator FERRIS—Could you give me some idea of the number of people who might use the library for back-up access to courses that we have heard a little about this morning, from the TAFE system, the WEA and other informal systems?

Mrs Schmidmaier—On an average day, we have about 4,000 people in through the door in Macquarie Street. On our busiest day last year, our door counter said 12,000. That was in the period after Easter, when all assignments start to be due at institutions. From surveys we have done we estimate that about 40 per cent of our customers are involved in some sort of training or education, either formal or informal. That is based on the sorts of inquiries we get and the sorts of materials people use.

Senator FERRIS—If people—family history students or those in other courses—come into the library seeking guidance, which takes up a considerable amount of the time of some of your researchers, has the library ever considered in the past, or have you a view on, a fee-for-service arrangement for those sorts of requests?

Mrs Schmidmaier—We have some what we would call value added services, which we do charge fees for. But I believe that the core library and information business we provide should be free and accessible. I think public libraries should have that philosophy as well. But, for example, for our special courses on how to find your way around family history—we call those `family find-it'—a small fee is charged. Our tours are free. We run a lot of tours for people who want to know how to use the state library. I think that is part of our core business and should be free.

If we are talking about raising funds, we should be looking very carefully at those areas where we have the expertise and the credibility to raise funds and also not interfere with our core business. Our act says that we are to collect, provide and provide access to the historical and social record of New South Wales for the people, and that is what we need to do.

Senator FERRIS—There is an interesting fine line between the two. Could you give me any indication of the percentage of your collection that would be available on-line or in full text format?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Very little of our collection. We have, for example, produced one CD-ROM which related to a book that we published through our press on Conrad Martens. The CD-ROM also contains images of the very large art collection that we have of Conrad Martens. That was a trial we did in 1995. We would probably not go into CD publishing now. I think we would put anything that we have straight up on the net. At the moment we are digitising the papers of Sir Joseph Banks. There are 10,000 letters in that collection. It is quite heavily used, it is of interest to researchers around the world and we are in the process of putting that up on the net.

The main issue with all of those things is not the technology; it is the indexing and analysing. About two years of effort has gone into the indexing of those papers and transcribing key items from those. While we are looking at digitising policy, we are unlikely to ever have major parts of our historic collection digitised because it simply will not be financially viable to do that except by specialised, one-off grants and so on.

Through our foundation we have identified about eight projects that we would like to digitise and make available. They are heavily used projects like our small pictures file, where there are about 80,000 pictures of early New South Wales. But we really need additional funding to do that.

Senator FERRIS—Given the fragile nature of a lot of your historical material, have you considered putting forward some sort of proposal that would allow the private sector to perhaps assist you with that digitisation? I am aware of the demand by academics, as you say, around the world for access to some of these early papers and of the fragile nature of those publications.

Mrs Schmidmaier—All of our early rare materials and the ones that we have identified as being in high demand have been microfilmed on high quality microfilm. That, at the moment, is still the most stable format that you can put anything in. We are in the progress of migrating some of the material we have already digitised to a new technology because the old technology can no longer read it, we cannot get parts for the equipment and the software is no longer being maintained. That is a big issue for libraries like us: how we actually keep the digitised record. At the moment you keep it on microfilm, which is an interesting problem for us. Yes, we are going to the private sector, but it is very difficult to get large sums of money. For those digitisation projects, you are talking in amounts of $100,000.

CHAIR—As a minimum, I should have thought.

Mrs Schmidmaier—As a minimum. That is a starting figure. You are talking about a quarter of a million dollars for a major collection.

CHAIR—In relation to the cataloguing system, do you mean that the Library of Congress is aware of the problem of putting stuff on under a different system? Are you talking about an international filing system for information on the Internet?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Once you get into the Internet, the front ends or search engines, as they call them, allow you to search the different files. There is not just one, but it is possible. If we put our files up, anyone from around the world can access those by going through the various search engines that allow you access to the Internet.

CHAIR—What were you telling us about two years of work looking at some kind of filing system?

Mrs Schmidmaier—No. I said that the issue to get the Banks papers up was the time

taken to index those papers, rather than the technology. Technology is not the issue. It is the human component of indexing and analysing.

CHAIR—Is each country being responsible for trying to digitise or put on some of their material so that it is accessible by new technology? For instance, is the Library of Congress interested in funding other libraries around the world to assist with this process?

Mrs Schmidmaier—They are not interested in assisting in funding. There is close cooperation through a number of organisations internationally—the major collecting libraries of the world—and we are certainly in close cooperation with them and are monitoring the sorts of things they are doing and learning from their technology. Next month, for example, we are having someone come out from the Library of Congress who is an expert in map digitisation. We have a very large collection of Australian and Asia-Pacific maps and we are interested in how we might convert those. There is a lot of cooperation, but I think all of the large institutions are finding it difficult to raise the dollars.

CHAIR—The Library of Congress has thousands of little drawers with little cards—a book review, critique or comment about things. When I last looked at this in the Library of Congress—they had at that stage spent $5 million or $30 million on the beginning of their program—they were actually destroying these records of cards because of the problem of where to keep them. I suppose you then need a museum to document that piece of history called the 19th and 20th centuries. Are you at the stage of actually destroying or deciding what you are going to have to do with out-of-date record systems?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Yes. We have not destroyed ours. We have moved them off the main reading room floor to provide more space for people. Once we are convinced that we have in fact captured all the information adequately and can make it available, we would probably keep a sample I suspect and probably dispose of the rest because they take up a huge amount of floor space.

Senator O'BRIEN—I wanted to ask about a passage on page 78 of the documentation on page 5 of your submission. You say:

Half day and full day sessions are arranged with the State Library, conducted by Library staff for the Workers Education Association (WEA) and Sydney Community College. . .

Do you charge fees to those organisations for those sorts of services or are they free library services?

Mrs Schmidmaier—My understanding is that they have been free.

Senator O'BRIEN—Yet you make charges for other courses to individuals on a user-pays basis of some sort? Is there some policy reason or do you know why there is a differentiation?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I am just trying to recollect, but we have had an association

particularly with WEA. They have provided some in-kind support for some of our exhibition programs and so on. We feel that this is part of our outreach and public programs that we would want to offer from the library. Also, we are well aware that there is not a lot of money in the sector to be charging for those things.

Senator O'BRIEN—I suppose it is fair to say then that you are funded by state government, so those services are an additional service funded by state governments for those ACE programs?

Mrs Schmidmaier—That is correct, yes.

CHAIR—Just to close the session, you have suggested to us that the state library might indeed take a large number of its people from the North Shore or from the eastern suburbs. Presumably that is a shorthand way of saying people who have already used information and been students are staying in education. You have also commented that perhaps at some of the other libraries, for example Campbelltown—and we could have a look at the Griffith report to see what other information there is—there are people who use their libraries or have a different fondness for it, that is people who perhaps do not have such a tradition of eastern suburbs expectation of education.

Have you given much thought to how the library might target information for people who are not used to being students in the ordinary course of the word? How do you entice people in and do you have a concept of something like an independent learner, that is people who might know how to ask questions and then just need to find ways in which they can get the information they need?

Mrs Schmidmaier—If I could comment on two things there. Firstly, in a previous life I was with TAFE and with Open Learning. One of the interesting things there was that there was the general view that students in TAFE do not read and that in fact they fix cars. However, it is an interesting fact that, when you provide libraries for them, they actually do use them, they read, they use them for study facilities and a whole range of other things. The first thing is to provide access. Once you have access, people can test the waters, see whether they want to use those facilities and how they might best use them.

At the state library and also throughout the public libraries there are a whole range of what you might call outreach programs in educational terms where we would hope to appeal to a very broad range of the community. For example, at the state library we have a very active exhibition program. At the end of last year we ran a very successful exhibition on Antarctica and that drew people to the library who had never been there before.

CHAIR—How do you know?

Mrs Schmidmaier—Because they told us and we asked them. In conjunction with that, we ran a mini-film festival over one weekend of that exhibition which also attracted a range of people who had not been there for a long time certainly and who then joined up to

become members of the library.

Through the promotion of our newspaper collection we get a lot of people who would not normally come into the library who are looking for some particular piece of information or historical fact that might come in. Libraries attempt to cover a range of programs that might attract people. Through our outreach, health information service and legal information service—which is another area—we do encourage people and attract people to come into the library.

CHAIR—Do you reckon the Crowded House audience often goes to the library? I know libraries are supposed to be quiet, but do you have functions of that sort to try to broaden the reach of library audiences?

Mrs Schmidmaier—We have Art Express on at the moment, so we are getting a very large cross-section of people there not only from the North Shore and the eastern suburbs but also from the south and the west. Last year we ran a photographic exhibition called Photo Documentary which documented the last 10 years of life in Sydney and New South Wales ranging from birth to drugs and death and everything in between. There were a lot of multicultural aspects in that exhibition. Again, we attracted people there who had never been to the library. They came because we did some wide advertising and across radio stations as well. We have tried music. Music is not popular at the library we have discovered, but we had Madam Lash in there last year and that attracted a big audience.

CHAIR—What about particularly targeting Aboriginal communities?

Mrs Schmidmaier—We have a well developed program. We have a program of having Aboriginal people to train as librarians and library technicians. At the moment we have two people who have finished their qualifications and we are taking on another two to start training. Since they have been on board with us, which is about four years, there has been a great increase in the use by Aboriginal communities of our resources and also a greater willingness by the Aboriginal community to deposit their resources with us because they know that we have set up systems and procedures that are suited to the sorts of materials that they would want to keep for posterity. I think that has been one of our very successful programs.

CHAIR—I suppose the question is interesting. Have we got Aboriginal communities out of museums and into libraries yet?

Mrs Schmidmaier—In terms of what? People?

CHAIR—A bit of both. It is quite interesting that often if we think of Aboriginal culture we think of museums—and that we are preserving the past rather than dealing with the present. I am interested to note that something like 200-plus Aboriginal languages are now probably reduced to about 12. Is the library doing anything to work with Aboriginal communities about their languages?

Mrs Schmidmaier—I am not sure about that. I would have to check. I know that we are working on the Koori index, which is an index of an Aboriginal newspaper which I think is the only one that has being indexed in Australia. So we are working on that. But certainly we get a significant number of groups of Aboriginal people coming to the library to consult with our Aboriginal staff there. I would say certainly they are coming to the state library. I do not know whether they are going to other libraries, but as far as we are concerned I feel we have made some significant inroads.

CHAIR—What do you particularly want to see in the review of the *Cinderella* report five years on? You make three recommendations. Is there anything further you would like to add to them or are they it?

Mrs Schmidmaier—They are it. I would be really delighted if they came up.

CHAIR—Thank you very much indeed, Mrs Schmidmaier.

Luncheon adjournment

[1.12 p.m.]

BEETSON, Mr Jack Albert, President, Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers, 13 Mansfield Street, Glebe, New South Wales 2037

CHAIR—The committee prefers that evidence be given in public but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in camera you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I do point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate. The committee has before it submission No. 47. Is it the committee's wish that the document be received as evidence and authorised for publication? There being on objection, it is so ordered. Is there any other material that you would like to provide us with, Mr Beetson?

Mr Beetson—No.

CHAIR—Would you like to make some introductory remarks and then we will ask you some questions, and I thank you for allowing us to be a little late.

Mr Beetson—Not a problem. I would like to make some introductory remarks. The thing that underpins adult Aboriginal education in Australia is self-determination. We have seen for many years successive governments refer to self-determination and have policies of self-determination, but we have seen very little of that actioned.

There are a few fundamental questions that need to be asked. One is: what is Aboriginal education? How do we define that? In most institutions around the country, Aboriginal people are accessing Western education for Aborigines and I think we have to draw a very clear distinction in terms of what that is. Aboriginal people are in the best position to know what our systems are about and to know what type of education, training and so forth we need to develop within our communities, to manage our own communities. In most of our communities, to this day we are still being managed either by government policy or by non-Aboriginal administrators who are in our communities.

We have a fundamental right to access our own education systems under many international charters and documents that specify that, particularly UN documents. The Draft Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples refers quite specifically to that fact that indigenous people should have the right to access their own systems and that governments should resource Aboriginal people to do that. To this point in time, Aboriginal people are still running to state bodies like VETAB and other accreditation authorities around the country telling us what is best for Aboriginal people and, indeed, telling us whether our curriculum and our training needs are legitimately formalised in those curriculum documents.

We talk about access and equity for Aboriginal people; we have talked about it for many years, probably my whole lifetime. I think when you walk into any Aboriginal institution in this country, particularly in adult education, you can leave access and equity at the gate. Look at the facilities that people are studying in. For example, in my own particular

organisation, Tranby Aboriginal College in Glebe—which has only just received funding after 39 years of operation to do any capital works—we are studying and working in Third World conditions; conditions which you would be alarmed at if you come across them in South Africa.

Many bureaucrats came there and went away and talked about the possibility of funding, but very few politicians bothered to come over and have a look at the conditions Aboriginal people were studying in. We had toilet facilities outside the kitchen where we were trying to feed our students and so on. We were open to disease. You talk about environmental health. Where do you put all of those things in some kind of context? It is all right to walk down to the government institutions but when you get to the non-government bodies you might as well forget all about it, that does not exist.

You talk about overcrowding and so on. You come into places like Tranby. We are studying in an old house. We do not have an institute. We do not have a building that is built to take our students in. We are working out of an old homestead for a sheep station. That is the reality of the situation. The situation in Alice Springs is even worse, at IAD. They are working out of demountable rooms to provide education to people all over the central Australian area, and so on right around the country where you look at the independent sector.

There needs to be a lot of issues looked at there. It is a matter of looking at the difference between policy and the actual action that is taken. If you look at most institutions around this country, built into their ongoing funding arrangements is a capital works element that does not even need to be applied for; it is just automatically granted.

The previous federal government made a grant of $15 million to the Australian National Training Authority. It was specifically aimed at the five organisations that I sit here and represent. That money has now been distributed and thrown out as crumbs to organisations all over Australia. It missed its original intent, to the point that the organisations that I represent have now either been underfunded or can carry out only part of their works and, in some cases, they may not be able to carry out any capital works as a result of the enormous fragmentation of those funds. That continually happens within our community. When funding comes in for whatever purpose, people want to fund a thousand things instead of funding four or five good things and making sure that they happen.

A big issue within our communities that is constantly coming up in government policy documents, particularly the federal government, is the definition of remoteness. What is remoteness? How do you define remoteness? As an Aborigine, I find it an extremely difficult term to come to grips with. How can you decide the difference between geographical remoteness in a place like Alice Springs or in the Tanami Desert and compare it to the social and economic isolation of people in Redfern and the urban areas of Sydney? That is what we are forced to deal with at all times. When we go to government for funding, when we go to government with our programs, there is a different value placed on geographical remoteness as to that of social and economic isolation that exists within our cities. They are the things we need to address. If we are going to look at remoteness and use such terms as `remoteness',

then we need to make sure that that is clarified and that there is no bigger weighting given to geographical remoteness than there is to remoteness in urban areas.

If we look at the adult and community education sector in general and their role in terms of providing education at the community level to adults, the only time that any of those bodies will fund Aboriginal training out in those communities is if they get Aboriginal dollars. It is as if we do not exist. We are economically isolated. It means that if they do not get Aboriginal money from AESIP or ATSIC or somebody else to run a particular program, then it does not happen. At the same time, we have got governments, both state and federal, that are inviting us in and saying, `We have to become one Australia. We are all Australians. We are all this and we are all that.' Nobody will provide training for Aboriginal people unless Aboriginal dollars are placed there to do it.

We are a part of the general community. Every adult education and training dollar in this country should be divided 100 times and our communities should be given 1.5 or two per cent of that training dollar. That is the reality of it. We should not split it up into AESIP and say, `We will put this program on if AESIP or ATSIC will fund it.' That is the current situation.

We are placed on the economic fringe, if you like. We are fringe dwellers now in terms of economics because nobody will do any work in the Aboriginal community unless Aboriginal people's money is paying for it—money that is granted through government.

We also have a right to access those other dollars, and that right is being denied. If you go to any education provider and ask them to put on a program, the first thing they ask you is, `Will ATSIC fund it? Can AESIP fund it?' The rest of the community has to come to grips with the fact that we are here, we are a part of that community and we want to be invited in economically in terms of those Australian dollars, and that the AESIP funds are only funds that are provided to bring about some form of equity. They are not there to be the base funding for everything that happens in Aboriginal education.

If we are going to be forced to continue along the line of colonisation and continue to be colonised in this country, it is important that we remain in control of that colonisation. If we are going to become a part of the Australian community, we need to become a part of the Australian community on our own terms. We are in no position, if we are not educated and trained properly, to make those decisions. That seems to be how we have been faltering along for the last 200 years.

I sit here before you today, as my grandfather would have sat here before you many years ago, and raise the same issues. I do not want to see my children coming back in 20 years or 30 years time sitting before another committee and raising the same issues, coming cap in hand or hat in hand, as you might call it, and asking that we finally be given control of our education systems and we be given control of the dollars that go into running those programs.

CHAIR—Mr Beetson, can I just buy into a bit of elaboration at this time and ask: can

you make clear to me a bit of difference that I am seeing here. If you are wanting Aboriginal control—I think that is one of the points that you are making very clear—you seem to be saying that you want that under state and Commonwealth funding for education rather than through ATSIC allocation.

Mr Beetson—It does not matter how the allocations come. I am saying that where non-Aboriginal training providers are out there, the only time that they are providing any training for us is if there is an Aboriginal dollar attached to it. That should not be the case. They should be able to get that money out of the general training budget. They should not have to run off to ATSIC and everything else. That is supposed to be there to provide support for these programs. What it is doing is providing the program.

We saw a situation in 1972, if you want to look a bit historically at things, where the DAA was set up—not to provide health services and legal services and so on to Aboriginal communities but to provide some supplementary funds, not ongoing but something additional to what the health department or the Australian legal aid system would fund. We would fund a little bit of difference to bring about some kind of equity in terms of those things—maybe to employ a legal field officer or something like that.

CHAIR—What does ATSIC say, Mr Beetson?

Mr Beetson—I think ATSIC is in the same position. What are we expecting—ATSIC with a budget of less than $1 billion now to fix all the problems in the Aboriginal community? Health is a basic human right, and that should be looked after by the health department, not ATSIC. It is the same as legal provision to the populations of Australia. That is a right to all Australian citizens. ATSIC should not be expected to come along and do that. It is the same with education.

Every citizen in this country is entitled to a free education until they get to tertiary level. Why should ATSIC and other bodies be forced to pay for that? That should be coming out of the general budget. AESIP funds certainly should be put aside, but put aside to assist and to provide other forms of support that will bring about some kind of equity, but not be funding the program.

CHAIR—I take your point about how the more things change, the more they do not change at all, and that your grandfather might have sat here and said the same things. That is not quite so, Mr Beetson. There was not an ATSIC to argue about then and there was not an Institute of Aboriginal Development. In other words, Aboriginal people have actually made some gains for themselves, with great struggle.

Mr Beetson—Miraculously.

CHAIR—It is different from how it was some time ago. What you are saying to us is that there is now a confusion in the minds of a lot of people about where the Aboriginal dollar should come from, and that the Aboriginal people are here to say, `With the greatest respect,

we reckon we have a claim on the education dollar, not just through Aboriginal allocations.'

Mr Beetson—Yes, absolutely. You only need to look at the royal commission recommendations; there are several, which we have referred to, in the submission that we put forward to you. You only need to look at any government department; the only time they did anything about implementing these recommendations was when they got the money to do it, money that came out of ATSIC or somewhere else. There is a prison population there. We are a substantial part of that prison population and we should be taken care of like everybody else within that system. It is the same in education.

You just cannot say, `The only thing we are going to do for Aborigines is if the federal government or the state government pays for it', in terms of allocating specific Aboriginal dollars. Those specific Aboriginal dollars are there for a purpose, and they are there to support the other money that should be coming in, and that is not coming in. We are not in control of it and we are still being controlled by the state systems.

CHAIR—Can you spell out for us what you mean by Aboriginal people in control of Aboriginal adult and community education, for example, under state and Commonwealth dollars?

Mr Beetson—There is a range of things you can do. You could very easily establish a committee of Aboriginal people that would oversee the allocation of funds so that Aboriginal people would be in control of the dollars. The other thing you could do, in terms of looking at the programs that we are actually running, is establish an Aboriginal accreditation authority to accredit the programs. Every course that we run now has to be accredited, if you like, by some alien body that has nothing to do with Aboriginal people, and it may have a token Aboriginal person on the accrediting committee that accredits the courses. I have been the token Aborigine in several cases that has sat on the state accreditation authority looking at courses for accreditation. Why can't Aboriginal people finally decide what is good enough for their community?

CHAIR—Can you push this a bit further? If, under accreditation, there is a separate series of standards for Aborigines, or people from a non-English speaking background, or women—let's just say any sub-plots of the community—then you would have three or four sets of criteria. That could mean that people would be differently disadvantaged because they would say, `You do not have the accreditation that we needed.'

Mr Beetson—I think people would say that until they had seen a substantial lift in the skill level of people. At the moment, the way it is run it is so culturally irrelevant to Aboriginal people in terms of the standards that are being set. Those standards have to be reorganised to fit within a cultural context, if you understand what I mean. At the moment that is not happening. What we have is a list of national standards that everybody has to meet, without taking into account, whatsoever, the cultural differences between people. In terms of these standards, we may as well go back to the IQ test and have every black fellow in Australia fail because it is culturally inappropriate. That is what went on.

I was part of a team that put together an IQ test for black fellows. We ran it on non-Aboriginal people in this country to see how they went, and they failed miserably—as we did with theirs—because it was culturally inappropriate, the terminology was different. We come up against these hurdles all the time. You have industry standards and you are saying that Aboriginal people have to meet these in terms of developing curriculum and so on, but at the end of the day who is going to employ Aboriginal people? There needs to be a lot more work done than that.

Most of us work in our own community organisations. If we do not, we are in a job somewhere where somebody has got some funding from ATSIC or DEET to employ an Aboriginal person. They have not taken out of the general profit of their companies to do it; it is all coming from government programs. It is almost like we are sitting around with a dollar amount on our heads and people pluck us out and say, `Well, we'll meet our one per cent, or whatever, in terms of Aboriginal employment, but we'll get the money from somewhere to do it.'

CHAIR—Can you give us some examples, Mr Beetson? I would certainly welcome an example or two. I think your story about the IQ test is a pretty telling one. However, I know that, for example, in my state of South Australia a lot of people have pushed very hard for children in primary school in the northern Pit regions to go to school in Pitjantjatjara. That has meant that when they leave primary school they are unable to go to school in English, and they are now having to go back and learn English as well as Pitjantjatjara, because they are relatively disadvantaged when they are trying to get into secondary school. To illustrate the points you are making, can you give us an example—apart from the IQ test—of the way in which Aboriginal people would set the criteria that might be slightly different from how they are set at the moment and currently disadvantaging Aboriginal people?

Mr Beetson—The first thing about Aboriginal people is that they have to feel good about themselves. I think that is a very important part of education. There is an example from the Pitjantjatjara region, but let me give you an example from Redfern, in Sydney. I do not have the figures on this at hand, because I do not deal in infant education. It has been proven that the children who go through Murawina—an Aboriginal early childhood centre, a preschool—and then go on to school achieve far better academically than the kids who do not go through Murawina. So it has been proven that, given that strong grounding in their Aboriginality and their identity and the building of their self-esteem, Aboriginal people can achieve. We have got no problem with meeting the standards. In fact, if Aboriginal people were in control, they would probably raise the standards somewhat.

Where we have a problem is our clientele's social and economic history, the amount of time they have spent in prison and some of the social diseases they carry with them—drug addiction, alcoholism and so on. When they come to places like Tranby and IAD they are carrying a lot of baggage with them that, in many cases, society has placed on them. It is not just a matter of bringing people in and saying, `Okay, these are the industry standards, old chap. You've got to meet these by the end of 36 weeks.' We have to deal with all those social

dilemmas that are going on in those people's lives, from domestic violence, to being abused as children, and so on, over many years. We need to deal with all of that. It is not purely and simply about bringing somebody in and sending them out as an academic or sending them out on the path to academia and maybe going on to university. It is a matter of looking at that individual's life and dealing with that. It may be quite a while before the actual outcome you achieve is an academic one. Yet what we have is a government that is hell-bent on only acknowledging and recognising academic outcomes. What about the social outcomes of those people? What about the fact that some of those students are actually alive at the end of 1997? For me, that is an outcome.

I walk in the doors over there every day. I see the people that are coming in there. I have been asked at different inquiries over the years what I have seen as Tranby's greatest achievements. I can point to many people, including me, that have gone on from Tranby. I have not gone on, I am still there—that is probably because I cannot get a job anywhere else; but I can point to many people who have gone on to university and other things.

One of the greatest achievements ever seen over there was a woman who came in, I think in 1986, and she could not talk until 1989. But she did talk in 1989 and in fact went on to present a tutorial in her class. That is probably one of the greatest achievements I have ever seen at Tranby. It may not very well be a great academic outcome on an annual basis, but it was certainly a great achievement and it certainly made her life a hell of a lot better, because for three years she could only speak to two people in the organisation.

The other great achievement of Tranby was a young fellow who intends to come back as a student and do a diploma course at Tranby this year. He was going to be removed from the college. At that time I was a member of the teaching staff over there as well as having my administrative role. When the head teachers had a meeting to discuss this particular student, they decided they were going to get him out, because he was on a methadone program and he was falling asleep in classes, and on many days he could not attend classes. He also did not have a roof over his head outside of Tranby. I had the authority at that time, as the Director of Studies, to overrule the decision, but I refused to do that. I said, `I would just like to say something in support rather than taking the option of removing this fellow from the college. The only reason he is alive is because he can come here when he can manage to get in here. He is trying his guts out to achieve something academically, to improve his lifestyle, but it is going to take him a while.'

I said, `When he falls asleep in my classes I enjoy that because I know that he feels comfortable enough here to be able to have a sleep. I do not know what he will go through at five o'clock of an evening when we shut down—where he will sleep, where he will eat and so on.' Those are the things that I put up. I said, `I am quite happy to stick by whatever decision you made. If you want to remove this student, fine, but in three months time when we are here having a memorial service for one our students that is no longer with us, you have to be prepared to stand up at that memorial service and say that you stand by that decision.' That is the reality that we face.

That student has been there now for another two years and he is going to come back again this year and start a diploma. He is still dealing with his problems, but he is achieving academically at his rate—a rate that suits him. It is no good coming along and saying, `These are the outcomes you need to meet every 36 weeks.' People are not like that. Aboriginal people are even less like that because the system we are expected to learn in is foreign to us.

CHAIR—I will just ask one question, Mr Beetson, before I call my colleagues. We heard this morning from Ms Schmidmaier of the state library that, once they got a number of Aboriginal people on the library staff, the turnaround in the number of Aboriginal people who started to turn up at the library, make use of it, benefit from it and participate in it dramatically improved. Is that one area that is a challenge for you and your organisation? Are there still more Aboriginal people looking to be students than there are teachers to provide the Aboriginal education for them? What are you doing to actually engender a desire for courses amongst Aboriginal people or are they just coming at you and saying, `We've got to learn'?

Mr Beetson—They are coming at us. There have been a range of government program changes that have forced that to happen as well. But, generally, Tranby has been in the position over its 39-year history of having a waiting list as long as the list of students it can take into the courses.

I appreciate what has happened at the library and I appreciate the work that the library has done in terms of employing Aboriginal librarians, assistant librarians, trainees or whatever. I know from my own students that they use the library far more. That is the nature of the beast. At the hospital in Redfern and the Redfern medical service, because there are Aboriginal people in the reception area and taking care of people in the initial stages, Aboriginal people come along to those places.

It is not that long ago that when Aboriginal people went to hospitals you knew they were not coming home. I am 40 years of age and that has happened in my lifetime. I have a brother who underwent a fairly major operation. He would not go under anaesthetic because he was frightened that he would die under anaesthetic. There are these engendered fears in Aboriginal people.

Those fears carry across to the education system, including the library—to every facet of our lives. Aboriginal people have these fears because we have never been allowed in. It is only lately that that has happened. It has only been theoretically since 1967 that we have been allowed in. Practically, it is probably only since the late 1970s or early 1980s that some Aboriginal people have felt confident enough to go out and have a go at the system. Many others are not confident.

Tranby is the first port of call. IAD and Tauondi in Adelaide, where you are from, are the same. Aboriginal people go there to get the confidence to go on. That is why it is important at the community education level that we are in control of that and that those places are funded and supported. If you look at the rate of students that go from our institutions onto tertiary education, it is just enormous and the success rate is enormous.

CHAIR—That is very interesting indeed.

Senator CARR—There has been quite a significant increase in funding for Aboriginal education across the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs. Is your organisation able to access any of that money or is it the pattern that, like the rest of the ACE sector, resources are very limited?

Mr Beetson—Our individual organisations access AESIP funds. The federation itself has no funds. The federation is probably the only truly independent federation in the country at the moment, because we do not have any funds. We have applied on several occasions to get funds to provide advice and so on.

I think that brings into question a fairly important issue. In our organisations we are continually invited onto committees to give advice to government when developing policy, but there is no remuneration given to the organisations for the time that we spend doing that. I think that is a fairly critical point because we do not have the financial resources that others have. If we are not invited, we knock on the door wanting to be invited so that we can participate in the process to try to achieve self-determination and community control. That is really what we are about as a federation.

If Aboriginal people do not feel in control of what is happening in their lives, then the situation will go on and my kids will be here. We cannot just have a program developed at a federal or state government level and be told, `Here it is. Here is a program for you.' We have to be a part of that program. We have seen it happen in health and housing. You can go to thousands of communities in Australia where houses have just been absolutely destroyed because the community has not played a part in that. We are like the embryo that the universities produce the babies from, if you like.

Senator CARR—You mentioned specifically the case of the federation. Are there providers that have access to moneys designated by the Commonwealth parliament for Aboriginal education?

Mr Beetson—The answer to that is yes. It is through AESIP.

Senator CARR—And what sorts of moneys are there?

Mr Beetson—In the organisations that I represent it varies from the dance theatre in Redfern, which gets, I think, an annual budget from the Commonwealth of something like $85,000, to the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs, which accesses, I think, $2½ million. Funding for the other three organisations that are a part of the federation at the moment again varies—usually it is about a million dollars. In fact, one organisation at this point in time does not access any—that is, the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association. I think it is trying to get back into the funding stream. The minister for the arts was going to pick that up, but I think they are trying to get back to DEETYA to

get into that funding stream.

There are standards for funding and standards on what it will cost to educate or train an individual. That is another problem we have. If you are talking about access and equity it is no good saying, `We are going to give $10 per hour per student to educate everybody.' It just does not work that way. There are some realisms there.

The problem for us—and the problem we are going to face more and more over the next three years—is that in reality ATSIC's social and cultural budget is being slashed. Community organisations will pick up particularly the social and welfare components for those students, because that is what we are about. We are about holistic education. We are not about farming Aborigines. I have gone on the public record many times saying that, in many universities around this country, that is exactly what is happening. People are farming Aborigines and reaping the money from the federal government. I object to that.

I am not going to put a dollar amount on our heads. It costs a lot of money to train an Aboriginal person because we are dealing with a lot of other issues that general Australia does not have to deal with. Every time you go to any funding body, whether it be a state or a federal department, there is a dollar amount given—this is what it costs to train somebody. That does not exist within our communities. We are still dealing with leprosy in our communities. We are still dealing with infant mortality and those sorts of things in our communities.

It is no good talking about $10 a head, if that is what it costs for the general population. If every social indicator in our community is four to six times higher than it is in the general community and you transfer that back the other way in terms of how you might train one of those people, then it should also be four to six times higher. That is a big ask. I would settle for twice.

The fact is that, if people have these social dilemmas within their communities—these health problems within their communities—it is going to cost you more to train them. I would say, just as my own guess, that 60 to 70 per cent of Aboriginal people are functionally illiterate. That is the reality of it. We get alarmed when we talk about 10 per cent illiteracy within the Australian community or if we talk about eight to 10 per cent unemployment. I am talking about a community that has been 80 per cent unemployed for 200 years. That is what I am talking about.

It is fine to have industry standards, but try to explain that to Aboriginal students when they walk in your door—`We have written it this way and we are doing it this way because you have to meet industry standards.' Not many of them will jump up and say, `Yippee, I am going to get a job out of this,' because they will not.

CHAIR—I guess your real challenge, Mr Beetson, is that some will—some of the children of the children of the children now have opportunities that their parents did not have. I note, for example, that last year I think it was, eight Aboriginal doctors graduated from

Newcastle, which is I think absolutely remarkable. Maybe what I need to do is find out what special steps and allocations their university might have set to assist those young graduates to get through. I take your point on what you are saying about the other things as well that those students might need. So some students might do that but many others, as you say, are still functionally illiterate, and you have to deal through adult and community education with that whole range.

Mr Beetson—Yes. At the moment at Tranby, we are dealing with students who need remedial treatment in terms of learning to read and write, students who can slip through a diploma and the whole range in between. Those students are going through different developmental stages of their lives in terms of coming to grips with their past—whatever was in that. Some of those people are still suffering from drug and alcohol addiction.

The only comment I would make in relation to the doctors who came out of Newcastle is that I agree with you. I think it is absolutely fantastic, and it is admirable what that university and those students have been able to achieve. The only problem that I do have with this—which is a fairly contentious issue—is that Aboriginal people are being asked to participate in an education system that is basically being imposed upon us because our own system has been so fragmented and interrupted. We are being forced into this and are also being forced to pay for the privilege. I think the higher education contribution scheme will have an enormous impact. Whereas this year you have seen eight doctors come out, I wonder how many doctors will be coming out in three to four years. It might be all right next year and the year after, but how many will graduate after that?

As an Aborigine, I have been fortunate enough in my life to have many opportunities given to me by Aboriginal people who have fought down the road long and hard, and it probably cost them their lives to get me to this point. But the reality for most of those people out there is that you are talking about a university degree and a $20,000 or $30,000 bill at the end of it when they cannot pay for their electricity and they cannot feed their children at night. Their kids are going to get cold and freeze, and kids are dying in places like Redfern and the Tanami Desert.

If you are trying to tell those people, `We're providing you with this fantastic opportunity. You can come here'—there is no relationship between qualifications and employment for Aboriginal people. It does not mean you will get a job outside of your own organisation or outside of the government. We are not being employed as managers in the corporate sector. You are trying to sell them a piece of paper that says, `We award you this degree,' while in the other hand you are handing them an invoice for $30,000 or $40,000. That defeats the purpose.

As an indigenous person in this country, I do not feel—and I am a person who did pay HECS—that I should have had to pay for having another education system imposed upon me. If we are expected to become part of Australia and a part of Australian society, then education to us should be freely available. I would argue that very strongly.

CHAIR—It is an interesting argument. I am not sure about the second one, but I certainly do know that there is a grave concern amongst a number of community groups. I am certainly one who has regularly heard from women who talk about the idea of taking on a debt—the idea that you might find yourself at the end of first year with a HECS debt of $3,000, $4,000 or $5,000. They have never borrowed in their lives. They do not know about it and do not want to take on a debt. That is just bad news. So I am interested to hear you reiterate that from the Aboriginal community's point of view. I will just call on Senator Ferris to ask some questions.

Senator FERRIS—I do have a couple of questions, but I just wanted to clarify in my mind a number of points that I noted during your introductory remarks. I accept and noted the comments you made about the difficulties that you currently have with your education centre here in Sydney, historically, and the difficulties that you are having in relation to future funding for that. I also noted the comments that you made in relation to the health system and the benefits of having an integrated health system, particularly when your people go to hospital and they are greeted at casualty by somebody they are familiar with.

Have you ever considered that there may be more benefits in seeking some form of integration in the education system so you are able to use core facilities on campuses in the way you are suggesting there are benefits in using core facilities in the health system? If you have not, can you explain to me—accepting, as you say, that both of those are very high priorities for all of us—why you would choose to keep them separate?

Mr Beetson—I think they are fairly obvious. If you go to a university and talk to the student counsellors about how many Aboriginal people have accessed them, they do not, historically. I think there are a lot of advantages in having institutions that provide a choice for Aborigines to come to an institution where they feel comfortable and they do not have by-laws and policies of the institution that are going to impinge upon their culture, or further break down their culture or further colonise them.

Our organisations are about reinforcing people's Aboriginality. They are about nurturing people's Aboriginality and nurturing their identity. The minute a lot of Aboriginal people walk out of some of these institutions, they are basically made to feel bad. We make them feel good about that. Most universities—probably every university—in this country suffer that fate that they are culturally inappropriate for Aboriginal people. We are expected, as Aborigines, to act and react in a totally inappropriate manner culturally to what is going on within those university systems. So there are great benefits in doing that.

If you draw the analogy of the medical services in terms of that, the medical services have not been so much integrated. If you look around Australia, the only places where Aboriginal health has actually improved is where there is an Aboriginal medical service operating. That is where Aboriginal health has been on the improve. That is where things have gotten better. Where there are no Aboriginal medical services, things have either remained the same or in some instances gotten worse.

Senator FERRIS—Yes, I asked my question in relation to education against my own background in New Zealand. I went to an integrated primary and secondary school where nearly half of the students were Maori. They had their own cultural centre within the school grounds, which we were all very welcome to attend. But it was an integrated education system. I think we all benefited from that rather than having—as there were actually—some segregated schools down the road. That is the reason I asked you the question. It is against my own personal experience in that area.

Mr Beetson—I think the situation is very different in Australia in terms of the political position of the Maori people compared to the political position of Aborigines in this country.

Senator FERRIS—Yes, I accept that. I will just move on to a couple of questions because I am conscious of the time. I wondered whether there were any statistics available to indicate whether Aboriginal people have been taking part in courses that have been sponsored by the TAFEs or, as we have heard this morning, from the WEA and some of the other community organisations. If those statistics are available, could we have a look at them?

Mr Beetson—I do not have them. I think the collectives of individual institutions would have that sort of data.

Senator FERRIS—Do you know whether they have been collected?

Mr Beetson—I am not too sure at the university level. But I know that at the vocational and educational training level, they are being collated through the AVETMISS system. Those sorts of statistics would be available through them. At a university level, I do not know and at the WEA level, I am not too sure. My only involvement in WEA has not been in terms of actually running training programs; it has been seminar and lunchtime type programs.

Senator FERRIS—I thought in the regional areas there may have been some broader use of the courses. I notice that the second page of your submission mentions the complexity of Aboriginal adult education. Could you speak a little more about the way you see adult education being complex in an Aboriginal sense and whether you see it as being more complex than it is for the rest of us?

Mr Beetson—I think I have outlined some of the complexities that we deal with in terms of our clientele and what the client will bring to the classroom.

Senator FERRIS—Are you talking about issues such as regulation and compliance?

Mr Beetson—No, I was talking about people's drug additions, their alcoholism and their social circumstances. There are other enormous complexities in terms of Aboriginal protocols, such as having husbands and wives in the same classroom and, in some instances, having men and women in the same classrooms.

Australia, in terms of its Anglo-Saxon or white history, has come a long way in addressing a lot of things in terms of gender. I suppose it is debateable whether it has really been addressed or whether superficially it has been addressed. In the Aboriginal communities a whole range of Aboriginal protocols revolve around men and women that are enormously complex. The geographical location of where people come from can also cause problems within the classroom. There is a lot of fairly complex stuff that, as Aboriginal people, we have a lot of difficulty dealing with. When you take that out into the broader community, there is absolutely no understanding.

People will not understand that with respect to many of our communities and many of the students who come here to Tranby. We have 10 people coming from Bathurst Island this year. The enormous complexity of dealing with those 10 students in terms of that community's protocol is astronomical. We are at the stage where we need to send some of our staff to that community to figure out what we are going to do with these fellows. They all want to come, but there are certain protocols that they will have to observe.

That community holds us responsible for that. We bear the responsibility—and take it on gladly—to send those people back in the same state that they came and maybe with an advanced level of understanding of the training that they have undertaken. But we want to send them back the same culturally. Another example is that, in some of our communities, women are expected to walk behind men quite a distance.

Senator FERRIS—We share that understanding.

Mr Beetson—You probably do because I suppose it was not that long ago that it happened everywhere. But within our communities that happens. In some of our communities women are not allowed to eat at the same table as their husband or where men are. We have to observe those protocols at Tranby. That is what it is about. Those cultural complexities have enormous detail that we endeavour to adhere to.

Senator FERRIS—In the second paragraph on page 3 of your submission you talk about what might be called best practice in Aboriginal adult education. Could you explain that a little further? Is that best practice for the teachers or the students or by some other independent arms-length measurement of the system?

Mr Beetson—Best practice has been something that the federation has been extremely concerned about since it became terminology within the training field. What is best practice? Is best practice about conforming to standards that are set by others, or is best practice meeting the needs of the community? For us, if our training meets the needs of our community, that is best practice. I do not imagine that we will be receiving awards in too many places for best practice. I do not think we are on about awards; we are on about realism. But the fact is, if we conform to the system and do what the system wants—a system that has not got it right in our communities for 200 years—if we conform to the perceived needs rather than the actual needs within our communities, we will be considered as people who are achieving best practice.

Senator FERRIS—The challenge for you is to try to match the, if you like, internal best practice within your community with a standard that enables your people to also achieve levels of best practice outside the community in a wider context.

Mr Beetson—I would not like it to be thought that we are trying to object to the standards. We have got no problem with the standards. In fact, most people who come into our organisation consider the training that goes on there far more rigorous than it is anywhere else. We have very high expectations of our students but we also acknowledge that they are all at different levels of development. Aboriginal people will vote with their feet. The fact of the matter is we have got 150 more applications to Tranby than we can possibly take in. So that to me is best practice.

Senator O'BRIEN—Mr Beetson, there just seemed to me to be a little bit of a contradiction in one of the things that you were saying earlier. The point you made was that the funding needs of organisations such as Tranby need to come not from, for example, ATSIC funds, but from the general education funding pool. At the same time you are saying, `But we need to be funded disproportionately to other organisations in terms of the number of students or the proportion of population.' I was not sure which of those categories you want to pick up there. But it seemed from my point of view that the government would have to specifically program money for your type of proposition. It could not simply allow that to be bureaucratically dealt with if you wanted government to take responsibility for that decision. Does that sound like a fair proposition?

Mr Beetson—I think you need to look at it from where I look at it. Every time there are dollars coming into our community, they are not education dollars, they are Aboriginal education dollars. When I hear about education dollars anywhere else I do not hear anything about white education dollars. I do not hear these people on talkback radio programs or the people running current affairs programs talking about how much money we are putting into white education. But every time they talk about education for Aborigines it has this Aboriginal label to it, as if we are getting something that nobody else in this country is entitled to.

We have just seen Aboriginal people and the Aboriginal dollars in this country dissected like some frog in a science lab. I would be loath to promote for one minute that we get into a system where we carve up the buck and work out who gets what around the community, but that is what happened with the Aboriginal community without any analysis of what everybody else might be getting. All the time we are analysed because it is labelled Aboriginal money.

Why not just label all the money and we will say, `This is the money that goes to the Italian community; this is the money that goes to women; this is the money that goes to kids under five.' Let us label it all and let us all have a big fight with each other. Let us all get around and throw stones at each other. Because that is what you will create.

Let us go out and say there are so many people of Maori descent or there are so many people of Italian descent who are on the dole. And let us say this is the government's

contribution. Because that is what happens with our community at every point. When the media grabs hold of us they start labelling all these Aboriginal dollars as if we are being given some gift and nobody else in the community is entitled to it.

Senator O'BRIEN—I understand that point of view. I think the point that I am making is that you seem to be saying that the government should fund organisations under the umbrella of the Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers. I do not think I would have a problem with that. But you are also saying it should be funded disproportionately to other areas because of greater need and I do not necessarily have a problem with that either. What I am asking is: how does government make that decision and give that direction without calling it, as you put it, Aboriginal education money?

Mr Beetson—I think what I was saying was that the non-Aboriginal education training providers in this country provide education training to Aboriginals only if it comes from that bucket. What I am saying is it shouldn't only come from that bucket, there has to be a contribution somewhere else. We see adult and community groups around Australia that run programs for people, but the only time they will run an Aboriginal program is when they get specific Aboriginal money to do it. But we are also citizens of the country, and it is not meant to be the be all and end all, it is meant to be a part of the funding, not the whole lot.

Senator O'BRIEN—Can I just pull you up there just to understand a point you are making because there seem to be two possibilities. Firstly, are you saying that the non-Aboriginal education, adult education providers do not provide specific Aboriginal programs or they do not provide any programs in which Aboriginals are involved?

Mr Beetson—No, I am saying that they do not provide any specific Aboriginal programs. They should be identifying in their budgets that there is a specific needs group there. Let me ask you: how many universities do you think would have 100 Aboriginal students in their programs if they were not getting the enormous amounts of money they get from DEET to take them in? How many spots do you think would be made available then? How many people do you think they would be sending out into Aboriginal communities and putting on this big recruitment drive and taking people in?

Senator CARR—Mr Beetson, isn't that the purpose of the money?

Mr Beetson—Yes, it is the purpose of the money, but why should it be only that money that is used? Most universities in this country do not contribute anything out of their general coffers to it. In fact, we cannot even track where the Aboriginal money is going in those systems. Universities cannot even tell you how that money is spent in terms of the strategic initiatives that the money is put there for. You cannot track that money. I am on the council of a university near Sydney that cannot do it. I am there for three more years and it will be able to do it in those three years because I have made it my own personal task to find that out.

CHAIR—I will push you a little on this, Mr Beetson, because we have actually had to

over the years earmark dollars that are called non-English speaking background dollars because those people come, for example, without any English and to try to fit into an adult education course, a nursing course or a child-care course meant that they could not do that without it. We earmarked some dollars to assist them to make that first bridge. Those dollars had to be special dollars—I do not suppose they did have to be, but they were—because the general funding for child care or education was not going to have the slack, or the spare, to be able to provide the dollars for them.

I am not sure that there is not a bit of a parallel there. I understand a bit of your point, but I also think there has got to be a bit of give and take. I understand what you are saying to my colleagues—and to me, too. What you have been saying to this committee is that you reckon Aboriginal people should have a claim on the standard educational dollar without it being earmarked Aboriginal.

Mr Beetson—Yes, absolutely.

Senator CARR—But you are not seeing the abolition of Aboriginal programs.

Mr Beetson—I am definitely not; in fact, I promote them. But, at the end of the day, it should not be the only dollars we can access.

Senator FERRIS—I do not think it is.

Mr Beetson—Look around at the distribution of it, look at what the adult and community education sector does in each state and look at the training it provides Aboriginal people and point to a program that they have run where Aboriginal people have been involved that did not have Aboriginal money to do it.

Senator FERRIS—That is why I asked you that question before about the statistics.

CHAIR—That is a very interesting question and we will certainly try to find that data about it. Your comments are really particularly focused about adult and community education and that there are very few ACE courses that are earmarked specifically to deal with Aboriginal needs.

Mr Beetson—I think in most non-Aboriginal training centres they do not provide any of their own funds to do it. If you look around at every department in this country, everybody who employs an Aboriginal person, how many of the corporate sector employ Aboriginal people out of their pockets? They do not. They employ them through TAP schemes and other schemes that exist and employ Aborigines. The government has to buy us a job, regardless of what our training is, regardless of what our skills are. The government goes out and purchases a job from the corporate sector to give to us. That is the reality of the situation.

The other reality is that the only training that we get, rather than coming out of the general pool of funds, has to come from within the Aboriginal budget. I think there needs to

be an Aboriginal budget. I think there needs to be a far more substantive Aboriginal budget. I am certainly not arguing against that. What I am saying is that other people should be chipping in. I am currently in an argument with this state trying to get money out of the state to run our programs, because the state does not want to contribute to them.

CHAIR—Who is providing the capital for you? Is that state money?

Mr Beetson—No. That is coming through ANTA, but it is the state who had control of who got it.

CHAIR—ANTA?

Mr Beetson—Yes, the Australian National Training Authority.

CHAIR—So you actually got some Commonwealth dollars after 39 years to do a bit of capital up-grade down there in Glebe.

Mr Beetson—Yes, after the previous minister came out and had a look at the facility and almost died of shame.

Senator O'BRIEN—Just one little point, which I am not sure is a question. We had information from the department of adult and community services, a state government department, about a demographic survey, and we have been offered further advice in relation to the results of that. I would be very interested if the secretariat could follow up the points you make about Aboriginal participation and whether the demographic survey reveals any information which we can communicate with you. Would you be happy to talk with us further when we get that information?

Mr Beetson—Absolutely.

CHAIR—I have one last question to you, Mr Beetson. I think it is a kind of reverse of what you are saying. I just need to be clear about this. It seems that you are saying that sometimes you can get some money to assist provided it is called Aboriginal money, but many of the courses you would offer Aboriginal people are not accredited courses and, therefore, you are not entitled to accreditation money. Is that right?

Mr Beetson—No. All of our courses are accredited, because the government requires that you run accredited programs. My argument in terms of accreditation is that we are being judged once again by people from a different culture about what is appropriate.

CHAIR—That is a very important point, but can I just ask you to hold that for a minute. Are you actually getting the accreditation dollars, the training dollar, the ANTA dollars?

Mr Beetson—No. We get all of our money through AESIP. We do not get any money

at all through ANTA other than the capital works money.

CHAIR—I see. So you would like some standard accreditation dollars, if we can put it like that—the standard ANTA dollars, as they are called?

Mr Beetson—Yes.

CHAIR—Then there is the separate question, which is another point I think you are making. If we were eligible for some standard training dollars, instead of them all having to be special dollars or Aboriginal dollars, then we would also like to have a say about the criteria by which we are accredited, because there are special demands, special things that we can offer and special needs that we have.

Mr Beetson—Absolutely. In fact, I think bodies like Tranby have been around for 30-odd years. All of our institutions have been around for in excess of 20 years. If we do not know what we are doing in education and training now, we will never know. You have the state system and many other companies in the corporate sector that have their own rights to accredit the programs that they run, and they accredit them themselves.

We, as Aboriginal people, are still running in and having to ask the white fellow, `Is this okay? Can we do this boss?' That is what it is about. That is what we feel like when we are going in there. We are still running in and saying, `Massa, can we do this?' It has gone beyond that. We are 39 years down the track in education and training in this country for Aboriginal people.

If we have not got the skills or the ability now to accredit our own programs the same way as TAFEs do, the same way as universities do and the same way as BHP and others do, then when are we ever going to get it? All we are asking, as Aborigines, is the right to have a say in what we do.

CHAIR—And do you have that fight with the state government or the Commonwealth or both?

Mr Beetson—Both, because you have state and federal accreditation authorities.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Beetson—Sooner or later, it has to be handed over, and I wonder when this will happen. Am I going to die in my lifetime asking: can we at least have the right to say that this program is okay?

When we run an Aboriginal studies program, we have to go to non-Aboriginal people to approve that. That is absolutely wrong. That is the height of hypocrisy that we should run off to a group of people from another culture and ask, `Can you approve us to run this? Can you tell what is culturally sound and correct about our culture?'

CHAIR—Mr Beetson, I think we could spend a long time talking about the meeting of cultures and the points that you raised, which are so critical. I am just terribly interested in what Aboriginal women think about having to walk behind Aboriginal men. I suspect that I should see you outside and have a yarn about this. But, certainly, some Aboriginal women I know are very much more minded to march beside their fellows instead of behind them.

What you are talking about are some absolutely major questions about the meeting of cultures. I think it is fantastic that you should provide the information and the submission that you have to the committee. It is going to be a very important part of our consideration, particularly as we are not looking at education in the broad but adult and community education, five or six years after the *Come in Cinderella* report, and where it is going. Your contribution will certainly enable us to have some words from Aboriginal people direct about what they see as their future direction and make us make sure that we do not overlook it. Thank you very much indeed.

Mr Beetson—Thank you.

[2.18 p.m.]

ERSKINE, Ms Christine Cecilia, Acting Manager, Language and Literacy Programs, Adult and Community Education Services, New South Wales Department of Training and Education Coordination, Level 7, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, New South Wales 2010

HARRIS, Ms Elaine, Head of English, Language and Literacy, Sydney Community College, PO Box 247, Leichhardt, New South Wales 2040

CHAIR—I welcome the witnesses from the Sydney Community College and the Adult and Community Education Services, Department of Training and Education Coordination. The committee prefers that evidence given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I do point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate.

The committee notes that we have not received submissions from your organisations. Is there any particular material that you would like to leave with the committee?

Ms Erskine—Is it possible to leave it on Monday, because it has now been handwritten?

CHAIR—That would be fine. You might like to make some introductory remarks now and then we will follow up with questions.

Ms Erskine—I do apologise for not having a submission available. I am sure you do not want to hear the excuses, but it will be there on Monday. I am actually wearing two hats today. I think I am listed down as the metropolitan coordinator for language and literacy programs. I am wearing half that hat and half the hat of the state-wide manager's role.

I just want to give an overview of the nature of language and literacy provision within the state. I am aware that much has been said about adult and community education generally. We wanted to focus more specifically on the language, literacy and numeracy aspect of adult and community education. Currently, there are 55 providers of adult and community education funding in New South Wales. At the moment there is a total allocation of $2.9 million, and $1.09 million of that is funded through ANTA.

CHAIR—Sorry, could you just remind me of that again?

Ms Erskine—Funding for 1997 is $2.9 million and, of that, $1.097 million is funded through ANTA.

CHAIR—And the other?

Ms Erskine—The VET funds.

CHAIR—Where is the other million from?

Ms Erskine—They are through the VET funds—the board of Vocational Education and Trading. Currently, it is roughly 50 per cent state and 50 per cent Commonwealth. There has been an increase of roughly 33 per cent in the commitment of funds from the Commonwealth to language and literacy provision from, say, 1990 to 1995-96. There has been a significant increase in the level of funding that we have received.

As I mentioned, 55 providers currently receive funding for language and literacy in the state, and 33 of those receive ANTA funding specifically for accredited courses in English language and literacy and numeracy. The range of provision is from one-to-one home tutor programs to metropolitan and regional based class settings, but there is also flexible delivery options with teleconferencing and that sort of thing happening as well.

The nature of the provision is diverse, ranging from individuals who are first wanting to access second chance learning and would be reluctant to attend a group setting—so they will meet in the homes with a home tutor—through to long-term migrants who either have not had access to their allocation on arrival or, for whatever reason, have remained in a situation where they could not access English language or literacy until their later years. That is a fairly significant group within the community. We also have those members of the community who are seeking work or are currently in employment but wish to improve their language and literacy skills because they see it as a barrier either to employment or to improving their work options.

Just referring to the terms of reference: the impact of structural and policy changes. The major policy change that has impacted on language and literacy and numeracy within the field has been NCAELLS—the national collaborative adult English language and literacy strategy—which was a development from the national policy.

CHAIR—I just can't believe the letters in this area of business, but keep going.

Ms Erskine—It would have to be the worst. All letters in the alphabet are used in any combination. From the national collaborative strategy, the state of New South Wales has developed its own strategy which means that all providers of adult English language and literacy collaborate together to develop diverse provision for an individual to develop pathways through the nature of provision so that they end up, hopefully, in employment. A major feature of that has been to have joint collaboration at the local level. So you have ACE, TAFE, AMES joining together to map what happens in their area, to develop pathways and that is then reported back to the state and the Commonwealth level.

The other policy change is the state policy. We now have the New South Wales policy on adult and community education, which you probably saw earlier. Reflected in that is the

desire to provide language and literacy which is complementary, as well as to provide it to all members of the community. The other area of policy and direction is the state training profile, and that comments on the role of language and literacy provision in developing a competent work force.

The final strategy is the quality strategy which has been developed within the sector and which you probably have also heard about. The field of language and literacy has probably been a leader in developing quality strategies and imperatives within the sector.

The major change in the patterns and levels of participation would have to have occurred in 1994 when the sector received access to ANTA funds which meant that they could run the accredited programs. Prior to that, we were restricted by the fact that we could only offer literacy programs to people who could speak some English. So there were lots of groups coming to the community colleges asking for English language courses, but we were not actually able to provide for those groups until we got the money for the accredited courses. So that allowed almost double the number of courses that could be offered and also provided access for groups that traditionally had been waiting in the wings. There was a big change in 1994 to language and literacy provision, both in extent and nature.

In June 1994, we were given a large amount of money. We had to actually adjust with considerable speed to implementing those programs. Many regions took on that opportunity. I think it did reflect on their capacity to actually adjust very quickly to offer accredited curriculum that they had not offered before and quickly access or provide courses for groups that had not been serviced up to that point.

I have mentioned the range of provision and how that has changed from literacy people, those who were classed as good enough to speak English, therefore they could access, to those that had an English language need. Plus we have diversified into becoming involved in workplace standards and integrating language, literacy and numeracy into the work site. It is no longer just community, as in separate from the work site, but community plus industry based.

I will now address the technological and demographic economic trends. Technology is available within the community sector. It is often not available to the language and literacy students. During the day, for example, it is taken up by school students because the facilities are actually available within the schools. At night, it is usually directed to those fee-for-service students who have purchased either an information technology or computer course. It is not a priority area in some respects.

Many of the students would have their own personal computers, but what they need to be able to do is use that to full capacity and therefore they are looking at improving their language and literacy skills first. Of course it would be nice for more students to have access to computers, but that is usually a regional issue. It is particularly evident in those communities where there is no disposable income. In communities where there is high unemployment the people cannot afford the fee-for-service courses. Therefore, there will not

be a surplus from that community that can go into the provision of computers. There is not actually an avenue for those computers to be purchased at this stage.

The major effect we consider to be the economic effect. That has had two impacts. One I have mentioned is if you have an allocation for a community for language and literacy and there is a demonstrated need for that within those communities, unless that community has disposable income, it cannot prop up that community need, especially if it is a high unemployment area.

When the change in the labour market programs occurred last year, the client groups did not disappear, so what the community sector has reported is that people have come knocking on the doors of community colleges wanting to access whatever language and literacy programs are available. This has meant that providers are placed in a dilemma: do they have to prioritise who gets access to that funding—the non-job seeker or the job seeker, the unemployed or those not looking for work? It is because all of a sudden there is a group of people who were serviced previously through what is called SIP, special intervention programs, and were targeted and did have access to training. That money has been reduced by about half. There are other people who are now wishing to access that.

I will address the changes in the role of adult educators' professional development and training. Because of the ANTA funds that became available in 1994 there has certainly been a significant increase in the professional development opportunities that providers could offer their casual staff. That was something that they just did not have before. They really have soaked up every professional development opportunity they could.

They have had to adjust to the teaching of accredited curriculum which has meant that qualifications have had to be tightened up. Within a community you normally use the expertise that is available, but the requirements for becoming an accredited provider and to be licensed to run an accredited curriculum are very stringent. The community providers are not in a position to contribute to the payment of that training and nor is a casualised work force. They do not have that income that they can dedicate to their training.

Certainly, funds have been used to professionally develop teaching staff, but when you are looking at postgraduate qualifications there is an issue there. It relates to the providers having the capacity to offer an incentive of any sort and whether people in a casualised work force can dedicate that money, which is usually dedicated to something else, to it. This relates back to something that Jack Beetson was saying. You cannot take on a postgraduate qualification if you are a casual wanting that debt at the end of it.

CHAIR—Is there much more that you would like to say? Perhaps you could wind it up there and we could hear from Ms Harris. Ms Harris, are you going to say something to us?

Ms Harris—I would like to, thank you.

CHAIR—Ms Erskine, have you finished? Can we get at you through questions?

Ms Erskine—Yes, the only two things left are research in the field and involvement of students as contributors to, say, conferences or research.

CHAIR—Do you mean a lack of funding for them to be able to?

Ms Erskine—Once upon a time they were invited to conferences and participated in papers, presentations and research from their point of view. That was a feature of the UK system as well, but the funds have not been available.

CHAIR—If our questions do not cover all of the points that you want to make, could we come back to you towards the end of the time?

Ms Harris—I am mindful of the time. Christine has given you a view of the metropolitan picture for language and literacy, so I will just quickly tell you about Sydney Community College. I have a number of issues relating to all of the terms of reference. Perhaps I will just leave those and you can ask me questions. If at the end there is anything further that you would like me to add, I will. In 1996, Sydney Community College enrolled about 17,500 students. In 1997, we are looking at a target of about 20,000.

CHAIR—Where is Sydney Community College?

Ms Harris—We are based at Leichhardt. We are looking at being the largest provider of adult and community education in New South Wales. In my area of language and literacy, enrolments have increased over the last three years by approximately 200 per cent. Christine said that the funding had increased by about 30 per cent. In our particular college, the funding has increased by seven per cent. So our enrolments have increased by 200 per cent but the funding has increased by seven.

What is happening is that the rest of the college is having to bear the brunt of all of these students who need language and literacy tuition. Lots of things that have happened in the last five years have impacted on language and literacy in Sydney Community College. They are the terms of reference. Would you like to fire away?

CHAIR—Could you just follow on with that? Tell us a little bit about your student profile. Where does this 200 per cent come from? Has it come from the changing nature of the funding—and we will come back to that in a minute—or has it come from a new demand?

Ms Harris—Both. As Christine said, in 1994 with the change of funding when we got ANTA growth funds for ESL provision where previously it had only been literacy, all of a sudden we realised that, in the metropolitan Sydney area, we have a really huge migrant population, so we were able to offer the migrants ESL provision as opposed to literacy. Literacy was not necessarily what they needed. These people did not have the oracy skills for them to access our programs up to 1994. At that point it took off in the ESL area.

Sydney Community College covers such a diverse area. We have groups of businessmen who are brought here on two- or three-year exchange programs, or they have been transferred through large banks. They need business English, their wives need social English, their children need survival English in schools, so you have got that kind of sector. You have got brand new migrants who are waiting for some kind of benefit and have put themselves on AMES. They are eligible for AMES provision but the waiting list is enormous. You have got a lot of people from TAFE who have been in what is called the access ESL program which is the program in which they offer general English language to students who do not necessarily have a vocational interest, but they are only able to stay in that program for one year. Once that is done, it is done, so they call us up and say, `Can you take these people over?'

NCAELLS is one of the major policy initiatives that has impacted on our college. I work very closely with the Sydney institute of technology, as well as the inner city AMES, and we have developed—although it is still in draft form—a map of all of our provision to be used for people in referring agencies, CESs, counsellors at TAFE and universities, various assessors of English language students. They may be not able to get into TAFE or AMES but Sydney Community College offers this particular course that is on a par.

AMES and TAFE have invited me to all of their enrolment sessions so that at the time of the interview and the enrolments, if the student is either not going to get in or is not appropriate for the courses, they just physically say, `Go and see Elaine and see if they have something to offer you.' Those are the kind of coalface initiatives that are happening as a result of the collaborative strategy.

CHAIR—Can I just ask possibly Ms Erskine, or both of you, perhaps, whether—with the change of funding in 1994 with the influx of the ANTA dollars—there was a change of definition about literacy skills, and did they move from being general life skills to a critical part of vocational skills, if you like, being defined in the eligibility for ANTA dollars where previously they had only been sometimes in and mostly out?

Ms Erskine—They were to enhance work and career opportunities, but certainly it was not from a certain level. So that meant that people with limited English could access those same dollars. They were pre-vocational, pre-training really. It did provide a stepping stone that was not there; there was this gap really. So, yes, it was targeted towards—

CHAIR—Pre-vocational and vocational? Does that mean, though, that the dollars for literacy and ESL as life skills are now reduced, or is there now more money in learning to speak English?

Ms Erskine—Yes. There is more money in learning to speak English—for us, anyway.

CHAIR—How much of those dollars was actually taken out of the migrant courses

under the immigration department?

Ms Erskine—I am not aware that that was the source of them.

CHAIR—If you have a look, I think you will find that some of the dollars were rolled out of one department into another. There was some considerable complaint. I do not know when that happened and it may not have been as far back as 1994, but I believe ESL money in the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs was toned down or reduced. I would need to check on that.

However, it is a bit interesting because we have had a lot of problems with the adult and community education inquiry as so many things are defined as vocational and eligible for money and so many things are defined as not that. We have found that the shift has been more in the direction of finding things out, so it is quite interesting to find that literacy or ESL skills have been defined in and, therefore, more dollars are eligible. It sounds from what both of you are saying that it has created some problem in terms of massive demand and not enough dollars to deliver on what people really want. Is that a fair assessment?

Ms Erskine—I think the demand has always been there but we could not provide it, and once people come out of the woodwork and know that they can access, then of course the word gets out. I think that is a feature of many colleges.

Ms Harris—I think that there is still a lot of unmet demand, even in our college, and there are lots of issues as to why there is still an unmet demand. We still have a terrible problem trying to get venues. I know that in the 1991 report one of the recommendations was that you still have free access to public buildings. Of course, that has not happened for a very long time and we are not able to get access, let alone free access, to public buildings. We still are looking at backs of community centres, churches, halls and schools—if we can get into the schools.

CHAIR—What about child care? Do you have many people who need child care so they can go to school to learn English?

Ms Harris—We have lots of people who need child care. We have absolutely no funding and have not had, to my knowledge, since this report, any funding for child-care provision. So it is just an area where we are not able to offer courses to those people who need that, except that we can offer them between the hours of 9.30 and 12 and one and 2.30.

CHAIR—Provided their children are over five?

Ms Harris—That is right—and they can get there.

Ms Erskine—Very few council areas have subsidised child care where they pick up the cost. Community colleges can access that, but that is not frequently available.

CHAIR—I think I will make it my business to ask the secretary if we can follow up how many dollars might have been transferred from Immigration and Ethnic Affairs because they actually had child minding dollars attached to them for a while. It would be interesting for us to check the changing status of those dollars.

Ms Erskine—With the tendering that is going to open up for the AMEP programs—the adult migrant English program—yes, the tendering requirements and unit cost dollars will have child care in there. At this stage we do not have access to those. The tender documents come out in June, and the ACE sector is going to consider applying.

CHAIR—Are you now going to have to tender competitively for the provision of those courses?

Ms Erskine—Yes, that is right.

CHAIR—Where previously you did not have to?

Ms Erskine—No, we did not access those.

CHAIR—So perhaps it is only about to happen now.

Ms Harris—Could I carry on with that for a second? In actual fact, because of the competition policy, what is supposed to happen is that it is supposed to create the level playing field for language and literacy providers so that we can tender for these courses. But TAFE and AMES have had 30 years or more of infrastructure time and money. ACE colleges have not had that, so it is really quite academic for us to think about tendering for a particular program when we do not have the venues, we do not have the counsellors, we do not have the child-care facilities and we do not have all of those other things that TAFE and AMES do have. Until that is redressed, I cannot see that we are ever going to be successful in those tenders.

CHAIR—Yes, that is a good point.

Senator O'BRIEN—Ms Erskine, we have heard from earlier witnesses that the ACE area has been drawing upon labour market programs for some of its dollar funding from the Commonwealth. You referred to some programs, but I did not think they were part of the labour market programs as such.

Ms Erskine—SIPs, the special intervention programs, are specifically DEET funded programs.

Senator O'BRIEN—Are there other programs that might have been used in the ACE sector as well, perhaps not in the literacy area?

Ms Erskine—There was some DTEC funding—that is, state government. There were

LEAP programs and things like that, which may have had a section of language and literacy in there.

Senator O'BRIEN—What do you understand about the current proposals to deal with the disadvantaged unemployed in this regard?

Ms Erskine—There are two things that we have commented on. One is the capacity to benefit and the instrument that will be used to determine that, and whether the situation will be that the people needing language and literacy may be, by default, excluded from that, firstly, because they take so long. It is realistic to expect that they will take more than 12 months. There will only be money tagged for that provision for a period of 12 months. So the concern is that people in the most need of language and literacy will actually not be eligible.

Senator O'BRIEN—There is a suggestion that there is going to be—I hope this is right—a relenting in the area of the determination that a person does not have the capacity to benefit to the extent that everyone will be eligible for language and literacy programs. Have you heard anything about that?

Ms Erskine—No, nothing definite about that.

Senator O'BRIEN—I do not suppose there is anything definite yet. How should that be dealt with if that occurs?

Ms Erskine—In excluding people?

Senator O'BRIEN—No, in ensuring that everyone does have access to that.

Ms Erskine—People normally nominate themselves that they need that, so that should be acknowledged. They should be training from the employment placement provider side of it to be able to understand and recognise language literacy needs. People may just front up and react a certain way. Therefore, they may be put back to the touch screens when, in fact, their reaction is as a result of their language and literacy needs.

Senator O'BRIEN—Don't they come through case management to get to that point?

Ms Harris—Not necessarily.

Ms Erskine—If the outcome is work related, how much of the training dollar or that commitment to that individual is going to go through to language and literacy needs? It is limited. To get the maximum of $10,000 is difficult.

Senator O'BRIEN—Yes, but I would have thought that that would not go to language and literacy. Would it?

Ms Erskine—No, and there are all these other areas it will go to. So that person may

still come out at the end of the 12-month period and not be in a position to reach the capacity for employment that they would like.

Senator O'BRIEN—Rather than have a debate about the legislation that is coming before the Senate shortly, in your view, what is the best way for your sector to address the problem in the emerging circumstances of language and literacy problems in the unemployed and employed working community?

Ms Erskine—The main concern at this stage is the unemployed, because that client group has been serviced over the last 18 months to two years.

Senator O'BRIEN—So you say that the employed are being adequately serviced now by programs that exist?

Ms Erskine—There is always unmet demand but I think that non-job seekers is the group that is missing out. That is the traditional community based group. If everything is going to move towards work as the outcome, some people such as women and senior aged people are non-job seekers at that point in time, and we certainly do not want those programs to be penalised or withdrawn. That is a concern. We want to maintain that non-job seeker traditional community access role, but we are concerned about unemployed people because they may be coming in, as I mentioned before, trying to usurp that non-job seeker traditional community group.

Senator O'BRIEN—It has been suggested by some providers that the increased use of technology in education is intensifying literacy problems of already disadvantaged people. Do you have any views on that?

Ms Erskine—Certainly. It is another level of literacy that you have to cope with. There is far more of a requirement now for the written and spoken word.

CHAIR—I thought there was a good case to be put that you do not need to be literate at all to use high tech.

Ms Harris—My goodness!

Ms Erskine—I do not think so.

CHAIR—I thought you would like that really provocative remark at this time of the day. A lot of the programs are near enough to very basic literacy—press here, do this, click on, click off, games and God knows what else—that a lot of it is minimally literate. In fact, some people criticise some of the programs for winding back literary skills.

Ms Harris—In our college in the language and literacy area, computer assisted language learning plays a minimal part of our language provision, and so it should, because language is meant to be an interactive activity. It is meant to be socially interactive; it is not

meant to be technologically interactive. I think that technology and computer assisted language learning can be used to bolster up some skills, to teach people skills like procedural language and to enable them to be comfortable enough to sit in front of a computer should they want to go on to word processing skills for the workplace. But to learn the language is totally different.

Senator FERRIS—Ms Harris, I am not sure whether you said this at the beginning, but exactly where is your college located within the city?

Ms Harris—We have two administration offices as of this week. One of them is in Leichhardt and one is in Rozelle, but we have 20 other centres that we use in and around the area. I guess the furthest west centre would be Petersham. The other centres are Marrickville, Glebe, Rozelle, Surry Hills, Ultimo, Balmain, et cetera.

Senator FERRIS—You also talked about the usefulness of services that your college provides to migrant women learning English and so on. How do you contact those people? Is it by word of mouth, or do you have an integrated marketing program that gets your information to those people?

Ms Harris—I think we have a fairly sophisticated marketing program in our college. We put out a brochure—I have one over there in my bag.

Senator FERRIS—Perhaps you could make it available to the committee.

Ms Harris—I certainly will. We put out a brochure every term in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and it is also distributed through bus depots and train stops. I do not know the actual figures, but I think it is probably 80,000 brochures a term. I also advertise in the ethnic press and on ethnic radio. I am a member of a lot of different ethnic community councils, and I go to a lot of meetings where I pass on our brochures and information to ethnic workers.

Senator FERRIS—Your enrolment figures show that you are spectacularly successful in that sense; you have a very good growth rate.

Ms Harris—Thank you.

Senator FERRIS—I note that you were here for Mr Beetson's evidence, and I am interested to know whether you provide or have been asked to provide any programs for Aboriginal people within the city area.

Ms Harris—About eight months ago I recall that our access project coordinator and our principal met with Mr Beetson. The purpose of the meeting was to see how we could collaborate and cooperate in provision. Nothing came of that meeting. I do not know the reason why, but it is something that I could find out for you.

We have statistics on how many students we have who are of Aboriginal or Torres

Strait Islander descent. That is on our enrolment forms, so that is also available. We do not offer courses specifically for Aboriginal people. We have a course in Aboriginal culture, but that is not necessarily for Aboriginal people. They are open to anyone. They are open to people from non-English speaking backgrounds—to anyone.

Senator FERRIS—And that is the point I am interested in pursuing. I would be very interested to know how many Aboriginal students have come into your integrated system of courses. I would also be interested to know what sorts of people are accessing the courses on Aboriginal culture, for example. Is there an interest from migrants to better understand Aboriginal culture? In other words, I am trying to establish how much integration there is in a philosophical sense within the college.

Ms Erskine—Until recently, we did not know how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people actually accessed ACE. Now that is coming through with the AVETMISS data.

Within communities where there are large Aboriginal populations, you will have dedicated funding for Aboriginal programs and they do not happen unless there is dedicated funding. In other areas there is a strong link within the community, with Aboriginal people participating in non-targeted programs—the Central West would be an example, where you have a LEAP program, which is not technically an Aboriginal program. They have a high rate of Aboriginal people there. It is a program designed to develop the community. When you have that feature, then you will have input from the Aboriginal community. In other instances, designated funding is made and, because that money is there, people pro-actively go out.

Senator FERRIS—Do you have a campus anywhere near Redfern?

Ms Harris—In Surry Hills, yes. It is on Chalmers Street and Cleveland Street. It is next door.

Senator FERRIS—I am just wondering whether you have made any attempt to encourage people from that area to enrol in courses, develop links or bridges or whatever.

Ms Harris—No specific attempts, nothing that is over and above making an attempt to get women or children in.

Senator FERRIS—Sure. I have picked up this point, Madam Chair, because I was very interested in the way you were marketing the program to non-English speaking people within the city area. We have heard a lot today and in the past from witnesses about the *Cinderella* report. Could I ask each of you, as my final question, to give me your own view on where you think we have gone since *Cinderella* and where you see us going in the future in relation to the framework of *Cinderella*.

Ms Erskine—Undoubtedly, because there was a commitment, because national policies and state policies have developed from *Cinderella* and because the ACE sector has

been put on the agenda for policy development—that is always a good thing. But where will it go from here?

Senator FERRIS—It was suggested to us by a witness this morning—and I am not sure whether you had arrived and heard this—that she had not got into the ballroom yet. I just wondered what your response was to that slightly flippant piece of philosophy.

Ms Harris—I was here actually, and I think she said we had a toehold, but not a foothold.

Senator FERRIS—Yes.

Ms Harris—I think that is absolutely true. We have come a long way in the last five years, not only in the language and literacy area but in the whole ACE sector. But there is still a lot of work to be done in recognition and credibility. I find that constantly when I go to an AMES, a TAFE or any other kind of government forum, I am having to still defend our credibility and having to say, `Yes, we do employ qualified and experienced teachers. Yes, I do offer accredited courses and, if they are not accredited courses, we can prove learning outcomes.' It is always an uphill battle to do that.

In the area of professional development, institutions such as UTS and UNE—and you will hear from UTS later—and private providers have come a long way in the qualifications for teaching English to speakers of other languages and adult basic education.

CHAIR—Who are your biggest knockers, Ms Harris?

Ms Harris—Do I have to point fingers?

CHAIR—You do not have to, of course, but if you are free to that would be a help. I presume you will say to us, `The community does not knock us at all; the community loves us, the community feels very welcome with us.' Maybe I am wrong; maybe it is not just the universities down the road or other educational institutions which are putting the kybosh on you. Who are the people who knock you?

Ms Harris—I personally have a really good relationship with the Sydney institute of technology and with the inner city AMES, but both institutions tolerate us and will accept us to a point. When it comes down to actually asking our advice on policy issues and directional kinds of things, they will ask us but I get the feeling that it is because of the ACE TAFE strategy or because of some of the others—NCAELLS, for example. It is because of that that someone is mandating them to do that. It is not because they really believe that we have a valuable contribution to make. That is just work on our part at the coalface. It is just constantly proving ourselves—that we are credible, that we offer a lot.

Ms Erskine—I think the other knockers would be those who are knocking on the windows to get into the ballroom, and that is the non-traditional. They are people peering

around the corners. Sometimes you lock the doors, because you cannot let them in. A number of centres know they are there and they have the phone calls and they know where to find these groups, but sometimes you just cannot let them in because you do not have the resources or the funding at the time. But you can see them peeping around the corner.

Senator FERRIS—At least you have identified them.

CHAIR—Just one last question. It is about what you said before on criteria. Previously you did not have to decide who would be eligible. Because there is not enough funding or places, are you telling the committee that you now have to establish some criteria under which you can exclude students or potential students?

Ms Erskine—We do not want to do that, and we feel that funds should be targeted to pick up the unemployed group. People have reported that they have been put in a position. All of a sudden they will have unemployed people coming through and they say, `Yes, okay, I will take them'—maybe they came in between enrolments or something. They do not want have to do that.

CHAIR—I thank both of you for coming. You have offered some written material. Does that also apply to you, Ms Harris? The material that you did not speak to, are you able provide that to the committee?

Ms Harris—Yes, certainly. You will have it by Monday.

CHAIR—We would appreciate that enormously.

Ms Harris—Do you have a copy of the NCAELLS, the national collaborative adult English language literacy strategy?

Ms Erskine—Do you want it?

CHAIR—A full spelling out of another set of letters would be splendid.

Ms Harris—You are welcome to it as well as our brochure.

CHAIR—Thank you very much indeed.

[3.19 p.m.]

PERLGUT, Mr Donald Jay, Project Manager, Open Learning and Adult Education, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, GPO Box 9994, Sydney, New South Wales 2001

PRITCHARD, Ms Jeune, Talks Editor, Radio National, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 700 Harris Street, Ultimo, New South Wales 2007

CHAIR—I welcome the witnesses from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The committee prefers that your evidence be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I have to point out however that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be ordered to be made public by the Senate.

The committee has before it submission No. 74. Is it the wish of the committee that the document be received as evidence and authorised for publication? There being no objection, it is so ordered. Is there any other material that you would like to table for the committee?

Mr Perlgut—Yes. I have some basic information describing one of our television programs in particular, called *English—Have A Go*, which I will describe in some opening remarks, as well as some current and upcoming television timetables for our open learning service.

CHAIR—We will accept that material and we may decide to incorporate it later. If you would like to make some opening comments and then we will ask questions.

Mr Perlgut—I will speak first and then ask my colleague, Jeune Pritchard, from ABC's Radio National to speak after me.

CHAIR—Can I ask that you take into account that we have got until 4 o'clock. If you would like to keep your remarks a bit short, then we can discuss things.

Mr Perlgut—Yes, I will do that. The ABC submission described in some detail what the ABC does. It was not a submission that made recommendations and that was on purpose. It was not the intention to do that. I certainly do not want to reiterate the submission, but I want to highlight a couple of key points in it in relation to television.

The first thing is a point that sometimes gets lost in the great public debates which occur about the ABC—and certainly there has been a public debate about the ABC in recent times—that is, the important educative role the ABC plays. That educative role is of two sorts: it is of an informal nature for adults as well as a formal nature. We in ABC TV and radio do both formal and informal education activities. They are quite extensive, which we have detailed at length in this submission.

Just to highlight the adult education side in television, there are four different areas

that we work on. The first is learning English and adult literacy, what we call adult basic education, particularly a new series that we launched in the middle of this year called *English—Have A Go*—and that is in some of the materials that I have submitted to you today. We have got more information about *English—Have A Go*. In the four-week period ending Friday of last week we looked at ratings and reach figures for that series. That series reached eight per cent of all households in Sydney and 3.3 per cent of all people in Sydney and that was Sydney alone. In Sydney alone that is calculated as being 127,000 people who would have tuned in to that series at one time or another. That is a series that teaches English language and is broadcast at 12.30 p.m. Tuesdays and repeated at 8 a.m. Fridays. So we see a very significant audience for education activities.

CHAIR—I do not want to interrupt you too much, but one question that we really should have put to our last witnesses—and we might have to invite them back or ask them to write the answer—followed a question from Senator O'Brien. It was really a question of the learning that can be done through television screens or high tech. I just wondered whether you can now or at some stage say whether your English language courses do better for having words on the picture, pictures on the picture or talking heads? Can you be interactive with a television screen?

Mr Perlgut—That is a very good question. There are a lot of advantages in putting education on television. We have found in particular television works very well for teaching languages. It does a number of things that you cannot do necessarily. You can actually show faces at close hand; you can see the formation of words. It is possible to build the interaction in the television series—which is in fact what we have done with *English—Have A Go*, going back and repeating dramas, repeating pronunciation, pulling words out of the screen and repeating certain key phrases.

It is by no means intended that the television series alone would be the sole source of learning. The television series is accompanied by a wide range of books, both student books, teachers books and work books—I have submitted to you a copy of one of the student books—and it is also accompanied by audio tapes. To really be an effective course of study it should be led by a teacher or instructor of some sort. Nevertheless, in a nub itself, on its own, with the accompanying materials and for motivated students using television to learn English or other languages—because we broadcast Chinese, Greek, Italian, French, Spanish and one other which may come to me—it can be very effective.

CHAIR—It is an interesting question, is it not, particularly when you think of how many people have been trying to learn languages over the years with nothing more than a tape?

Mr Perlgut—Our language education courses television series are some of our most popular and continue to be, no matter how often we repeat them. The second area where we do things is in university education which is our open learning. The third area is what I would call informal learning. In addition, we have two more strands in development. One is starting

to work more systematically in vocational education and training with our first co-production with the Victorian TAFE. The final area—although we do not yet have any programs in production, but hope to have some later on this year—is what we call the adult life skills strand, where we are going to focus on things like living skills for elderly people, first aid, emergency management skills and others.

I have a couple of other points. All of ABC TV's adult education programs since 1990 have been co-productions—that is, taken with outside organisations—and therefore we always have partners for what we do. A total of 15 per cent of the ABC TV yearly timetable—24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks per year—is devoted to formal adult education programs, approximately 26 hours per week.

Ms Pritchard—I am working on Radio National as the Talks Editor. I am actually filling in for Joe Gelonesi our radio producer who, in cooperation with the universities, puts together some fabulous series for open learning. On Radio National we go out at the appalling time of 5 a.m. six mornings a week. But on Friday—and that is starting today at 2.30 p.m.—we introduce any new series that we have actually got in open learning. Open learning actually comes on before the Peter Thompson breakfast show on Radio National.

Some of the series we have actually run on open learning include international politics from an Australian perspective, introducing science and technology, democracy in a nation, American music and popular culture. I do not know how many times that has run, but it is fabulous. There is Australian and Asian music and culture, introducing Asian studies and contemporary Chinese politics, which has just been re-cut and is going to be run again. Other topics include Australia since the war, society and politics, righting the nation, Australian literature to 1950 and Australian literature since 1950. Other programs include *Your Desert, Not Mine*, *Modern Feminist Thought*; *Many Voices: Language in Australian Society* and *Chasing the Rainbow* and one topic that ran over Christmas and into the New Year on small business management in Australia.

It does not seem like a huge contribution to adult education, but as Talks Editor on Radio National a lot of our programming and scheduling could be described as adult education as well. The open learning series does not stand out as being dramatically different to the other programs we actually do. They are beautifully researched; they are beautifully cut. They are complex little documentaries. They are actually very good listening for quite a general audience as well. It is not just for people who have enrolled with open learning. The general audience have responded well to them too.

Five in the morning as the first run could be a problem. We have taken them off the 11 a.m. run and we are re-running programs like *The Europeans*, *Women out loud*, *Hindsight* and *Way?* in that 11 o'clock slot. We have just started our new schedule for 1997, so we have actually taken open learning away from that slot. I do not know whether that is going to affect our audience or not. I suspect it may well do.

CHAIR—What is an adult? How do you define an `adult', especially when you run

and include in your submission such things as Triple J some of whose audience would be over 21 but many of them would not be. How do you define an `adult'?

Mr Perlgut—Our definition of an `adult' in educational television is basically people 18 and up. In ABC TV education we also broadcast programs for schools as well as produce programs for both primary and secondary schools. Really the dividing mark for us more or less is: after year 12 becomes adult and before year 12 becomes young people. There are other variations. Clearly, you will sometimes have some television programs that will look for an audience between 15 and 30, so it is crossing the boundary on that. I am not an expert on Triple J, but I understand that certainly the Triple J audience does include a very large number of people in their twenties and thirties.

Ms Pritchard—And certainly beyond that.

CHAIR—But these are adults who want to allow the perpetuation of the child in them.

Ms Pritchard—Do you mean those who listen to Triple J?

CHAIR—I am sorry, I have heard some of my colleagues insist they are not too old because they still listen to Triple J. I am interested in the definition of adult. It is quite interesting because one of the big challenges has been that a lot of kids who are bored out of their brains in secondary school—the 14, 15 year olds and so on—say that the way the information is produced for them or presented to them does not take account of that. I am interested in what you define it as.

Senator CARR—Radio National's scheduling seems to me to be essentially adult learning. There are very few programs I think you could categorise outside of that. Your education reports, your arts reports and even Peter Thompson's breakfast show seem to fit into that category. What distinguishes what you are putting to us as specialist programs, in terms of the open learning co-productions, from the general schedule?

Ms Pritchard—I have not been involved in the actual making of these, but the new tourism series, which I think kicks off in about April or May, is not something—

Senator CARR—I listened to your small business series over Christmas. If anything I thought the production value was perhaps a bit lower rather than higher.

Ms Pritchard—I actually might agree with you there.

Mr Perlgut—You are asking a very good question. The basic difference between the wide range of information programs done by Radio National and those that fit specifically into open learning is that the open learning ones are done to a certain curriculum basis. Sometimes the content may be very similar and their style of presentation and organisation could be very similar, but the open learning programs are done to a certain curriculum basis for the university or TAFE open learning providers.

Senator CARR—Does that mean that you actually have a lower standard? It struck

me, for instance, with the broadcast on the business program and the broadcast on modern Asian politics, or whatever it is called, that the production standards were lower. Is this a device by the ABC to save money?

Ms Pritchard—No, absolutely not. I think the budget for the series, which is a 15-part series, was something like $60,000.

Senator CARR—So it amounts to a substantial budget?

Ms Pritchard—That pays for a producer who is going to be working in conjunction with a few academics and whoever they bring in as consultants. It is a substantial budget. People work hard to produce that series to a high standard, certainly not a deliberately lower standard. Some of them have higher production values than others. Certainly there is no deliberate policy to make it less complex or with less texture than what we might produce across Radio National.

Senator CARR—Would you pay more for a book reading, for instance?

Ms Pritchard—I am not the arts editor but we pay an unspeakably low amount for a book reading.

Senator CARR—So it is actually cheaper in that regard?

Ms Pritchard—I would think so.

Senator CARR—Your submission really paints a picture of the way the ABC sees its role within its charter. I take it that you are suggesting that at the moment everything you do is within your charter. Given the current government policy, which is to narrow the focus of the ABC—and I understand that is the term that is used—what is it in the present charter that actually protects or values the work that you are doing?

Mr Perlgut—There is one reference in the charter to education. I may not have the words exact, but it is pretty close to `the ABC shall produce programs of an educational nature, and in doing so shall take into account the needs of the states'. That is as far as the charter goes in terms of the reference to education.

Senator CARR—Is there anything within the Mansfield review and in recent debate which would actually challenge or have an impact upon your work?

Ms Pritchard—Mansfield certainly agreed that we should be a comprehensive broadcaster rather than a complementary broadcaster. He was extremely complimentary about the radio networks, probably much to the surprise of people who actually read the report. But he was talking comprehensively. He was not talking about narrowing the focus.

Senator CARR—Yes, I understand the point that Mr Mansfield was making. But do you see any threat, in the present political climate, to the work that you are doing in terms of

narrowing the focus of the ABC? It could be argued that this is an expensive exercise. Twenty-four hour television broadcasts are relatively recent.

Mr Perlgut—In 1993.

Senator CARR—It is relatively recent. Is it not the case that it could be argued that this is superfluous to your core function?

Ms Pritchard—Unless the charter were to be changed, yes.

Mr Perlgut—You are asking a number of different questions. Let me try to deal with them. There is a part of the Mansfield report where it goes into great detail on children's programming. It is very complimentary and supportive of the ABC's role in children's television, in particular. There is one phrase in there which is that the ABC should be involved in broadcasting programs rather than producing programs that support the developmental needs of children. So, in that way, I think you could read into that an educative function. That could be a range of things, but that is how we read it.

The second part was your reference to cost. The ABC provides effectively no cash or staff costs to the production or the purchase of curriculum based adult education programs and has not done so, as I said before, since about 1989-90. All of the programs I mentioned before are done as co-productions; co-productions that are done on the basis that the ABC provides facilities—and this is across radio and television—and archival material and, to a certain extent, project management, which is people like me, and that is for only a small percentage of the time. So it is a large number of hours to air for an investment of only production facilities. It is, in my view, the most cost effective television programming that the ABC can actually do and, therefore, I suspect that we will have a reasonable life in the future.

Senator CARR—Please do not misunderstand me, I am actually supporting your role.

Mr Perlgut—Yes, I understand.

Senator CARR—I am quite concerned about the debate about the ABC and I wonder if there is in fact a threat to the work that you are doing?

Mr Perlgut—Let me describe the current movement within the ABC as I see it. First of all, in the current environment, there is a threat to everything across the board. But given that, there will soon be announced—it has been announced internally, though I have not seen any reference to it in the press—a new commissioning editor structure. There will be, as I understand it, a commissioning editor of education. That person will be responsible for television education, radio education as well as multimedia and on-line services. This is the first time in 10 years or so that education has been on its own. I think that there is some significant acknowledgment on the part of senior ABC management, and through that the ABC board, of the role that the corporation has in education.

Senator CARR—What this submission lacks—and I think it is very good in terms of explaining what is going on in the ABC; if anything, you are under-selling the work that you are doing—are recommendations. How do you believe this committee can assist in promoting education and adult education through the ABC? What sorts of recommendations would you like to see come out of a process such as this?

Mr Perlgut—I can speak from a personal point of view only. One of the reasons that there were no recommendations in the report was that, given the time when the submission was put in, it would have taken far longer to have any recommendations agreed to by management and the board and we would have gone well passed the deadline. That is one of the key reasons there were none included. It was simply a process that would have been beyond us at the time. I think it goes back to some of my earlier remarks about the ABC having a very important education role and, to a certain extent, some of the success in that education role and the cost-effectiveness of using the national broadcaster in pursuing national social and educational goals. I think they are all very important.

I agree with you—once again, having worked in this area of educational television on and off for almost 10 years now—that the role of education in the ABC is underappreciated and is often taken for granted by many of the recipients of those services. As I said before, I do believe it is quite a cost-effective one, but there is a constant need to analyse how the money is spent. It is not just that it should be there; there are certain roles and we are working and living in a time of certain technological change, particularly change in the education environment, which will see new forms of education delivery, and the ABC needs to be conscious of that. So certain types of television, and possibly radio programs, that we may have produced and broadcast in the past we may not wish to in the future. They may be more suitable for other means.

But I still think that some of the major changes—in other words, the use of online services—are still easily five to 10 to 15 years ahead of us. Even given that, we have to be aware that certain very technical education things possibly are not suitable for television. There are certain other areas that we should be using television for. We would spend a good part of our time constantly analysing and double-checking that with the audience, with our colleagues and with our educational providers. I am reasonably confident that what we do and what we continue to attempt to do is the correct thing for the environment.

Senator CARR—Did you have any suggestions, Ms Pritchard?

Ms Pritchard—Just to add a comment to that, the big move for Radio National in the delivery of their programs is actually online. A substantial number of the complex programs—the documentaries and features and the reports across the 8.30s in the mornings—are all transcribed that day and delivered. We have a terrific project, the *Science online* project, that has just this week taken in three trainees, which will be a very good delivery to schools in science. That is where we see our delivery of radio expanding enormously with Radio National.

Senator CARR—This boils down to the fact that you are seeking from us acknowledgment of the work that you are doing? Have I oversimplified your response?

Mr Perlgut—That was the primary purpose of this submission.

Ms Pritchard—I guess delivering information to you.

Senator CARR—That is very valuable. I just want to be clear that that is the main exercise here. I was left wondering how we could actually assist, other than draw public attention to the work that is being undertaken. That in itself, I hesitate to suggest, might be a very large task. That is about the size of it then, is it?

Mr Perlgut—The submission was done in the context that there have been a large number of educational inquiries over the last couple of decades. The ABC, despite its role in education, did not have its role mentioned in a number of them. That was, in large part, the fault of the ABC for not having put in a submission. Therefore, it was the intention this time to make certain that the role of the ABC was acknowledged. As for the drawing of conclusions, this is harder for us to suggest.

Senator CARR—Do you have access to any of the educational funding for your programs? Has that ever been explored through the ABC management, given the crisis in budgeting?

Mr Perlgut—In doing the coproductions and having access to facilities funding, it is a very valuable source of funding. It is not something that I attempt to demean. For instance, a major coproduction such as *English—Have A Go*, which we did in coproduction with AusAID, was approximately a $2 million production, of which AusAID put in $1.1 million, and the ABC put in approximately $900,000. An amount of $900,000 in facilities and service is still $900,000. That is a great deal of money.

The ABC, because of its important facilities base and the key production facilities and archival resources that it has, is still able to contribute substantially to educational television production. That is not something which a large number of other organisations have. We do not have the source of funding that an organisation such as the BBC has, or TV Ontario. But we do have these important sources of facilities. We value that because it is counted as cash in terms of ABC copyright holdings, and they can leverage a great deal of production.

There is an additional thing, which is the ability to transmit programs. I am not saying that the ABC does count that, but it is of incalculable value. That depends on our ability to reach out to the audience, but it is of enormous value.

Senator CARR—But you have to pay for the transmission—the transmission agency actually requires a fee for that.

Mr Perlgut—Transmission does cost money, yes. But, on the one hand, if it was not

education filling those hours it would be something else, so it is not a cost. We have just costed it.

Senator CARR—So is there any revenue that comes to the ABC in terms of surplus profit revenue as a result of educational programs?

Mr Perlgut—There is a small amount of revenue for the sale of programs, either domestically or overseas.

Senator CARR—Radio tapes, books and things?

Mr Perlgut—Radio tapes. Often the book publication rights are held by our coproducers, and they tend not to produce a great deal of money. Very occasionally we will get a series that will sell a lot. But, when I say that, in educational television they will never get close to reaching the total value of the coproduction input. In other words, if it cost $2 million, you might make $200,000 on that $2 million, because educational television does not pay for itself.

CHAIR—Give us an example of one that sold well.

Mr Perlgut—*English—Have a Go* is one that I assume will sell well. It is beginning to, and the program sales people are actively marketing it around overseas.

CHAIR—Does *Bananas in Pyjamas* sell well?

Mr Perlgut—It does extremely well. It has been licensed in many countries. But that is children's entertainment.

Senator CARR—The radio tapes sell well.

CHAIR—Is *Quantum* entertainment or information or education?

Mr Perlgut—It is, technically, information programming. It is engaging, and it certainly builds into it certain entertainment factors and entertainment values, but that is the nature of broadcast television—you have to have an engaging point to it all or people will turn it off. And the more prime time your programs get, the higher the level of audience engagement you try to incorporate.

CHAIR—I have colleagues with other questions to ask but, Mr Perlgut, no-one can tell me, without expecting some bite back, that education could be seen as boring, that the nature of entertainment is to somehow attach a hook to the information being exchanged so that it captures the imagination or the attention. I should have thought good teaching or good education was about that anyhow. But perhaps that is just my prejudice. Do you actually put any educational dimension on programs such as *Quantum* or *The Investigators*, or is it just not in the education area at all—for the purposes of clarification?

Mr Perlgut—In terms of production, they are not; they come out of a separate area. They are not produced with the idea that they are being produced to a core theme or to a certain teaching set. However, they are widely—and this is in answer to your question—used by schools in terms of teaching in science or in other areas. So clearly they have a very significant and important educational value; there is no doubt about that at all.

Senator CARR—Did we get a figure on—

Ms Pritchard—I would have to deliver that to you on tape sales. It would be minimal; it really would be.

Senator CARR—I understood that ABC sales were around $21 million. That is depending on who does the bookkeeping, I am sure.

Ms Pritchard—Not in radio tape sales.

Senator CARR—But not on radio tape.

Ms Pritchard—No.

Senator CARR—But overall, most of that, I would have thought, would be on educational products. I do not know.

CHAIR—Mr Perlgut, you are suggesting that there might be some other factor besides education selling there for the ABC?

Mr Perlgut—Let me give you a reasonably accurate figure. In the course of my time in managing the Open Learning programs, we have produced 13 Open Learning series and a bunch of individual episodes. The total sale value overseas of all of those programs in all markets is probably not much more than $120,000.

We recently made a sale to the Israel Open University, which we had very carefully negotiated, for $US5,600, and then we had to share the revenue from that with the owners of the copyright in Europe, the Dutch, so not the net return but the return before our expenses was $US2,800. That is not an awful lot of money.

Senator CARR—I guess I am pointing to the problem of definition. There may well be larger sales for what we regard as educational materials. If I walk down to the ABC shop in Melbourne, I see a roomful of educational materials, but most of it you would not regard, under the definition you have used, as setting to a curricula.

Ms Pritchard—Certainly the radio tapes, the programs that actually sell extremely well, are religious programs and science shows, and that does not come under the definition of education.

Senator CARR—And the relevant book readings too, I suppose.

Ms Pritchard—Yes, absolutely.

CHAIR—I suppose we could measure whether the audience is actually getting it wrong and being entertained, or whether they should have been informed, or whether they were being informed when they should have been entertained.

Mr Perlgut—Do not get me wrong; we want our audience to be engaged, which is the word that I used, and we make very high quality educational programs so that they want to come back and watch again. But it is not the primary intention to entertain them; the primary intention is to educate.

CHAIR—I still find this almost a shocking claim, Mr Perlgut, that if we are talking about educating people we would have something other than a primary aim to entertain them. But that is just my view of education.

Senator FERRIS—As a slightly chronic insomniac, I often listen to your five o'clock *Open Learning* program. The timetabling has intrigued me. It is a marvellous program on Radio National. Could you tell me who you are aiming at with that 5 a.m. time slot?

Ms Pritchard—It is genuinely insomniacs like yourself—and I catch it—and people who have actually enrolled in the courses too. I think it is highly inconvenient, and I guess that a lot of the students actually—

Senator FERRIS—Tape it.

Ms Pritchard—Tape it; yes, they do.

Senator FERRIS—I was interested in your comment about the $60,000 budget. I have heard many of them over the years, and there is an involvement of many groups, universities and so on, so there is clearly a lot of money spent on the production costs of them, and I have always hoped they are on at a time when I am doing something else so that we do get full benefit—and you are saying that they are.

Ms Pritchard—There is one other time, and that is 2.30 p.m. on a Friday afternoon. That is for introducing the new series.

Senator FERRIS—Okay. On the subject of taping, and I hear them always say that tapes are for sale, it has occurred to me—and I have asked the Friends of the ABC this question when they have come to see me—that education programs in particular, both video and radio, could be put into video hire shops so that people could actually have the opportunity to borrow particularly videos of *Open Learning* programs, rather than having to pay the full purchase price of them which is really discriminatory for those you are probably

most trying to help with the programs. Have you ever considered looking at that, or is there a copyright problem with that?

Mr Perlgut—Let me answer the question in a number of ways. There are a few problems with it. There is No. 1 a copyright problem. The video rights are held by a wide variety of organisations and, in the case of a number of the series that we in the ABC have coproduced with our partners, we have not cleared Australian video rights. And the reason for all that is that the clearance of the rights would have cost us much more than any income that would have been returned. In other words, we would have to spend $10,000 or $12,000 clearing rights, and any net income would probably be along the line of $5,000 or $6,000.

The second thing is that there have been a number of attempts to place educational videos in video shops but, by and large, I do not believe they have been very successful, the reason being that the video shops do pander—`pander' being a subjective word here—for the—

Ms Pritchard—Market to.

Mr Perlgut—Yes, market to a certain strong entertainment component, and people do not, by and large, go to the video shops looking for specific education programs. There is, however, a way to deal with this need and it is one that is sort of being dealt with but in a very haphazard manner. It is the use of public libraries for loaning. A large number of libraries have the videos and audiotapes and loan them out to individuals, both by distance as well as direct loan, but it is a rather haphazard way. I know that in the case of Open Learning they have contracted with one library in 1997, the University of South Australia Distance Education Library, which will in turn be able to loan both audio and/or video tapes of all *Open Learning* programs to enrolled Opening Learning students, and there are about 10,000 or so people enrolled. So there is some attempt to deal with all that. But in a mass way I think it is very difficult. Financially it is not an easy proposition.

CHAIR—Can you explain a little more about what clearing rights means?

Mr Perlgut—In a television series there is a wide range of rights which are involved in the series. Everybody who has contributed anything potentially has some share on it. When a writer writes a script, you can buy out the rights on that script but sometimes you do not do so for all media because you do not want to buy out the video rights for the writer's script because you are never going to sell it on video so it is wasted money. If you use, say, a photograph, and the photograph is owned by the State Library of New South Wales, the State Library of New South Wales will charge a certain use for the photograph and that use may cost more as you sell it more.

CHAIR—So, essentially, a down-the-line variety of copyrights?

Mr Perlgut—A large number of copyrights.

CHAIR—Right. Thank you.

Mr Perlgut—Actors, musicians, music, written materials in it.

CHAIR—So what you are saying is that, if the ABC wanted to sell or lease these videos, they would have to clear the rights before they could do that?

Mr Perlgut—Yes, but you have to understand that the ABC does not hold the video rights for most of the television series. In the case of programs that we have purchased, those rights are held by a range of different video distributors around Australia. In the case of the coproduced programs, by and large they are held by the coproducers' organisations such as Open Learning Australia or Victorian TAFE or others.

In some instances when we have worked with DEETYA on adult literacy programs, the Commonwealth has decided to forgo its share of video residuals, and we have been able to sell programs at quite a heavily subsidised rate. That was in the adult literacy series *Reading Writing Roadshow*, but it is a very unusual case for those things to happen. Video is loaded with rights issues. The clearance of rights is a big issue.

CHAIR—I will ask the secretary to see whether there is anything further that you could provide to the committee about that issue, because it is like a hidden cost that we might not have anticipated.

Senator FERRIS—This is perhaps a theoretical question, but could you look at how that might change as a result of the Mansfield recommendation that more use be made of contract productions? In other words, those people might hold clearance rights which might enable them to put them in the ABC Shop or any other place. Perhaps you could look at that principle in a legal sense, because I understand there have been some productions like that.

Mr Perlgut—Legislation which has been available now for a few years and which we call the AVCS—audiovisual copyright service legislation—allows primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions to copy television programs off air and pay a licence fee to the copyright holders. That is collected by the AVCS and, in turn, redistributed to the copyright holders. That allows certain programs that would not be distributed on video to have de facto video distribution.

Only certain institutions can tape. State government departments cannot and, generally, private organisations cannot. Because of that, you will now find in a large number of educational libraries significant legal collections. They always had illegal collections but now they have legal collections of videos taped from television. Of all those, the ABC is probably the most significant provider of that information.

Senator FERRIS—I have a question that relates to strategic alliances, which you have mentioned quite frequently in your submission. I wonder whether part of the education program involves any strategic alliances with industry or particular businesses so that the

people listening might learn something that provides them with a job pathway.

Mr Perlgut—The strategic alliance question is a very important one. It will be part of the job description of the new commissioning editor for education not only in content terms but also in delivery terms, so a lot of that is still in the future for us. Also, you would appreciate that we in the ABC are bound by quite stringent regulations about the nature of who is a bona fide coproducer of our television programs. Because of that, by and large, any activities or discussions that we have had with industry have not been that interested in education; they are interested in advertising their name.

The activities with industry would tend to be through the educational institutions that we work with rather than directly with them. Except for having a number of individuals who are representative of industry on various reference panels, I cannot think of one instance offhand where we have developed a long-term strategic alliance with a certain industry. However, with educational institutions, Commonwealth government departments, state government departments and other bona fide coproducers, we certainly have.

Senator FERRIS—There has been a lot of concern over recent times about measuring outcomes in terms of student competency. I am just wondering if this is something that you have been aware of in the context of your adult literacy programs.

Mr Perlgut—The word `competencies' arises a great deal vis-a-vis adult literacy. I cannot pretend to always fully understand what it means when it is brought up in the context. The best that we can do is to make high quality educational television programs that meet the needs, but to do that with extensive use of expert advisers and expert reference panels, people who do understand the nature of where the field is at the time. All of our educational television and radio coproductions make extensive use of advisers. We rely on them heavily and we spend a very great deal of time making certain we get the right advice and we often double check the advice through the use of reference panels. But I am not certain how I can directly relate the use of the word `competency' to what we do on a day-to-day basis.

Senator FERRIS—Thank you for your very interesting presentation.

CHAIR—Do you see the ABC getting any more, or at all, involved in things like Adult Learners Week?

Mr Perlgut—In the short term, no. I could not tell you offhand when Adult Learners Week is. By the time we find out about these things our programs are scheduled—they are scheduled well in advance. There are some opportunities but I think the opportunities, rather than for individual one-off events, are more of a longer term public awareness possibility. Adult literacy is a good example where, over the course of the last 2½ years, the ABC in conjunction with New South Wales TAFE and the Commonwealth has been very effective in delivering a large—and I think significant—amount of adult literacy tuition through television. Twenty-five thousand copies of the book have been sold and in excess of 41,000 people have rung the 1800 hotline run by the adult literacy information office. Those are the sorts of things

to look at, on a long-term arc of time, rather than individual one-off events.

It is particularly difficult with us when we deal with the fringes of the timetable. Adult education programs run at the moment between 3.30 a.m. and 8.30 a.m. weekdays. It is not necessarily the easiest time to grab people's attention as to upcoming events. It is better for us to take a bit of a longer term perspective, rather than going for the king hit and trying to put a lot of effort into that when we are up against major dramas and things like that.

CHAIR—That is really an interesting comment because of the dimension that is sometimes discussed in various committees or groups, particularly the community, about the community education capacity or capability, I suppose, of television—let alone our ABC. That is commented on interestingly by what you have just said; that the community education dimension of a television station might necessarily be limited because programs are set so far ahead or there is no timeslot when you could include it, for example.

Mr Perlgut—These things happen occasionally. A good example would be International Literacy Day which, by my recollection, is in early September each year. Once upon a time Channel 10 used to run an American drama on International Literacy Day. I am not certain that very many people noticed, however, but they did it, they had the rights to the movie. I am not speaking against the idea of doing events and certainly the idea of community service announcements can be very effective. The `Life. Be in it' program has got behind the adult literacy activities and has been extremely effective in that. So I think the role of community service announcements in promoting educational activities, and adult education in particular, can be very effective if targeted very well. But, once again, it is not necessary to focus on one day, per se. As I said, I think it needs a sustained effort, rather than saying we are going to put it all in one thing.

Yes to publicity and yes to substantial marketing. But we are living in a very noisy world, you might say, in media terms and we have to establish a message which will reach through that noise to the people. It is not always the thing to throw everything we have got up at one point in time; we need to conserve our efforts and use them strategically and carefully.

CHAIR—Thank you for those comments. Those of us who have tried to get representation on television, whether it is for women's sport or whatever, do know that in a noisy world—as you put it—the message often comes across loudest when it comes on television. So maybe what we might have to do is contact the Adult Learners Week and say, `How about knocking on the door of the ABC well in advance?' Let us see what happens, but I do appreciate very much your feedback on that because I think it is a very useful comment.

Thank you so much for coming. It has been interesting. I am not sure whether you initiated this or we did, but I think it is very important, in looking at adult education, that we do consider the contribution made by the ABC. One way or another I think it has been in the adult education game for a very long time. A report on adult education does need to be at least passingly comprehensive, so thank you very much.If there is anything further we might want to contact you about or if you feel `Gosh, I wish I told them that,' please feel free to

contact us.

[4.06 p.m.]

KNIGHTS, Ms Susan Mary, Head of Division of Community and Aboriginal Education, School of Adult Education, University of Technology, PO Box 123, Broadway, New South Wales 2007

TENNANT, Professor Mark Cameron, Professor in Adult Education, Faculty of Education, University of Technology, PO Box 123, Broadway, New South Wales 2007

CHAIR—The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific question in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may, indeed, subsequently be made public by order of the Senate. The committee has before it submission No. 76. Is it the wish of the committee that the document be received as evidence and authorised for publication? There being no objection, it is so ordered. Is there any other material that you might like to provide for the committee at this stage?

Prof. Tennant—I just wanted to point out that neither of us were authors of the submission that you have—submission No. 76. I believe that submission was prepared by Associate Professor Roger Morris and that he has already spoken to that submission in a previous meeting of this inquiry, although I am happy to talk to elements of that if you wish to follow up on that. What I do have is something to table, but it is by way of introductory comments and remarks of a general nature on adult education related to the inquiry.

CHAIR—Is it the wish of the committee that the document be incorporated in the transcript of evidence? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

The document read as follows—

CHAIR—If you would like, you may make some opening comments, then we will field questions.

Prof. Tennant—I know it has been a long day for you. My colleague has been here all day and she has assured me that you are probably very tired at this stage. Looking over my submission, my colleague tells me that some of these items have been covered before. Would you like me to take about three minutes and go through it?

CHAIR—That would be great, thank you.

Prof. Tennant—I will try and do it in three minutes. It will be slightly disjointed but you have the full text. In my submission I talk generally about some of the things that I believe have affected ACE in Australia since the report *Cinderella*, which I prefer to call the emergence of adult and community education—the report, that is. One of the first things I say which has been covered, I believe, has to do with the increasing and renewed interest in adult education as a vehicle for addressing national priorities. I think there is a lot of evidence of that and that is on the rise. Priorities include increasing levels of literacy, the formation of adaptable and multi-skilled workers, the creation of an equitable multicultural society, promotion of public debate on key issues and so on.

As such, adult education has been reconfigured away from its strong British liberal tradition, and no doubt you have heard testimony about that. The various studies that have occurred since 1991 bear testimony to that. I start with that general comment.

I then make the comment that, in your first term of reference, you ask what structural changes have occurred within the ACE sector and what impact have they had. I think some of the changes which are most important are the general changes in education and training, and I believe there have been some comments on those general changes. I summarise those in my paper, but I will just pick up on some of them.

I think the net effect of a lot of these changes in the education and training reform area has been that they have led to things like open and competitive training markets and an emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness. We can see that in the desire to have more measurable outcomes in vocational or equity terms, and we can see that in better management training and so on.

We have naturally flowing from that increased competition and the desire for the adoption of common standards. I think, even in the equity program area, we can see an emphasis on vocational outcomes across the board. We are increasingly seeing links between the different educational sectors—between school, TAFE, universities and so on—and a move to establish more flexible pathways of learning, routes to skill formation and so on. That is my commentary on the general changes in education and training which have had an impact on adult and community education.

Then I have a section where I identify four areas of impact on adult and community

education. The first has to do with the positioning of adult education within the vocational education agenda, and I believe a number of comments have been made on that already. Adult education is changing in its nature because of, in a sense, its desire to position itself within the vocational educational agenda. So you have more links with industry, the move towards accreditation, the formal assessment that goes with that, the adoption of a more business management approach, competitive tendering, my role in the professionalisation of adult educators, the vocationalisation of education provision and so on.

So a real issue for adult education is how to preserve its identity as a form of education which goes beyond the seemingly narrow aims of producing skilled and flexible workers, sustainable economic growth or improved international competitiveness. That is one major issue for adult education. I have four of these; I will go to the second now.

The second area is access and equity. I think we can say pretty confidently—although the figures are not comparable between last year and 1991—that there has been substantial growth in the participation of adults in educational provision, whether it be in CPE courses, workplace training, basic literacy and numeracy, ESL, preparatory access courses, general adult education or whatever.

It is still quite clear that we need to address access issues. I think you have probably had testimony to date about the participation rates—that is, who participates in adult and community education and who does not. You might want to ask some questions about that, but I think you have had testimony on that. That is an issue that has to be addressed through pedagogy and curriculum reform as much as anything else.

As for the third area, I think adult education is in a really good position to influence pedagogical strategies in its neighbouring educational sectors—in higher education, TAFE and so on. With the introduction of the quality audit and so on, universities are having a look at their educational practices and they have really discovered some of the time-honoured practices of adult education. So adult education, in a sense, is leading the field from a pedagogical point of view.

Universities are asking questions, such as, `How do we utilise the experiences of learners? How do we involve learners in determining the content and pace of their learning? What does self-managed or self-directed learning mean? How can we introduce problem based learning? Can we use peer learning strategies? What is the role of reflection on practice or experience? What alternative methods of assessment do we have?' As universities are asking these questions, adult education has some of the answers to them—or at least it can certainly contribute to the debate on all of them.

We see that in reports such as Philip Candy's report. I think it was called `Developing lifelong learners through undergraduate education' and was produced in 1994. The principal author of that report, Philip Candy, has a background in adult education. He is an academic adult educator who has been asked to talk about the notion of lifelong learning in the undergraduate curriculum. It is obvious in that report that he brings to bear a lot of his

background in adult education. I think adult education also has a great potential to enhance the debate on deliberations in the current higher education review. No doubt, there will be people putting their minds to that.

The fourth area I want to talk about is creating a lifelong learning society. While it is true that reforms in the vocational education and training sector have supported a lifelong learning society, I think that those lifelong learning ideas need to be explored a great deal further. We need to move them beyond the vocational arena, particularly into public education, education for older people, and so on.

This whole idea of lifelong education and lifelong learning has a long history internationally, especially in those agencies such as UNESCO and the OECD. In that context, I think it is important that Australia does have a very strong presence in the forthcoming Hamburg conference, which is a UNESCO conference on adult education—the world conference on adult education—which is only held once every 12 years or so.

The only other comment I wanted to make is on the role of the universities, but you might have particular questions you want to ask me about that. Obviously, we have a professional development role, both formal courses and non-award courses. We have a research role, and we have formed a number of partnerships with adult education agencies. We do see that our role is to disseminate knowledge concerning adult education policies and practices and research to the international community. I am happy to comment on Roger's paper, which is submission 76.

CHAIR—Thank you. Ms Knights?

Ms Knights—Being here all day, I have a feeling of wanting to comment on many things that other people have said, but I will not do that, except to say that—

CHAIR—You can if you wish. You can critique all the other witnesses or you could critique the committee.

Ms Knights—It must be the academic tendency to be feeling as though you are giving feedback reports. I was just trying to think of what other things needed to be said. One of the major things is this danger of people, whose focus and organisational survival depends on their role as providers, having a rather narrow view of what community education might be about.

From our position in the university, one of the important things for us to be informing, both upwards and outwards, is that community education is broader than formal programs provided by specific providers. I really was shocked at the ABC document, as I read it, and presentation, as I heard it. I know they have a lot of turnover and so on, but the ABC Radio National program, *Connexions*, was a world first in terms of its five days a week community adult education provision and interaction with the field. At that time I managed to persuade our faculty to buy several months worth of tapes. That will have to be written up and researched as a really significant contribution to community adult education in its time. Of

course, it disappeared and moved.

Members of that team now work on *Australia talks back*. The audience for *Australia talks back* would be far more than any of those designated adult education programs. You have to just see the difference between talkback in terms of ABC Radio National *Australia talks back*. That is an education exercise. Each program is planned so that there are expert speakers and opportunities. That is dialogic education. That is what community education ought to be about. If the ABC does not even realise that is what it is doing, it is a bit depressing.

As head of the division of community and Aboriginal education in our area, obviously I have strong interests in what our role can be—non-Aboriginal educators—in assisting and working with Aboriginal educational institutions. We actually have the strongest record for graduating Aboriginal students of any kind of university education in Australia, as I understand it, but certainly in adult education. So we have worked long and hard to establish Aboriginal lectureships in our areas and to learn from our Aboriginal colleagues how we can make our programs accessible and sensible for Aboriginal adult educators. And I think we have been successful in doing that.

Jack Beetson is a graduate of our program, and I absolutely support what he is working towards in terms of Aboriginal controlled education. That needs to exist but, at the same time, all of the provision that is there for non-Aboriginal people needs to be there for Aboriginal people as well if they wish.

Jack and his group are not looking to set up a completely parallel system. But the work that can happen in Aboriginal controlled education, I think, is the best hope of contradicting these generations of education deprivation that the Aboriginal adults now have not received. They have not grown up with a proper education. So we need to work with the adults, and they will work most happily, I think, in Aboriginally appropriate settings, and that is a pathway that needs to be there. Then those of us working in mainstream institutions need to be aware of the needs of Aboriginal students coming into our programs.

CHAIR—Could you replace the word `Aboriginal' with `women', `non-English speaking backgrounds', `disability'?

Ms Knights—Certainly. I think the issue is about making provision for homogenous groups of particular groups of students. Our Aboriginal students have the opportunity—they do not have to do it this way—to study in Aboriginal groups. So there are classrooms of Aboriginal students. I think that that contributes to their learning. It removes a whole lot of distractions in terms of interacting with non-Aboriginal people for that particular moment in time and allows them to work with a classroom full of people who understand the issues. They can then learn and move on. I think the same opportunity is usefully offered to women. Women-only learning opportunities in the community—not as a permanent separatism but just to be available from time to time—have a strong educational value.

CHAIR—Thank you for that. Have you finished your comments, because I might move us to a few questions? I am very interested in influencing pedagogical strategies. I love a word like `pedagogical'. I will have to go home and look it up. Teaching methodology, is it? What does `pedagogical' actually mean?

Prof. Tennant—Teaching methodology, yes.

CHAIR—I had the feeling that I needed to be clear about this one. Will you be making a submission to the university inquiry—the higher education review?

Prof. Tennant—I will, in my capacity with the AAACE, be working on that, yes.

CHAIR—It certainly seems to me, from what you are saying here, that it is an interesting thought that adult education might care to comment on a review of higher education. I certainly think, from the points that you have highlighted here, that it would be a most interesting exercise. We cannot urge you to do it, but I think from what we have been learning in this review of where ACE is up to, particularly following the *Come in Cinderella* report, that many of the points that people have told us are valuable in education for lifelong learning, and what have you, are so different from what you get when you get a packaged education, whether it is at school or in universities. Some of the best education is probably done in preschools, where it does not come packaged in the same way. So these points that you have spelt out here are, I think, very interesting because they are some of the characteristics that people put a lot of value on in adult and community education.

In talking about adult education now being well placed to influence other sectors, though, you are not necessarily telling us how adult and community education needs to be placed. You might be saying that it is a good thing, but it is sort of hanging out here, it does not have too much infrastructure, it does not have too many people who passionately believe in it and it does not have a large bureaucratic infrastructure at the Commonwealth level. It does have a bit of an understanding in New South Wales; it has an ACE policy. What would you be saying to us might be needed to strengthen, if at all, the ACE sector so that some of the things it has to offer other sectors might be strengthened?

Prof. Tennant—In a sense, I always try to split my roles when I talk about the ACE sector. As an academic who is interested in adult education and adult learning, I think more broadly than the ACE sector as such. That is why I feel we are in a reasonable position to comment on higher education, being involved in higher education but also having a broad remit to understand adult learning wherever it occurs. There is a lot of adult learning in higher education.

CHAIR—That is nice to hear.

Prof. Tennant—I think there are a lot of adults in higher education anyway. There are some things one could implement which would actually strengthen the whole interest in adult education, broadly defined, and there are some things one could do to strengthen the ACE

sector as such. I think they are probably two different strategies. There is a desperate need—this is from my perspective and, admittedly, perhaps even vested interest—for research in adult and community education or adult education, more broadly. The establishment of an institute was mooted in 1991. I still think that that is appropriate. If you find in your inquiry that other people think it is appropriate, I think that would be a useful thing to look at.

One could say that universities have an infrastructure for research and so on, but adult education is not really separately identified as a priority area. It is an area which has a tradition of applied research. The kind of research that can influence policy decisions is of an applied nature. It is very hard to get ARC grants through such research and so on. So I think some kind of infrastructure to support research in the area would be very useful, especially collaborative research, whereby the research agency or university collaborates with maybe one of the coordinating authorities in each state, or whatever it might be—the kind of research that I think we have been doing with ACE in New South Wales. That is an important area for support.

I could go on, I suppose. I do not know whether Susan wants to speak. I do not know whether you are asking me questions. Between us, we can probably answer your questions.

Senator CARR—We have heard that there is a number of things that we can do. Particularly when we are speaking to witnesses from universities, research is very high on the list. I am very interested in your submissions, including Professor Morris's submission, on the issue of professional development. It seems to me that there are arguments for and against greater levels of professional development, in particular professional training of teachers. At a personal level, I do not think much of the arguments against. But what is it that would strengthen the system in terms of professional development? Is there a capacity to strength this sector of education by encouraging greater levels of professional development? That is the first question. Will it actually benefit?

Ms Knights—I think that it can be a wholly positive move. I think that increased professional development has been a feature even since the Cinderella program. Where professional development is seen as dangerous is when it becomes an excluding mechanism. I think one of the strengths of community adult education has been its openness, not just to students but also to teachers. People in community based providers have been able to call on expertise, whether or not that expertise has a qualification attached to it.

The way that the field has developed—and it is particularly a strength of the Australian system, and I come from the UK and I know about North America, too—what we have is the opportunity for people to become adult educators almost inadvertently and maybe even without realising it because they possess some sort of expertise and they find themselves being asked to teach adults. Then there is the opportunity—of course, I am most aware of our own programs—to undertake academic development to support that work. If someone discovers that adult education is something that they want to do, programs for professional development then have to be accessible for the teachers.

Those programs also have to be flexibly delivered because people are teaching. I am one of those people. In the latest HECS rises, we were at least in the lowest. I think it has halved our Aboriginal applications this year, but we cannot tell because they are enrolling today. We have only half as many offers out to Aboriginal students in our programs. We cannot yet tell how that is going to work out, but we fear that is because of the cuts. I am sorry; that was a diversion. The form of teaching has to recognise that these are people who are already practitioners. They are already working in the field.

Senator CARR—I might engage you on that point because Senator O'Brien and I were discussing this at lunch time. Senator O'Brien has been involved in the trade union movement, and I have taught in a tech school so I am used to working with what we used to call `tradies'. It seems to me that professional development works well for full-time employees. But how does it work on top of the issues you raise about accessibility and frightening people away from adult education if they are obliged to undertake an academic course in study and they had been a plumber? How does it work for the part timer? Where do you start if you are going to develop an industry wide professional development program? How do you allow people to participate in a professional development program that benefits them as well as the industry?

Ms Knights—It certainly helps if the employers are on-side. You may know that New South Wales TAFE has been sending its newly appointed staff to us for many years. If employers can offer some support, that is a help, but that is likely to be less and less the case. I think the flexible delivery of programs allows people to take on as much as they can sensibly fit into their part-time work. Particularly, it seems to me that the academic input has to be closely linked with the real life work that people are doing. Our programs are available only to people who are already practitioners in the field—at least they have the priority for the places that are available. A third of their course has to be related to their teaching work. So they are not doing a full academic program completely divorced from what they are doing in the field. We are trying to integrate the two.

Prof. Tennant—From my observations and experience, part-timers really welcome professional development, not necessarily formal professional development but certainly informal professional development—informal meaning not necessarily leading to some kind of qualification. That has been my experience. I do not see that as a problem, but I think it needs to be resourced in some way. The best way to resource it is to provide and develop good educational packages with all those features of flexible access.

Senator CARR—But is there any empirical evidence that you actually improve the quality of teaching by having trained educators by trained teachers? Is there any empirical evidence that in the adult education field a plumber teaching a plumbing course who has access to theoretical models of teaching—actually gets taught how to teach—improves the quality of his or her teaching?

Prof. Tennant—You might ask the same about lawyers. With any professional qualification, there is always an issue of how that contributes to one's expertise. I am not sure

that it is even worth conducting studies on that question. It might be worth doing that, but there is—

Senator CARR—I am surprised that nothing has been done. Is that what you are saying?

Prof. Tennant—I think there is an assumption in our society in all fields of professional work that professional training is important to the expertise associated with that work. I think that assumption carries over into adult education as well. I know it is a disputed thing about teaching. Some people, even some noted educators, especially from the private school sector, advocate that—

Senator CARR—Teachers are born and not made.

Prof. Tennant—Exactly. I am sure that some teachers are like that, but there are a set of skills, which are pretty identifiable, which teachers need to develop. Professional programs identify those skills. I would not be interested in doing it, but I am sure one could provide the hard evidence for that quite easily.

Senator CARR—But you are in no doubt that it would improve the quality of teaching if there is professional development?

Prof. Tennant—On aggregate, yes. There is absolutely no question about it. There will be some individuals who have no training who are better teachers than some people who have some training. But, on aggregate, I have absolutely no doubt that that would be the case, as I believe it would be the case with dentists, carpenters, plumbers and so on. It is really not a question that bears thorough empirical investigation unless there was a crucial decision being made on it, in which case it would bear thorough empirical investigation.

CHAIR—Maybe a university review might at last look at the quality of teaching in universities, which are, by and large, extraordinarily uneven. There are people who may be making wonderful research, but there are some absolutely dreadful drongos passing as teachers in our universities. Students will tell you that very clearly, and they can tell you that within a week or two, but still our institutions do not quite know how to address that, or at least have not taken steps to. That is a very interesting point.

Senator CARR—Academics, I have found, are horrified at the thought of having to be required to have professional qualifications like school teachers.

Ms Knights—Our faculty is one that does not share that view.

CHAIR—Can I get back to a point that you were both making in response to Senator Carr a minute ago—that is, that adult education is its own worst and best enemy. It is flexible, it is different and it does have lots of lovely things to offer, but it is always the micky, the poor cousin. It has no money and most other academics spend a lot of time mocking adult

education and community education. It is like the lollipop end of education.

We have an absolute contradiction here—that there is no bureaucracy, there is no policy and there is no weight of research and data to substantiate the virtues that you have just elaborated and, at the same time, a need in some ways for these to be incorporated. How are we going to get these two contradictory ends of the ACE thing together—apart from our report, of course?

Senator CARR—That should solve all the problems.

Ms Knights—Yes, well, the last one did such a good job. One thing that interests me is the general admiration that seems to be around, in a greater or lesser respect, of Scandinavian societies. For example, community based, non-accredited adult learning through the folk high schools and so on is still, even now with their difficult circumstances, just seen as part of the social fabric. It is seen as the provision of opportunities for adults to go on learning through their lives. Just as we would take holidays and do other things that are part of what we expect, the members of the Scandinavian adult public expect to spend some time in folk high schools. When we talk to colleagues from Scandinavia, they say, `Of course, it does help because two-thirds of our parliamentarians will have been in a folk high school in the last five to six years because just everybody would have.' Somehow it is part of the social fabric; and that is not the case here.

CHAIR—No, we have not got that far. In fact, we have some other battles to deal with. I think you made the point before that since the *Cinderella* report, and particularly since the Working Nation document and perhaps prior to that, there has been a very significant shift or hanging of the adult education tag on the peg of accreditation and training, particularly associated with jobs. That has moved away from the adult community end of neighbourhood houses and so on. There has been much more a shift towards adult and community education as part of vocational education. Indeed, leave out the ANC and put in VNE. How much of this skewing is something we have to undo or counterbalance? Or is it a good thing and should we be pursuing it even more? Either or both?

Prof. Tennant—There are different points of view expressed about that within the ACE sector and no doubt if you had asked that question to others you would get differing views on it. I do not think the trend has to be redressed at this stage. In a conversation recently with Sam Thomas, I asked about the level of accredited courses in New South Wales and I think the figure she gave me was that out of six million contact hours in New South Wales something like half a million were in that accredited type, which is one-twelfth, which is eight per cent or so. It really is a small part of it.

CHAIR—But something like 100 per cent of the dollars go to those 500,000 places. That is the really big crunch. This is the difficulty I have. Perhaps I am not asking the questions in a coherent way. What we have is a commitment to adult and community education in words, but the dollars are following one-twelfth of the contact hours in New South Wales for adult and community education. Is that balance all right, in your view, or

does this committee need to take some long hard look at that kind of allocation of resources?

Prof. Tennant—Are you talking about government dollars?

CHAIR—Yes, Commonwealth dollars.

Prof. Tennant—Of course, that is skewed in that way because other areas have a capacity to pay, based on the user pays principle. I am sorry to ask you a question, but does that include courses like labour market programs and so on? Does that fall within that ambit?

CHAIR—Quite a few of them did, yes. The trouble is that what has happened is that there has been an emphasis towards preparing people for work by vocational training, getting ready to work or in work and upgrading skills so that all the courses in TAFE, for example, that might have been other than directly that are now fee for service—I think `user pays' is better—and lots of adult and community education courses in neighbourhood houses and so on are now courses that people have to pay for. The big dollar items are staying with the vocational training.

Prof. Tennant—I imagine they are staying with vocational training because they are targeted towards vocational training and the money would not be available otherwise for general adult education purposes. I would like to see the redress come through resourcing other than vocational training and education courses, in other words, the other 92 per cent. Obviously I would like to see that redressed. I do not think eight per cent of delivery is a significant inroad into the traditional role of ACE at all. I think it is a useful thing to have accredited courses in ACE because at least the students can see the beginnings of a pathway towards accreditation and so on. To see that within the ACE providers is a useful thing. My answer is yes, it does seem skewed in terms of the way the money is spent, but how to address that is to not to necessarily withdraw the money from—

Senator CARR—Could I put it to you another way. Why should the Commonwealth fund non-accredited courses, given that these are public moneys? Shouldn't there be some measure of accountability in terms of quality control and various other matters that go to the provision of a service on behalf of the public?

Prof. Tennant—I can only answer that in a general way in the sense that, while accreditation provides a certain level of quality control, there are other quality control mechanisms that you can introduce. Education which is non-formal, informal or not accredited is still educational in the sense that it still has the potential to have the same kinds of outcomes as education in any of the sectors. As you have no doubt been told before, the return on the educational dollar invested from the Commonwealth in ACE is in fact much greater than the dollar invested anywhere else in terms of provision, the number of students, turnstile numbers and all the rest.

The receipt of education has a public good component, and I think the public good component in adult education is as great as the public good in fully accredited courses at

universities. You could put that as a proposition anyway and argue around that, but I think there is a public component. It does not just solely benefit the individual, put it that way, and I think that is the argument around that issue.

Ms Knights—Another possible argument about that issue is the fact that public money is invested in a whole lot of activities that are not purely economic—in cultural activities, in sporting activities, in the Olympics, which is partly economic, and so on.

Senator CARR—Are you saying there is no general humanities based program that is not purely utilitarian? Accredited courses go right across the range, and they go to the liberal education issues as well as the labour market or purely skilled based vocational market.

Ms Knights—But accredited programs that do not have specific vocational outcomes are still likely to be provided on a cost recovery basis.

Senator CARR—Not funded by Commonwealth moneys.

Ms Knights—Yes. If the vocational outcomes are the criteria for Commonwealth funding, you will miss out important areas like health, programs that meet the needs of our ageing population—if you have talked to U3A, they will have told you that—cultural activities, reconciliation activities and environmental activities. So there are a lot of significant areas of public life that are not specifically about jobs, and I think they deserve funding. But it is not a question of course funding. I think the financial investment needs to be in infrastructure and outreach, and those are the areas where you cannot have specific performance indicators. The work to reach those who do not normally take part in adult education—those who have not had the initial educational success that makes them most likely to pay their own money for it and so on or to feel confident about it—and to get them on the pathway is something that needs to be funded, and it will not be funded by the non-participants. It is at the moment funded by the small amount of surplus from the participants who are paying for themselves, and that is where it is so difficult to have a measurable outcome.

CHAIR—We are going to have to wind this up, unfortunately. Some of the things that you have raised are really terrible important, and I thank you very much for your additional submission to submission No. 76. Senator Ferris, in the interests of time and efficiency, has put a couple of questions here to leave with you. I wonder if you might give them an answer, as we would say in estimates, on notice. Is that reasonable; do you mind tackling those? There are not too many pages.

Ms Knights—Footnotes.

CHAIR—Yes, somewhere between a footnote and a full essay. I certainly think that this question of pedagogy is terribly important. One of my experiences illustrates it very well. I used to belong to a running group. One day they brought along a physiotherapist, who proceeded to give us a lecture under a tree for 10 minutes on something or other. My very

good friend hissed in my ear, `She is now an adult educator', or was it a he? That was absolutely true. It was like, blah, here we were all being spoken to, all feeling as though we should have been sitting at our desks or doing something. It was really very interesting. It was a pedagogy, or a teaching methodology, that went down like a big lump of lead.

We might want to just talk to you a little more about this notion of what actually assists with the adult education pedagogy. Is it because you are talking to adults? Is it because of how you treat the students? Is it where you do it? Does teaching under a gum tree make a difference to teaching in a classroom, for example? Just what is it that contributes to this pedagogy? Is it the things you have described, which is about being learner centred and respecting of the learner? Is it relational? There are a number of those things that we might want to come back to you about if there is anything further you might like to add.

We will make sure that you get these other questions. There are only six. I think that they are probably very much about what you have been talking about.

Thank you very much indeed. It is very good that we have had you two to finish out the day. Thank you, Ms Knights, for your tolerance of being here all day. To close out, you might actually like to give us your critique, not only of the other witnesses but how the committee has measured up to its task. We do thank you, because we have to write a report that is five years on for adult and community education. I think we can say that it is here to stay, but I think it is possible that we still have a bit of a task to get the whole world to know that and how best to do it.

Committee adjourned at 4.53 p.m.