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SENATE

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS
REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference: National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy

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SENATE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Monday, 1 November 2010

Members: Senator Back (Chair), Senator Marshall (Deputy Chair) and Senators Bilyk, Cash, Cormann and Hanson-Young

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Adams, Barnett, Bernardi, Birmingham, Bishop, Boswell, Boyce, Brandis, Bob Brown, Carol Brown, Bushby, Cameron, Colbeck, Coonan, Crossin, Eggleston, Faulkner, Ferguson, Fierravanti-Wells, Fielding, Fifield, Fisher, Forshaw, Furner, Heffernan, Humphries, Hurley, Hutchins, Johnston, Joyce, Kroger, Ludlam, Ian Macdonald, McEwen, McGauran, Mason, Milne, Minchin, Moore, Nash, O'Brien, Parry, Payne, Polley, Pratt, Ronaldson, Ryan, Scullion, Siewert, Stephens, Sterle, Troeth, Trood, Williams, Wortley and Xenophon

Senators in attendance: Senators Back, Bilyk, Cash and Marshall

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

- (a) the conflicting claims made by the Government, educational experts and peak bodies in relation to the publication of the National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing;
- (b) the implementation of possible safeguards and protocols around the public presentation of the testing and reporting data;
- (c) the impact of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime on:
 - (i) the educational experience and outcomes for Australian students,
 - (ii) the scope, innovation and quality of teaching practice,
 - (iii) the quality and value of information about student progress provided to parents and principals, and
 - (iv) the quality and value of information about individual schools to parents, principals and the general community; and
- (d) international approaches to the publication of comparative reporting of the results, i.e. 'league tables'; and
- (e) other related matters.

WITNESSES

CALDWELL, Professor Brian, Managing Director and Principal Consultant, Educational Transformations	1
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Committee met at 11.48 am**CALDWELL, Professor Brian, Managing Director and Principal Consultant, Educational Transformations**

CHAIR (Senator Back)—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into the administration and reporting of the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy, or NAPLAN, testing, which was referred to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee on 13 May 2010 for inquiry and report. The committee tabled an interim report on 27 July 2010. The committee re-adopted the reference in the 43rd Parliament, and the new reporting date is 24 November 2010. The terms of reference for the inquiry include, firstly, the conflicting claims made by government education experts and peak bodies in relation to the publication of NAPLAN testing; secondly, the implementation of possible safeguards and protocols around the public presentation of testing and reporting data; thirdly, the impact of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime; and, fourthly, international approaches to the publication of comparative reporting.

This is the second hearing in this inquiry for the committee, which has been convened today to hear evidence from Professor Brian Caldwell, who was unable to attend the first hearing on Friday, 29 October. Professor, thank you for making time for the committee.

Before we start taking evidence, I advise all witnesses appearing before the committee that you are protected by parliamentary privilege with respect to your evidence. This gives you special rights and immunities, because people must be able to give evidence to committees without prejudice to themselves. Any act which disadvantages a witness as a result of evidence given before the Senate or any of its committees is treated as a breach of privilege. You may request that any part of your evidence be heard in private. However, I remind you that giving false or misleading evidence to the committee may constitute a contempt of the Senate. You are all aware of the rules about mobile phones.

I welcome Professor Brian Caldwell, Managing Director of Educational Transformations. Do you have any comments on the capacity in which you appear?

Prof. Caldwell—I am Managing Director as well as Principal Consultant of Educational Transformations, and it is in that capacity that I am providing evidence. I am also a professorial fellow at the University of Melbourne, where I was Dean of Education from 1998 to 2004.

CHAIR—I thank you for your submission and invite you to make a brief opening statement before I ask committee colleagues to proceed to questions.

Prof. Caldwell—Thank you. My areas of interest lie in education policy, leadership, finance, change and international comparative studies in school education. I have a continuing interest in teacher education and I am currently co-director of the Review of Teacher Education and Induction Project for the Queensland government. I have monitored developments in assessment and testing in different countries since 1988. I would affirm the views that were expressed in my submission as set out in my co-authored book *Why not the best schools?* and the two issues of SCOPE, the Strategic Commentary on Policy in Education. In particular, I would affirm the position I took in opposing tests such as NAPLAN if they led to the publication of league tables. I have taken that position since monitoring initiatives of the Thatcher government in the UK in the early 1990s. I became even more strongly opposed when I saw what had transpired in England in the intervening years.

Let me give an example. Each year the results of national tests in England are published as supplements in all of the daily newspapers and one would find right up until the present time, for example, that all 13,000 primary schools in England are ranked from one to 13,000 from best performing to least performing. I became particularly concerned last year when I saw that, if you accessed the website for the national test results in England, you found a paid link for an Australian coaching company that would coach students to do tests. I then looked at the website of that company and found an advertisement for beyondblue the organisation that deals with depression. I was very concerned at that point least league tables of this kind develop in Australia and those kinds of links on the pages of test results telling us about schools then focus on coaching and then further link with stress or depression whether it be for students, teachers, parents or others. So it was for that reason that I had no hesitation in supporting a boycott of the tests should the same occur in Australia. But I note an accommodation in the recommendations of a recent working party that was established to resolve public and professional concerns. The key issue for me is where to from here with NAPLAN and My School.

I think it is summarised in the key question: are the problems facing Australia so serious that we require students as early as year 3 to complete 40 to 50 mostly multiple choice tests when the information that is furnished and the strategies that should be adopted have been known for at least a decade? I believe that Australia has the best technical expertise of any country to construct and analyse the results of these tests in the persons of Professor Barry McGaw, Chair of ACARA, Dr Peter Hill, its Chief Executive Officer and Professor Geoff Masters, the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council for Education Research. I do not think any country has that level of technical expertise. The issue for me is the policy context in which they are doing their work.

I believe that there are exemplary approaches to the whole issue of testing and reporting in Australia. I would pick out Victoria and Queensland. Internationally, there are exemplary approaches in Finland and New Zealand. As far as Australia is concerned, I was commissioned more than a year ago to provide a report which was to guide the Obama administration in the United States on strategies that that administration might use to turn around schools. Most of my report, which will be published sometime in the next month or two, was focused on Victoria and the approach that they have had for more than a decade—but which continually evolved—for both testing of students at those year levels and also reporting the results to schools and to parents.

As far as Queensland is concerned, I was able to examine the practice there very closely earlier this year when I was invited by the Queensland government to assess a very innovative approach to secondary education in three so-called state academies. I was particularly impressed with the way those schools were using data, system generated, and also the way that they were personalising learning. I note that recently the three academies received a Premier's award for public sector delivery.

So what is the best strategy for the decade ahead? I would like to tender as part of my evidence a scenario to the year 2020 that outlines a preferred approach which I believe will take Australia through a series of transitions to support the transformation of its schools. It reflects findings from the international study that we reported in the book, *Why not the best schools?*. Essentially, I propose a sunset on current approaches to NAPLAN and My School and the adoption of benchmark practice along the lines of high-performing Finland and policy and practice as it is emerging in New Zealand. I would be very happy to read that short scenario, which only takes a couple of minutes to read, later and answer any questions on it. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for that introduction. I will go to questions.

Senator CASH—Professor Caldwell, in your oral submission to the committee you mentioned the exemplary approaches of Victoria and Queensland in relation to the testing of students and the reporting of results. What are the fundamental differences between the My School/NAPLAN arrangement at a federal level and what you say are the exemplary approaches of Victoria and Queensland?

Prof. Caldwell—Victoria has had now for more than a decade—and it has really evolved over 20 years—an approach of systematically testing students at those grade levels 3, 5, 7 and 9 in state based tests. The level of sophistication has increased over that time. The results have always been made available to schools and the school system and are invariably reported in school council reports to parents and the community. The comparisons there are made between the school that is doing the testing and like schools, which is a fairly generally understood classification of schools according to their level of advantage or disadvantage. That approach really has the support of all stakeholders. It is really not a policy issue but it continues to evolve. When I looked around Australia, when I was commissioned to do the research on Australia that would eventually lead into the advice to be given to the Obama administration, it was for that reason that I picked out Victoria as the example of best practice, as it was longstanding.

In the Victorian situation there are none of the highly, as they have proved, contentious approaches to comparing schools across the country. Whilst they may be the same or similar on the ICSEA index they are impalpably different contexts. I think those results are of little value and, if we proceed to what I would hope to be a period of sunset and transition, there would be an improvement on that.

In terms of Queensland, when we were doing the evaluation of the three state so-called academies—these are the three purpose built Queensland senior high schools that are offering only the international baccalaureate—the co-leader of the review and I were astonished at how skilfully the schools were using data on state-wide tests and opinion surveys of parents, students and teachers. Because they were available they were using their own NAPLAN data.

There were two aspects of that. One was the way the schools were able to so skilfully use the data to then set priorities for their own improvement. The second was the way in which the Department of Education and Training in Queensland was making available and facilitating the use of that information. When I look at the kinds of directions we should be going in with our schooling, what I see as being an essential move to personalise the learning of each student, I was also very impressed with those three academies because essentially each student in those schools had their own individual learning plan. That was based not entirely but substantially on information about the student's progress. That is why I picked out those two examples.

Senator MARSHALL—You drew to our attention Victoria and Queensland and comprehensively. But to me that begs the question, based on the evidence that we got from Professor Masters, who you alluded to earlier, that Queensland did quite poorly in terms of NAPLAN. So while they may have a good internal system going on they have fallen behind the Australia-wide benchmark, so much so where they have engaged Professor Masters to look at that and try to determine why. Doesn't that say that there is an important role to test across the whole of the country?

Prof. Caldwell—No, not necessarily. I do not see any inconsistency at all here. There is no question that the Queensland government has a legitimate concern about what it had seen as being a decline in student performance. If you had to pick out a consultant to provide assistance in that then Professor Masters would be that person. Among other things he recommended that schools build a capacity to be able assess well their students and act on the basis of those assessments. You do not need national tests to do that. I would like to come back to that in the context of Finland and New Zealand. There is a link between that and the current commission I have from the Queensland government to conduct a review of teacher education and school induction, because the Queensland minister included in the terms of reference the building of a capacity in all teachers—which means in their initial teacher preparation programs—to assess their students well and then act on the basis of those assessments to focus all of their resources, intellectual and otherwise, on improving the results of students.

I know that Professor Masters had a supplementary report and I believe that he has been able to discern an improvement in Queensland. I should reiterate my view of Professor Masters' expertise—I should say that I am deputy chair of the board of ACER and Professor Masters is its chief executive officer.

Senator CASH—In your submission 'Strategic commentary on policy in education', you state:

... the tests were administered last May. Parents will receive the reports at the end of January, eight months later.

But then you make this comment:

It is hard to conceive of a more educationally reprehensible approach to assessment and reporting.

I put a similar proposition to Dr Peter Hill from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) when he was here on Friday in relation to my concerns about testing being undertaken in one month and parents not receiving the results of that testing until some time later. His evidence was that he did not necessarily have a concern with that because it was only one part of the overall testing of students. How does your comment that 'It is hard to conceive of a more educationally reprehensible approach to assessment and reporting' sit with, say, Dr Hill's evidence that the NAPLAN testing cannot be looked at in isolation?

Prof. Caldwell—I think the time line which I was highly critical of in 2009 has been addressed this year, and that may be a reflection of experience with the administration of NAPLAN, especially since Dr Hill has assumed his position. But I would still stand by the comment that I made last January, which is: you are in fact testing every single student in the country, or that is the intention; the tests are implemented in May and the state-by-state comparisons are not made until December, when there is virtually nobody around; and it is not until the start of the next school year that the results would be available more deeply. When I say 'it is reprehensible' I am saying that that time line is not suited to either a school system or a school acting on the basis of student test results. But I would just say that, yes, we appear to be doing better this year. So there is no inconsistency there. I stand by the comment that I made in January 2010.

Senator CASH—My understanding of the testing this year is that it was undertaken in May and parents did not receive the results until September. Do you still see that time period as being inefficient?

Prof. Caldwell—Yes. This really goes to the heart of the scenario that I would like to address in more detail later. It is possible—and in fact some school systems in Australia are very close to delivering this now—for parents to have online, real-time information about the progress that their sons and daughters are making. If we are interested in monitoring the educational health of the Australian school system and schools, we do not

need to put every single student through a regime of testing and reporting such as the one that has been implemented. We can do that periodically with a sample of students and with a very timely release of results to both the school systems and the schools so that actions can be taken. It is in that regard that I would really stress that, if we are going to follow international best practice in this regard, we look to a country like Finland, which invariably comes top or near the top of the international test of student achievement. Finland has no national tests and no equivalent to the My School website. Indeed, it has no inspection system. Its students perform highly and the gap between its high and low performing students is relatively narrow. When I look at the directions that we ought to be taking in the next decade as a nation, I believe that we should be paying attention to a superior system of monitoring the achievement of students and putting in place a whole series of strategies, some of which Finland has addressed and some of which overlap with the brief that we currently have from the Queensland government about initial teacher education.

Senator MARSHALL—The design of the My School website, according to the evidence we have received so far, went to a lot of trouble to ensure that people were unable to extract league tables from it. Having said that, you will always get people, I suppose, who produce something and claim it be a league table, using whatever information is available. Whether it is true or not or whether they misrepresent their position should not then be used as an argument not to do something. In fact, probably before My School you could find websites that would categorise different schools in different levels. Because some people profess to misrepresent the information on what My School is all about does that necessarily mean My School cannot provide a good conversation between school communities, the school itself and school parents and provide valuable information for parents?

Prof. Caldwell—My response is in two parts. First of all, that initial and fairly uncompromising stance that I took against NAPLAN, should it result in league tables, was based on what I had seen occur in England, and I gave the example before. That is why I stated, again in one of the policy commentaries, that if that approach was to be implemented in Australia then those who opposed the tests that would lead in sequence to that kind of league table would be occupying the high moral ground. I think it is the skilful work of Professor McGaw, Dr Hill and their team—also to a degree the responsibility of the Australian media that, after all, could construct league tables like those that have emerged now for nearly 20 years in England—that it could have occurred but it did not. That is why I was really pleased that the professional concerns were addressed through a working party that had been established at the time and why, in that report card that I prepare from time to time on progress with the education revolution, we were not so tough on the national testing because league tables of that kind did not emerge.

The second part of my response is: why are we assembling such a large, national, bureaucratic, extensively staffed effort to produce information which either we already know or the strategies upon which we should be acting we have known for a decade and when countries that we should be benchmarking against like Finland—and I would like to highlight New Zealand if I might a little later—do not need the national tests. We do need tests. In fact as the scenario to 2020 that I suggested proposes I am calling for more testing and more assessment. But it is assessment of a kind that will not have the, what I think are misleading and unnecessarily complex, presentations and debates such as those around My School, which I think will be with us if another scenario is that they stay in perpetuity. I think we will have endless debates among policy makers and practitioners and academics. When we do not see those debates and we see better use of data in countries like Finland and, I suspect, New Zealand.

Senator MARSHALL—What if I put to you that the My School website was not designed for the educational academic, it was actually designed to be transparent and involve parents and the school community.

Prof. Caldwell—And that should be its top priority too. But it is inevitable, as in any education policy, that those who research and monitor and whose area of academic expertise is policy analysis of assessment would have something to say about it.

Senator MARSHALL—I think Dr Hill made a point worth repeating that, in any case, even if someone did profess to produce league tables, we certainly are not going down the path that they went down in Great Britain and the United States, where if you were seen as a poor performing school you were penalised. I guess the comparison might be if NAPLAN identified weaknesses that are real in any particular school there is money there to assist in addressing that. So the high stakes, for instance, of the testing in the United States and the UK led to a financial penalty. I guess the worst that can happen to you under this system, the NAPLAN system, is that you get added assistance and more funding. What would you say to that?

Prof. Caldwell—The same is also available in both England and the United States and many other countries. The funding formula is usually biased in favour of schools that are faced with very difficult socioeconomic circumstances or educational disadvantages, to help them improve. My comment is twofold. Firstly, there have been disparities in school performance, particularly between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, those in rural and urban areas, and those in high- and low-socioeconomic circumstances. We have known, and state education departments have known, of those disparities for at least a decade. Many of the strategies that are needed to address those disparities are known and in many cases have already been rolled out—and should be rolled out with even greater intensity.

But I do not think there has been any doubt that there have been a number of dysfunctional effects of My School and its administration. I referred in one of my policy commentaries to the situation in England, where there has been narrowing of the curriculum and a large amount of unnecessary coaching of students and teachers doing the tests. But even here in Australia there are areas of concern. I have been involved in the Queensland review of teacher education and the recommendations that are presently in the hands of the minister. We received information from schools that indicated that they did not wish student teachers from universities to come to the schools for their practice teaching in the months immediately before NAPLAN was administered in May. I find that a really serious dysfunction, when we are wanting our student teachers to be deeply embedded in their practical experience in schools, certainly in the early part of the year.

Senator MARSHALL—But would that have been a justifiable concern? Or was there no justification?

Prof. Caldwell—I think it is a dysfunction, when we should have the closest possible partnerships between universities and schools. After all, universities are or should be preparing teachers to assess well and act on the basis of those assessments.

Senator MARSHALL—Yes, but was the concern totally misplaced? Doesn't that say more about the professionalism of the administration of a particular school in coming to a conclusion, if that is unfounded?

Prof. Caldwell—I think that that is an illustration of the pressure, which is a pressure that you would never find in a school system like that of Finland.

CHAIR—Could I ask as an adjunct to that: do you expect that apprehension to be there in second and subsequent years?

Prof. Caldwell—I think a lot would depend, then, on what are the consequences for schools that do not perform well, as evidenced by NAPLAN and My School. I think there could well be apprehension there.

Senator MARSHALL—The point I wanted to make was that just because someone has an irrational or wrong reaction to what is happening does not necessarily mean that what is happening is wrong. We should not be basing our policy making on irrational reactions to it.

Prof. Caldwell—I take that point. That is really why I say let us look at a better policy framework for the way we test, assess and report students.

Senator MARSHALL—We have heard evidence that the stakeholders have come together, that it is going to be an ongoing and developing process to improve and I guess that at some point in time a judgment will be made whether it was successful or not.

Prof. Caldwell—Yes.

Senator MARSHALL—Can I come back and ask you about the correlation between student performance, as measured by NAPLAN, and the school itself. Is there a correlation between student results and the quality of teaching in schools?

Prof. Caldwell—Yes, I think there is almost unanimity among researchers and policymakers that the most important resource of all is the quality of teaching. It was the finding in the McKinsey & Co. report and it was the finding in the six-country report that was contained in our book, *Why not the best schools?*

Senator MARSHALL—A large proportion of the quality of teaching is teacher quality, but it also goes to resourcing and support, both from the school itself and, I suppose, from the system that is supporting the school.

Prof. Caldwell—Yes. It certainly does.

Senator MARSHALL—Is it fair, as simply one element, to say that there is a strong correlation between it and how else can we measure that? Even though one school has had some flaws and there have been some changes made to it, every school is able to put their hand up and say, 'Well, we've been compared with schools

that we shouldn't be compared with.' Let us say, on the whole, that is generally right. Is it not then a fair assessment, if you are being compared with statistically like schools, to be able to actually make a valuation on the quality of the teaching provided by the school compared with the NAPLAN result?

Prof. Caldwell—Yes, but we do not need the whole panoply of national testing, which really very few countries have, when we have the means of doing that right now. Many states and schools do this extremely well anyway. We have lots of documented examples around the country—and we have had for many years—of schools that have not done as well as one would want or expect them to do lifting themselves up through a whole range of measures. This has been done with the use of data, which includes student achievement data—that is where I used the Victorian example—and with excellent system support that has been available to help those schools. But if I now take that out of the Victorian context into, say, the Finnish example—and I understand that Professor Masters referred to this in his evidence, but he also referred to it in his report to the Queensland government—where now every teacher does have a masters degree and is an expert in how to assess, test and act on the results of student assessment, about a seventh of all professional teachers in the school are people who are trained to ensure that no student will fall behind by more than 48 hours. That is the kind of strategy that is going to lift the performance of students and close the gap between our high- and low-performing students. When you look at the 10 recommendations for an education revolution that we made in our book *Why not the best schools?* you see we had 10 strategies to be rolled out over 10 years—they need to work together. You cannot bring about a transformation in schools unless you do have good information about the progress of each and every student almost on a day-to-day basis.

At the same time you need major strategies to build the capacity of the profession, and we are now turning to that in Australia through the agenda of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. We need to place a priority on building the capacity of our school leaders. This is going to be the policy judgment that I think is going to be necessary. At some point we ought to be phasing out or moving to a new plane if we are going to stick to national testing and reporting as we build the capacity of the profession to assist, test, act on, report to parents and transform teaching and learning. We should be able to get to that point by mid decade. Of course, since every school is unique, we need to give the government schools in most states and territories in Australia more autonomy because they have to address a unique mix of student needs. I am pleased to see a national rollout of that will commence in 2015, although I think it ought to commence immediately.

There is a set of strategies. Having addressed the major concern that I raised last year—fortunately, we have not had the devastating league tables that have been highly demoralising to the profession and did not lead to improvement in student learning to any significant extent after the first few years in England—we should be able to move, as New Zealand is moving now, to what I consider to be the most coherent and comprehensive approach to assessment of students that I have seen in any country. I am referring to the Ministry of Education position paper on assessment. It is a magnificently argued, evidence based approach as to how you can integrate assessment from the level of individual student to classroom, to school, to school sector, to level of government. I see no reason why it ought not to succeed because New Zealand had nearly two decades of experience with its education review office, the equivalent of ACARA. It is going to be able to do that without the jarring and potentially dislocating debates of a kind we have had. It all goes to, I hope, a support of the scenario that I would like you to consider as part of my evidence.

CHAIR—Thank you. In the couple of minutes left, my understanding is that the catalyst for NAPLAN to come into existence was a perception that there has not been a significant increase in numeracy and literacy amongst children, particularly at the primary levels. Given that Victoria has been actively involved at least for a decade in a type of testing for their students, and you suggest longer, is it the case that the Victorian education system or the students in the Victorian education system are performing better than the national cohort of students?

Prof. Caldwell—It is difficult to answer that. I have read the NAPLAN profiles and Victoria is doing very well on some if not the majority and is near the top for most of the dimensions. Where the NAPLAN tests address that, other states and territories are doing as well if not better. But I would say that the improvements are marginal and I would predict that unless we get a balanced set of policy initiatives along the lines that we have proposed in the book and which are contained in the scenario we will follow exactly what has happened in England where there was early success with their literacy and numeracy programs. I am referring here to the initiatives of the Blair government, which I monitored very closely. There was improvement and it was fairly rapid improvement. Schools were focusing their attention on literacy and numeracy, targets were set, but then were not met. That led to the resignation of one of the Blair government's most able ministers, Estelle Morris, because those targets were not met. To me there was excessive focus on ways of comparing schools and not

enough attention to the other issues I have identified, mainly the reform of teacher education and building a capacity for each and every teacher, and other professionals who support teachers, to act immediately should a child fall behind, which is the situation we find in Finland.

CHAIR—You have certainly emphasised—and witnesses last Friday emphasised—that it is the quality of the education as much as the number of teachers. You also make the point that New Zealand seems to be way out there and that, in Finland, the vast majority of teachers, if not all teachers, have got master's degrees. Could you comment on a concern which I have, which I think is evident, and that is that we are just not attracting sufficient quality of people to go into teaching. It seems to me that, each year, the universities are having to drop the required level to attract teachers. Many teachers will say to you that not only is it the children that need instruction in literacy and numeracy; in many instances the teachers themselves need it. There has been an issue of teachers' salaries. I know that in my state of Western Australia—and I expect in others—those levels of salary have increased in an attempt to try and attract and retain teachers. What do we need to do better to get that quality of teacher that you refer to as being the Finnish example?

Prof. Caldwell—It is not necessarily salaries, because when you adjust for purchasing power of currency our teaching salaries are probably a little above those of Finland. There is a cultural advantage that Finland enjoys, and that is that for many decades teaching has been a very highly valued profession. The initiatives of the Finnish government, in saying that the level of professional knowledge and skill that you now require if you are really going to make a difference for each and every child requires five years of university preparation—and then making a master's degree a requirement for beginning teachers—lifted the status of the profession quite significantly and, as Geoff Masters points out, and as the McKinsey report also points out, education is one of the top three preferences for those entering university.

But I think there are a range of factors and I think they are built into a number of the recommendations that we provided in *Why not the best schools?* in the 10-point 10-year strategy. One of them is that we certainly needed to, as a matter of urgency, replace most of our school buildings, which were designed for teaching and learning in the 20th century, if not the 19th century. One of the benefits of Building the Education Revolution has in many cases been the building or rebuilding of facilities of a kind that would make young people want to work in this profession, compared to some of the appalling facilities that have existed in many states in Australia. It will be unfortunate if we lose momentum on that particular issue.

On the negative side, I think an unrelenting focus on national testing, narrowly conceived, and public reporting, especially if they lead to any form of league table, will turn people off the profession. We do not have a counterpart to this kind of transparency and scrutiny in any of the other professions. So it is a matter of getting the balance right of a range of policies and keeping NAPLAN—in fact we will probably rename it because it is focusing on literacy and numeracy, whereas the national curriculum is broadening out. Professor McGaw himself has taken the international lead in wanting to build a capacity to assess what I call 21st century skills in terms of problem solving and creativity. In some ways, there is a race against time, but I would be advocating a policy environment that will shift, certainly no later than mid-decade, to get the best possible balance if we are going to achieve the transformation of Australia's schools.

CHAIR—I thank you for your presence here today and for the submission. We do not have time to address your document, but we can accept it being tabled for the committee. I also thank my colleagues, Hansard and the secretariat.

Committee adjourned at 12.34 pm