

**EDUCATION AND HEALTH  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**AN INQUIRY INTO IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES  
FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIANS OF ALL AGES**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2012**

**SESSION TWO**

**Members**

**Dr J.M. Woollard (Chairman)  
Mr P.B. Watson (Deputy Chairman)  
Dr G.G. Jacobs  
Ms L.L. Baker  
Mr P. Abetz**

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**Hearing commenced at 12.23 pm****SAYCE, MS DEBRA****Catholic Education Office Representative, examined:****JACKIEWICZ, MS STEPHANIE****Catholic Education Office Employee, examined:**

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** On behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I would like to thank you for your interest and your appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence for its inquiry into improving educational outcomes for Western Australians of all ages. At this stage I would like to introduce myself and the other members of the committee; it is a bit light on today, but I am Peter Watson, the deputy chair, and on my left is Ms Lisa Baker. On my right are the research staff, Dr Brian Gordon and Miss Lucy Roberts, and Amanda McQuillan from Hansard. The Education and Health Standing Committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal procedure on behalf of the Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. This is a public hearing and Hansard will be making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you could provide the full title for the record. Before we proceed to the questions we have for you today, I need to ask you a series of questions. Have you completed the “Details of Witness” form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet provided with the “Details of Witness” form today?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today’s hearing?

**The Witnesses:** No.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Is there anything you would like to say before we start asking questions? Any statement? No? You are quite happy for us to do the work!

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**Ms Sayce:** Other than to say that Catholic education is about the business of serving young people, and so these sorts of inquiries are really important because we all learn from it and we can enact what is required of us, so thank you for the opportunity.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** No worries. How much autonomy do individual school principals have in the running of their schools, and how are schools funded?

**Ms Sayce:** That was a big question. The governance structure of our Catholic schools is such that the principal is the employer of its staff. Their responsibilities sit under the Catholic Education Commission policies. One thing people say is that the Catholic Education Office says this; well, we actually do not. The governance structure for Catholic education is the Catholic Education

Commission, in which a broad membership of that group occurs. The appointment of our principals; as you can imagine, in the Catholic language we have four regions or four dioceses, and each bishop of each diocese is responsible for their Catholic schools. Uniquely in Australia, Western Australia collectively operates out of one commission, so our bishops in each diocese are very happy to delegate the responsibility of appointment for principals to the Director of Catholic Education, so we undertake a process of application—typically it is a 12-year contract. So each principal, when they are appointed, has a lot of autonomy, but they work within the requirements of the commission policies, which are not as broad as public schools but they certainly are quite broad enough for them to be protected but also to ensure that the educational requirements are met. That is how much autonomy the principal has.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** What are your four regions?

**Ms Sayce:** We have the Kimberley, Geraldton and Bunbury regions, and of course the Perth region as well.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Do you not have an Albany region, or is the Bunbury diocese part of Albany?

**Ms Sayce:** That is part of Bunbury. If I start from the top: the Kimberley diocese has 13 Catholic schools; the Geraldton diocese has 11 Catholic schools; the archdiocese of Perth has 107; and the Bunbury diocese has 27 schools.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** What role does head office have in responding to issues around school attendance, and what roles do the schools have?

**Ms Sayce:** Each school has responsibility for student attendance. If we talk about mainstream in the Perth area—last year I had the opportunity of being in a school—I have complete responsibility for the kids to be at school, unless of course, through the Education Act, they are unable to attend due to illness. In the Kimberley it is a bit trickier because children typically move from one community to another community. We are addressing that through the national partnership project that has been funded through the Australian government. We were looking at a tri-border sort of approach, where we can partner up with South Australia, the Northern Territory and certainly with the Kimberley, so that we are aware, across the jurisdictions, of where children are located. That is our desire and that is what we are working towards. If the Catholic Education Office was to be asked how many kids are at Mulan, which is one of our more remote schools, we could find out very quickly by contacting the principal, but that movement of kids up and down is a bit troublesome.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Do you know what the average attendance rate is in the Kimberley?

**Ms Sayce:** Offhand I could not say, but it varies significantly depending on what is happening in the community or outside the community. If it is a period of sorry time, kids will come from everywhere. We are always mindful of, on census dates, where the kids are. Our schools try to ensure that the kids are particularly at school as much as possible, but it really depends on what is happening within the community. That is not to abrogate our responsibility; some of the principals will have particular intervention to actually get on a bus and go around and pick up the kids. Some schools, such as Balgo, have an engagement officer to go —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Actually the one in Halls Creek goes out, does he not?

**Ms Sayce:** Yes, he does—Dean Savoia.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** We met him when we were up there.

**Ms Sayce:** Is that the role of a principal? In that instance he is making some decisions—“I need to go to those families.” He has been trying very hard in the last month because we have some funding for those schools to go and find where the kids are at—to sort of find someone within the community to go and get the kids. We try in earnest and our principals try in earnest to ensure that the kids are at school. Sometimes the community has acknowledged that. I know in Balgo last year

the community really talked about it. As I said, I was in a school last year and we actually set up a partnership with Balgo and that particular area—Mulan and Billiluna—and we were drawing kids down for secondary education. We set up boarding, and last year was the first formal year. One of the issues is getting the kids back at the start of the school term. We actually sent staff up there to get the kids onto the plane. Parents—the community—want the kids on the plane, but sometimes the kids will get to the plane and run, and that is the reality; that is what happens. So the schools try very hard to get the kids back. Is it working? In some instances very successfully; in others, not so.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** What is your average attendance rate for Catholic schools?

**Ms Sayce:** Across the 158 schools?

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Sayce:** Probably very high. Regionally, the Kimberley would probably be the key issue of kids coming along to school.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Have you got an average of what it is for all schools?

**Ms Sayce:** I could not tell you offhand.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Would it be possible to get that as supplementary information for us, please?

**Ms Sayce:** Sure.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** We will talk about the Kimberley. Some of the issues that schools mentioned when we went up there are that the communities want to have a place where the kids can stay from Monday to Friday and then go back to the communities—an away place in the school grounds.

**Ms Sayce:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Have you looked at that through the Catholic school system?

**Ms Sayce:** No, we have not, partly because in particularly our remote schools, where we are the only educational provider, that school is right in the middle of the community. If I use Balgo as an example, because I was there last year, that school is located centrally and so that is not a focus of ours. We do, as I said, offer opportunities. As the college I was at, La Salle College, they looked at bringing the kids down, educating them during the school year, and they go back every school holiday. We have opened up Clontarf Aboriginal College hostel now on the school site in Bentley, and that is giving opportunities for boarding for up to 80 beds.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** So is this part of Gerard Neesham's Clontarf Academy?

**Ms Sayce:** No, this is a Catholic Education school.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** So you have your own academy?

**Ms Sayce:** No, we have Clontarf Aboriginal College, and the academy was born out of what has been happening at Clontarf over the years with Gerard Neesham, but it is a Catholic school first and foremost. The hostel is there to provide educational opportunities for the boys, and now they are moving to boarding in the second semester for the girls because the hostel has been built on the site.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** So that is just for the school; it has nothing to do with Clontarf?

[12.33 pm]

**Ms Sayce:** That is, you mean the —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Do the kids from that school go to Clontarf?

**Ms Sayce:** Yes, absolutely—it is right on-site of the school grounds.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** But do they go to the academy?

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**Ms Sayce:** Some students do; some students are drawn. Certainly, working cooperatively with Gerard Neesham to get the children to come along to school because that seems to be the hook—the football and sport. Certainly, Ricky Grace and the girls’ basketball academy, that seems to be a bit of a hook because kids love sport. But we work in partnership.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** What is the relationship between yourselves and the education department?

**Ms Sayce:** A very close relationship. We work, particularly with the Australian curriculum and also with AISWA—Association of Independent Schools of WA—in partnership so the delivery and support of the Australian curriculum is collaborative. So, we have a very good close working relationship. Our consultants sometimes will work together. Certainly, Stef in her area would know who the people in the department are. We have a collaborative working relationship.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Health and hearing—“can’t hear, can’t learn”. At a recent breakfast, we were told that east metro, south metro and the Pilbara–Kimberley had totally unacceptable levels for ear infections requiring but not receiving medical intervention. This is also the case for the goldfields. Is this an issue with your regional and community-based schools?

**Ms Sayce:** It is. We are very aware that, particularly in the Kimberley, the children’s hearing is poor, but we have addressed it by putting audio loops in and the teachers actually wear a —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** It goes around their neck.

**Ms Sayce:** Yes, around their neck. We have done that for all of our schools up in the Kimberley and we are certainly looking towards some of the schools—it happens in the Geraldton diocese area as well. So, as the need arises, we certainly address it.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** What about treating them on a daily basis? Kids come to school, they have got pus coming out of their ears, especially in the Kimberley area. Are there any health nurses or school nurses that can look at that in the school?

**Ms Sayce:** Yes. In the Kimberley because of the nature and the size of the schools, they do not all have health nurses; they may have first aid people there. In, for example, the Balgo and Billiluna areas where we have schools, there is a health nurse. There is no doubt a circuit that happens in Warmun; there is a circuit of health provision to check out the kids in terms of all of that. So, we work in partnership but in the Kimberley we do not have—unless it is like St Mary’s in Broome where there is a larger school that can sustain the funding for a nurse to be on-site most of the time, and that is typical throughout our schools. Principals will make a decision on which areas they want supported in schools, so a health nurse, first aid officer, those sorts of things.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** How often do you reckon then a nurse or someone with the right medical skills would get to Warmun to check kids?

**Ms Sayce:** I think with Warmun, and I can probably —

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Or as an example.

**Ms Sayce:** Yes. I think if there is a health nurse on-site in the community, very regular; it happens regularly. In the Gibb River, which is very isolated, maybe about a dozen children on-site and the principal and his family live there—actually, there is a nurse, a nun who is a health nurse there, so she is on tap. Certainly, she was there a year ago, but I am not sure if she is there currently. So if there is a health nurse there or someone who can provide those services, the school would connect very quickly because we know if a child is not well, they are not well. If they cannot hear, they cannot learn. So, we work very quickly to ensure that relationship is established.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Do you have a formal relationship with the Department of Health?

**Ms Sayce:** No formal relationship, no.

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**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** So how do you advise if there are concerns in your schools with health issues to get nurses or additional nurses? Are you on the same quota system as they are in the normal education department?

**Ms Sayce:** When you say “quota system” —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** You know, they say there should be a child health nurse for a certain amount of people. You have not got that sort of relationship with the Department of Health?

**Ms Sayce:** No, not that I am aware of, but I certainly could find out.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** So where do you get your school nurses from, Stephanie? Do you just employ them as part of your system; there is nothing that the health department provides?

**Ms Jackiewicz:** No.

**Ms Sayce:** No. As I said—not to take over what Stef was going to say—the principal is the employer. We have not talked about finance yet, but when we look at a school’s budget, size, number of students and needs of the school, they will make some decisions on the type of person they have in their school in terms of what role they can offer, so an Aboriginal teaching assistant, for example, or a social worker. In some of our primary schools in the metropolitan area, they have elected to go down that path and so they will make those sorts of decisions. As the principal is the employer, they will advertise, they will go through an interview process and appoint someone. As I said, I am not aware of a relationship. Our director might know, but certainly I am not aware of that.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** I understand what you mean, and what tends to happen in those kinds of situations is collaboration across schools in regional areas so that they all put in a portion of an FTE. Does that happen around the allied health professions or anything? Would you say three schools across the region put their money into the pot and all agree to hire a nurse in this or early childhood or whatever? Do they do that kind of stuff? Are there any instances of that happening?

**Ms Jackiewicz:** I think there are very few schools that would do that but there are some principals who get together to make those decisions. But mostly the school makes the decision; if they need a speech pathologist or they need an occupational therapist, then they would look at that. Quite often for our system, it has to be user-pays arrangements. We probably do not have that relationship with —

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** So the kids would have to pay.

**Ms Sayce:** Or the school.

**Ms Jackiewicz:** Or the school would have to pay.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** In terms of that kind of collaboration, is there anything structurally that stops that from happening—in your structure, I mean, your corporate structure of schools?

**Ms Sayce:** We would welcome that because there is the economy of scale; the more people who want that service, then let us go for it. If someone is flying in in a remote community, not just for the school, but the community, everyone would utilise that service and I think our principals would work very cooperatively if that was offered.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** So why has that not evolved? Is there not the demand there for that?

**Ms Sayce:** Sometimes it is difficult to get staffing. Not to talk about health nursing, but certainly in psychology in the Kimberley trying to get a psychologist, for the department, AISWA and us—to get a specialised person to work with because we know the mental health in the Kimberley is an area of concern—has been really hard; the attraction of getting people up there.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** I totally understand what you are saying, but surely that is the argument as to why schools will band together and collaboratively fund that.

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**Ms Sayce:** And it has happened in psychology. They were utilising and it has happened in the last probably, I would say, six to eight months where there is an issue trying to get qualified staff who can work in that because it takes a specialist not just in the area but also in understanding the context of the Kimberley and the issues. So it is happening with psychology.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** In some of your communities, are you the only school?

**Ms Sayce:** Yes. We have six schools that we are the sole providers in terms of area and location.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Do you have any other ones up in the Kimberley?

**Ms Sayce:** Yes, we do; we have 13 schools all up.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** But they are appearing in like Broome —

**Ms Sayce:** Town schools, like Halls Creek, Derby, Broome, Kununurra and Wyndham.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** You have got a psychologist coming up with the other schools, do you hook in on or piggyback in on that?

**Ms Sayce:** Yes, and our hope is our principals do connect with those schools around that particular area in the town so that you know who is coming along, so you sort of reorientate your program to enable that person to come into the school.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** It was interesting at Halls Creek that the headmaster there was very innovative and so was the one at the Catholic school. Just looking at the guy from the Catholic school, listening to some of the things that were happening at the other school—the primary school—he was surprised and he kind of went, “Oh, you know, I never thought of that.” So I am just wondering if they can get together and share ideas because, as I say, the guy at the Catholic school was great; he was going around picking up kids in the morning and giving them early lunches so that the —

**Ms Sayce:** That is right, that is their main meal for the day for some children.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes, because he said if you give them breakfast —

**Ms Sayce:** They are gone.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes, they are gone for the day, or the parents will not give them anything before they come, so it is a very innovative idea.

**Ms Sayce:** The schools make particular decisions about resourcing because that does cost. I remember my visit up there with another member of the office. We were helping cook tuna bake or tuna pasta something or other, so the kids were fed a really solid meal, with the knowledge that maybe that is the only meal in the day. So, the kids are drawn to that because if you feed children, they will come, but it is a cost to the school to do that, or the school community.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** How hard is it to retain kids in the Catholic school system in regional areas?

**Ms Sayce:** In regional areas, I think predominantly in Geraldton and Bunbury as regional areas are very high retention. Parents will typically stay in the Catholic school if they are in the community. If parents do not work there, they will move maybe to a larger centre and so forth, so there will be some movement. In the Kimberley, it is harder. As I said, there is a whole movement of families and children across the Kimberley and the Northern Territory, particularly. But overall, we have a very high retention and really starting from primary school and mainly going into the secondary, but we do get a large number of students who begin secondary as well—brand new.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** When we were in Halls Creek we were told that a lot of young kids get to high school, then they go to Perth to a private school or something like that. Once they are finished there, they stop; there is no pathway after that. So they come back to the communities and you have

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wasted—not wasted, but a large amount of what they have learnt over that period of time, there is nothing for them. Do you find that is an issue with the children who come through your system?

[12.45 pm]

**Ms Sayce:** Yes. Again, I am sorry to keep going back to my last year's experience, we had up to 35 students coming in from the east Kimberley, the remote schools, who were boarding at the school. There was one young man, Clifford Sunfly—he was well-known in terms of the paper and media last year—who was the first young person to graduate from high school in the Balgo Hills community. He had been at the school and associated with La Salle College for three years. He had stayed in Swanleigh boarding, and then when La Salle started boarding last year, he was head boy of boarding. Trying to get him to finish and graduate was a lot of energy and effort around him. Sometimes his participation was a bit limited but nevertheless there were a lot of staff, and he was a lovely young man. A lot of staff committed to ensuring that he had a secondary graduation. He told me, "Miss, I'm having a gap year." All young people want a gap year. I think you have to work really hard to earn a gap year, but no, he wanted a gap year because it was all too much, the movement in and out. Now, because of the trade training centre that has been built and will be officially opened next month in Balgo Hills, he is now going to be employed. I hope over this last week there has been some big conversations to help him work within trade training. Our hope is he will do certification and will be able to get his trade up. That was always the intention of the school—to ensure that he could get a certificate for building, because that was one of the areas to go back to the community. The trade training talk about Balgo is developing. Trying to attract good personnel to work in there has been an issue, but they have employed some very good staff. To find what hooks people in the community to come into the trade training that captivates and engages them is the other part; then there is a commitment to completion of the certification.

For young people, whether it be Aboriginal children or not, to find where their interests are, where they are engaged and then to support them post-school. That is why I think trade training has been a great benefit certainly for our schools as we have evolved into trade training, because you cannot always access TAFE. Not everyone accesses online opportunities for learning. This aspect of trade training is going to grow markedly. I do not know if it answers your question directly, but for this particular experience, it is engagement post-school with this young man who missed his home desperately and wanted to go back to the Kimberley. He needed to be doing that. To say, "We'll get you into a fast-track university course transition unit, off you go to get your degree", for some children that works, but for some of these children from the Kimberley, they miss their families desperately. They miss their community. This boy, who went through a bit of a rough patch, said, "Miss, I just want to run barefoot on the land." That is where the kids are at. They are not highly complex in some ways; they are still young kids. You are giving them that opportunity to go back to the community to engage, because, through lore, they are men in their community, and you have to respect that cultural aspect as well. It is a broad question.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** How do you support them, once they have left the school system?

**Ms Sayce:** Depending on what they are doing, if they go back to the community or come back and connect with the school, but typically, once they have finished their school, post-school areas is where they go. Their families, and hopefully their communities, support them.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** You were talking about IT. Your submission states that you are implementing a system-wide learning management system that will assist schools to deliver more effectively and should be of particular importance to country schools. What is the system, how is it funded, and how is that used differently to the education department?

**Ms Sayce:** We have moved away from the term "learning management system" because we had so many different iterations of what schools need. We had the new one-stream school, the remote school, and then you have the big schools with over 1 000 kids. Different needs are required. Catholic Education supports the system by ensuring that schools can access their needs. We are



looking at digital learning. We know now—we certainly have known for a while—that kids are very IT savvy. Typically, families are giving them great opportunities in understanding the technologies. So the kids will have iPads, phones, laptops and PCs on their desk, trying to ensure that a child's learning is supported, because kids will learn in a digital world. How do we support it? We are developing a system that enables different schools to opt in or opt out. We are still undertaking it at a very, very big cost to the system. We certainly allocate money for the development of our platform, because also you would be aware that we have to provide a lot of information to various groups—government bodies and so forth; census information. Harvesting that information is a very important thing. If you can have a system that allows you to do that fairly easily and quickly, then that is the way to go. We are not going down one learning management system that all 158 schools operate from. From an office perspective and a commission perspective, we have to offer an ability for schools to opt in and out. It is probably not a very good summation of things, but we are still evolving. We have various committees. In fact, right now we are waiting for a report. We have gone out to our schoolteachers and school communities across different types of schools asking, “What are your needs? How do you look at learning technologies in school? What sorts of ways can the office support you in that?” All of our teachers pretty much have access to a computer, whether it be a laptop or an iPad. Year 9 to year 12 students have access one-to-one to the laptop system. Some schools will make decisions to have computing labs. Some schools have opted to say to parents, “It is hired through”—I cannot give you the direct cost, but per fortnight, they actually hire their machine for their child. The trick in all of it is where teachers are at, and familiarity, confidence and their professional learning to deliver a different type of learning environment for students who live in a very technological world.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** With universal access, why would a school opt out?

**Ms Sayce:** Universal access in terms of?

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** IT.

**Ms Sayce:** Universal access means other things too! Schools do not opt out. In what way do you mean?

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** I thought you said that some schools opt out of it.

**Ms Jackiewicz:** I think schools use it differently, depending on what their needs are.

**Ms Sayce:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** What is your backup, such as your IT support?

**Ms Sayce:** Developing. For example, some local primary schools will band together to have someone supporting them. It is a user-pays system. We only have so many staff in the office and we have a workforce of 8 500 in our schools. We have probably a dozen people who offer different types of support to schools. One is system support; some technological help desk-type support. It is very difficult to offer one-to-one with a school that needs it right now because the system has gone down. It is user pays in some instances. Big secondary schools have their own system administrators and have a number of supporters who help teachers in the classroom if their computers are not turning on, right through to major system issues. Because of the size and nature of our schools, we have different types of support required.

**The CHAIR:** With the schools, it is not some people's job description but they are fixing up IT problems. Are they being taken away from other important parts of the school?

**Ms Sayce:** In a secondary school, there is typically, as I said, a system administrator and ICT support. They have employed staff. Usually technicians—non-teaching staff—are involved with that. Again, my experience last year was we had two dedicated teachers who had been taken off their teaching line to go into classrooms because the kids do not do an IT course. That is actually integrated in everything that happens in the classroom. This teacher would go in and support the

teacher in delivering, in a digital format, something to train the teachers so they are confident and familiar with that particular program; or that opportunity for a child to learn is built into the classroom. That is a secondary school.

Primary: as I said, teachers have a laptop or some form of technology. They all have particular professional development days looking at particular programs and those sorts of things.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Are children provided with iPads?

**Ms Sayce:** In secondary school, year 9 upwards is a one-to-one laptop scheme—they have access. In primary schools, depending on the size of the school and what the school has made a decision on, some will have computer labs where the child will go into a classroom, the teacher will offer a format. I would say most —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** With those schools, is that because they pay higher fees?

**Ms Sayce:** No. Principals will make their decision on what is the best way to offer technology to school. I have just come from school visits. Some schools will have a dedicated computer lab. Some schools have said, “No, we’re going to have our computers, four or five in the classroom, so that the kids can opt in and out depending on what the needs are.” They are trying to cater for the diversity of the children’s learning needs.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Say there is an IT issue in a regional area, how do you fix that up?

**Ms Sayce:** Depending on the nature of the problem, if it is to do with the program, there are phone calls being made to the head office. That is in Leederville. As I said, sometimes principals will band together and employ an agency or a group within the community. That person’s support is bought. Typically, it is bought in user pays. Broadband is always an issue, and how fast things are happening. Now we are getting over those sorts of issues.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Literacy and numeracy: one of the objectives in your strategic plan is to provide a whole-system focus for enhancing literacy and numeracy learning. What does this mean in practice and what have been the results?

**Ms Sayce:** I will keep going, shall I?

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Stephanie, I know you have been dying to say something!

**Ms Sayce:** I think for early years you might want to talk about that sort of thing, but if I can just give a broad picture. With national partnership money, we have made a focus, obviously, on literacy and numeracy. We have made a decision rather than send the money out to schools, that no, we will operate from the point of having a school support consultant who will feed and support a number of schools and work with them to develop their literacy and numeracy focuses, and by keeping the school community, the principal, very aware, “This is what you say you’re going to do, what the focus will be, let’s not be overcome by so many different sorts of things.” That has been a very successful model of supporting schools, being true to what they say their target for the year is about. Underpinning all of this, we have also had an initiative over the last two years called “Quality Catholic Schooling”. It has been a self-review tool for schools to look at where they are at in a number of areas. There are 25 elements under the four domains of Catholic identity, education, stewardship, and resources. Some schools are focusing for the year on learning and teaching, looking at literacy. Some schools are leading literacy initiatives. Some schools have said, “No, we will focus on this aspect.” Literacy is quite broad; so breaking it down. Schools, in their strategic planning, will say, “That is what we are going to do.” As an office, we offer support through the school support consultant. We offer obviously broad days where professional development occurs. This year, the primary conference—we have it annually—brings around 600 to 800 people throughout the system. They come in for those days where we showcase what schools are doing. We have some key speakers, but nevertheless schools will say, “This is how we’re dealing with persuasive writing”, for example. Does that help?

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**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Sayce:** We work on the principle of “subsidiarity”: the school site is the best place for these things to occur. Rather than push from a head office perspective, we say, “No; schools will make their decision and we will support that in this particular way.”

**Ms Jackiewicz:** We would have early years consultants who also work with those school support consultants and with the principals and teachers. They will go into a classroom, for example, and work alongside the early years teacher and support him or her in that teaching. We also provide professional development for those teachers to come in to the head office generally, or to our Siena site, and provide them with the support they require. A lot of our support has been around implementing the early years learning framework. That has a play-based approach for the early years and an intentional teaching focus as well. So very much focused on making sure children have strong phonics and backgrounds, have good oral language, and getting children in as early as possible. We run three-year-old programs in many of our schools, so children start attending on a sessional basis when they turn three. They get their oral language program starting really early in that particular area.

Up in the Kimberley, those children may come even earlier. Basically, if they are going to come, we are taking them. It is really important to get them in as early as possible. That is happening. We also ran our first early learning seminar this year where our teachers got to hear people from outside the system talking about the importance of the early years and getting it right in the beginning. If we do not get that oral language, if we do not get that happening early, and that love for reading and language, it is very hard to catch up down the pathway.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** I asked this question of the education department before: we spend a lot of money and a lot of time on kids with FASD, with all sorts of issues, does this affect the bright kids in the class? You spend a lot of money getting aides for these kids. A teacher has a classroom—especially up in the Kimberley—that might have two or three kids with FASD, ADHD, bipolar, whatever, how is this affecting the bright kids? Are they getting the attention they need in the education system today?

**Ms Jackiewicz:** Certainly in the early years it is looking at the individual children and trying to meet their needs and meet them at their point of learning, and take them forward from that point of learning. Wherever a child is at, that should be where we are meeting them and extending their learning from that point. We also have a program, a gifted and talented program. We work within the office and we have consultants who go out and work with those children—work with the teachers rather than the children—looking at what is required in that particular area. But I think what is really important, particularly in the early years’ education, is that we meet children at their point of need and extend them, because we are all different, and we are all different at different times, so whilst today you might be up there and acting at the best of your capacity, that might not be the case tomorrow or a month down the track. So that is very important.

[1.00 pm]

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** The thing that worries me, especially in the Indigenous community, is that you might have a really bright kid, but all the other kids are misbehaving in the classroom, and he gets, not dragged down, but he joins in with that sort of thing and he loses that impetus and that desire to succeed. This is not only in the Indigenous community. It is in the wider community as well. It is a real issue.

**Ms Sayce:** That is right. Particularly in the Kimberley, we have Reading Recovery as a targeted program, as a one-to-one, so a child who is struggling with their level of literacy is taken out and is working with the teacher. We have had great success with that. The idea is that the child comes back and is skilled up, particularly in the early years, so that there is not an issue as they go forward. We use the language in education-speak of a “differentiated” curriculum, meeting the needs of the

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diverse learners in the class. We have up to 32 children in an English class, and even if there are no identifiable issues with any of those children, their learning needs are so vast because of their maturity and how they learn. So it is a very tough occupation, education. I know from my learning experience back when I was educated that there was one way of delivery, and this was how you learn. You either sink or you swim. If you have some ability, you go down this pathway; or if you have a different ability, you go down some more vocational sort of area. We are saying now let us offer our kids the best we can, mindful that we have kids who do need to be extended, and mindful that we have kids who need to catch up, and that is the nature of the classroom. That is a very important address that we have to make, and teachers in their preparation as pre-service teachers, and certainly teachers in the classroom right now, have to deal with that. It is a constant interchange, because at some time those kids do not want to learn, and their behaviour management is another issue, too. So it is a very complex environment, but it is about trying to meet those needs.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Can I just ask about your policies around bullying. Are they all done per school or do you offer some advice to your schools about how to deal with that?

**Ms Sayce:** We do have a Catholic Education Commission policy on the issue of harassment and bullying and what that looks like, with some clear definitions, and we certainly utilise the National Safe Schools Framework as a guiding point. We have that policy. It is an expectation. It is part of our agreement for registration that schools do have a policy, and then how that is enacted in the school depends on the nature of the school. So we talk about how one of the hallmarks of Catholic education is pastoral care, looking after and respecting every person in that school community, and then how does that manifest itself. So people's familiarity with the bullying policy is critical. You need to know what you need to do and how you go about the business of engagement. There are lots of issues around when young people have big issues with each other, but one of the things we do is restorative justice, where we get the kids to actually talk to one another and see the harm that they are causing. That is a very intensive activity. A big school might have a psychologist or a social worker or a counsellor, but in the smaller schools you might have a principal and an assistant principal or some key staff who have that responsibility.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** I asked this same question of the education department, and I knew the answer in their case, but I actually do not know the answer in your case. In terms of the gay and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersexual community, where suicide is an increasing problem, particularly with youth, do you have anything that specifically targets that type of bullying?

**Ms Sayce:** We do not want to pigeonhole a child into this category. We say that all children —

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** I am sorry. I am saying that if somebody is identifying as having problems and they are one of those target groups, where do they go, and what can they do? Can they access any online information? Can they find out how normal or not normal this is in the school? Can they find someone to help them? What is their path?

**Ms Sayce:** I would hope that if a child was really confusing their sexual identity, and they were uncertain about so much, that they would have someone in the school community, whether it be the teacher who teaches them regularly, or whether it be a member of the leadership team, or the psychologist or the social worker or the counsellor, that they could go to. We also have chaplains in our schools. Our definition of a chaplain is a Catholic priest. I know that in public schools chaplaincy and Youthcare have a very big role.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** They do.

**Ms Sayce:** I am on the board at Youthcare and I am very aware of how important that program is for young people to identify, because just because you have a title does not mean that a child will go to you.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Particularly in this group—they are not known to contact any of the people that you have just mentioned.

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**Ms Sayce:** Absolutely. The child should be talking to someone; or if the parents are really concerned, they should be contacting the school principal or the member responsible for the wellbeing of the child, which I would say is the school principal, to talk through how to deal with it.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Because if the child is identifying with having some confusion around these issues, how would they know? Would the school bullying policy say that if you are having problems with any of these issues, you should speak to this person or that person, or anything like that? Would it be as blatant as that?

**Ms Sayce:** I do not think it is as overt as that—I do not think that is the case—but I do believe that in a Catholic school, if a child says to me, “I am struggling”, I would go to someone and something will happen, because there is a responsibility to deal with that issue around that child, because at the end of the day the child will not be learning if they are preoccupied with this situation happening in their lives. The school will deal with it pastorally. The school has an absolute obligation to ensure that the child’s wellbeing is paramount. The issue around suicide is dreadful for young people—for them to have that sense of hopelessness is just terrible. So I would hope that the Catholic school would be able to support that young person to deal with these issues in a manner that is going to be giving them life, rather than pigeonhole them by saying this is what is to be done. It is more about the relationship with that child and the follow-up. Sometimes a school’s resources will not be able to support that child, particularly if it is a little school, so let us help them access the resourcing; and that is another broader question that we could go into, but maybe not at this time.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Just before we finish on literacy and numeracy, when students come from disadvantaged and language-poor backgrounds, do you use phonics?

**Ms Sayce:** As a program?

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Sayce:** Again, schools will make the decisions on the types of programs that they use. So some schools would definitely do that.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** So some will and some will not?

**Ms Sayce:** Yes.

**Ms Jackiewicz:** Can I just say that teachers would be expected to be teaching phonics in the school. What program they use to teach that, if they have a specific program to teach that, would be the decision of the school. There is a whole range of phonics programs out there. We do not say this is the program that you should teach. That decision is made within the school. Any early childhood teacher should be able to teach, and should be teaching, phonics.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Your submission talks about the value of corporate partnerships, which range from BHP and Telstra to software companies and many others. Who negotiates the partnerships—the school principals or your head office, and how do these partnerships extend your work?

**Ms Sayce:** With the big-system priorities, for example, with the hostel at Clontarf Aboriginal College, the kids there were boarding at two different places, so the decision was made that they would board at the school site in Bentley. That was negotiated through the Catholic Education Office with BHP. Sometimes there are smaller partnerships. There is one school in Ellenbrook, Holy Cross College, that has a strong partnership with Apple. So they have made the decision that they would go down there. So there is flexibility. If it is a system focus, a big-ticket item, an expensive item, then the director would get involved with those sorts of discussions, or members of the office. If it is do with an individual school making a particular decision about something, the school would have that relationship. By and large, BHP has been very supportive of supporting Catholic schools. They offer scholarships. They want to help particularly Indigenous children to connect back with the community.

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**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** So are the kids at Clontarf from the metro area or from the Kimberley?

**Ms Sayce:** It is a mix. They come from everywhere. Some children come from the Northern Territory, and some come from the local area of Bentley; and I am not sure of the enrolment right now, and I do not know whether there are any Kimberley students there now, but there certainly might be some Pilbara or Geraldton kids.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Your submission states that for country schools, your organisation sees value in identifying metropolitan schools that can take on a mentoring, advice, support role, and this involves funding issues that are not readily available at present. In this electronic age, what is the funding needed for?

**Ms Sayce:** For example, St Mary in Carnarvon has a connection with Nagle Catholic College in Geraldton. It is great to set up on the laptop and be face to face with teachers there and make that connection. But sometimes it is good to have the person located close by to work through programming or issues in discussion. So funding is needed to make that possible, because travel is very expensive and accommodation is very expensive. Sometimes people feel very isolated in these areas, not just from their profession, but from family and those sorts of things, and also from networks and associations. So funding is very supportive to enable people to make contact. We have set up, at our Newman Siena site that was mentioned earlier, an ability to have a technological space where teachers can connect on the big polygon screen, and we are heading more and more that way. Online is another form, and the development of this online material does take time and obviously finances to support that. So that is the sort of thing we would want to have. It is about travel, transport and accommodation and ensuing that the networks are met.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** What are the barriers to good educational outcomes, and how can they be better addressed? There is one for you!

**Ms Jackiewicz:** Can we move on to the next one!

**Ms Sayce:** That is a huge question, and this is not about giving a glossy view of Catholic ed, but we are in the business of educating young people, to enable them to transform their lives, to engage post school, and to contribute to the community, in a particular way—we have a very clear Christian identity that we want to promote and develop amongst our young people. There are many barriers. One is finances. Access is another one. Another one is the diverse needs of our student learners. That is not ethnicity. It is just the way a child learns. We have got children presenting themselves more and more with learning difficulties. Disabilities is another huge area. Whilst we have a certain percentage of parents who chose a Catholic education, we do not necessarily have the resources or the time to support that child with a particular need. It depends on where they present themselves. If, for example, a child with a disability were to present themselves to the school that I was at last year, that would be fine, because we have an education support centre. If a child presents themselves in a remote area or a rural area, it is very, very hard to offer them expertise and support and a staff who have a background to assist in their learning. The other initiative that Catholic ed is really pushing ahead with is the early learning centre. But also we have developed an intervention centre at St Kieran Catholic Primary School, called the Ciaran Centre, where children with disabilities in the early years can come, be assessed and supported, and it enables the parents to make a connection to the Catholic school.

**Ms Jackiewicz:** And when they are ready to go to the school that they are enrolled in, they can go back to the school, with support from the Ciaran Centre. So that is really important. In the early years, we have the Holy Name Early Learning Centre that we will be starting. That is an integrated centre. That will be a licensed childcare centre. We will be starting to take children in there from six weeks of age and providing a quality early learning program for them there. They have an outside school hours care program. Many parents are not able to pick their children up from school and are not able to take them to school these days—and who looks after them in the holidays? So we have launched into looking at outside school hours care, and we have eight services that we are licensed

to operate on our school sites. In the Holy Name Centre we will also have an outside school hours care, and we will pick those children up in buses from schools and bring them to that facility. We really want to get in early. There are a lot of families in Carlisle from refugee backgrounds, and a lot of Aboriginal families, so we want to get them into that learning early so that we can get them kick-started. We will have other programs there as well, like facilitated playgroups, so that parents do not necessarily have to leave their child there. It is come and be part of our community, play with your child, and learn what it means to be a good parent and how that might look. We will also have allied health professionals coming into that site and providing that support for those people there. So that is a fairly big project for us.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** What if you have a situation where a child is in a public school and has a carer, and they then want to go to a Catholic education school, but you do not have that funding? Can you get that funding from anywhere?

**Ms Jackiewicz:** I think the funding is attached to the child.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** But if the child comes from the system to another, does that carry over?

**Ms Sayce:** No problem at all. If a child is diagnosed and there is funding attached to that child —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** But that comes out of the education department budget?

**Ms Sayce:** No, not necessarily. It comes with that child. If the child has a report that they have this particular issue, the money goes with the child. So if a parent presents at a Catholic school and wants to enrol their child in, for example, the education support centre, and they meet the requirements of enrolment, because it is not just an automatic entry, and if there is space in the school, because we are also talking about numbers, then of course that money would come with the child. But at the same time, in a primary school, it may be funding a teacher assistant. In a secondary school, it comes into the school—where there is a centre, it goes into the centre—so the centre can support a number of children, without losing sight that that is the money for that child. Does that make sense?

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** We have had people who have said that their child went from one system to another and the carer did not go with the child.

[1.15 pm]

**Ms Sayce:** The carer may not because they are not an employee of the Catholic school, but the funds would because the Catholic school employs its own staff —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** No; I am sorry they could not get a carer in the other school.

**Ms Sayce:** It depends on the money and the issues around that child; it really does. If they are diagnosed, that is the money — At the same time there is not enough money for the needs of a child with a disability, particularly if they present learning needs as well

**Ms Jackiewicz:** Only our three-year-old programs cannot access funding for children with disabilities.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** How do you fund all this—the Holy Name early childhood integrated centre, plus generally —

**Ms Sayce:** Careful fiscal management.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Is it fees from parents?

**Ms Jackiewicz:** Yes, it is a fee for service.

**Ms Sayce:** It is a user pays.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Is it a fee for the church?

**Ms Jackiewicz:** No; it is run like a childcare centre would be run, financially.

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**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** I mean everything; the whole system.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** How is the Catholic system funded, is what you are asking.

**Ms Sayce:** Currently, without the implementation of the Gonski findings, we get, in round figures, 50 per cent federal funding, 25 per cent state funding and 25 per cent private income. General recurrent grant will come in from the federal government and it is apportioned out to the schools per capita. You could have a large school, small school and depending on whether it is primary or secondary. We also have a very strong flavour, if you like, of co-responsibility where money is kept for particular projects within the system to fund new schools, because we have to fund that to fund particular projects such as literacy and numeracy; to fund the Kimberley. We have two care schools, St Clare's in Carlisle and Clontarf Aboriginal College, and we have the Edmund Rice Education Authority in Geraldton. It is called the St Patrick site, but it is closely affiliated, if you like, with Nagle college. They are our care schools. Money goes into those specialist projects, but nothing to do with the church. We are highly accountable to the government for the money we expend.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** You have four dioceses?

**Ms Sayce:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Does the richer diocese do better than the poor one?

**Ms Sayce:** No. The money comes into the Catholic Education Office, the commission oversees it and they ensure it is appropriately divided. It is to do with the size of the school in many ways and primary or secondary.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** You said earlier that access was a barrier. What is the access?

**Ms Sayce:** Under the EBA so many children can be in a classroom. Some schools their maximum number —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Thirty-two?

**Ms Sayce:** Depending on the type of class. For a year 9 science class, it is 32. In a year 1 class —

**Ms Jackiewicz:** Thirty maximum? With the early years access, now looking at the national quality standards for our kindergartens, we need to make sure we have higher staff ratios than we have had traditionally. That alters our group sizing so that is really important; it has an impact on funding and so forth.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Are there any schools under your system that you cannot provide enough funding to provide teachers?

**Ms Sayce:** One hundred and fifty eight of them!

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** It is a huge system but, as you say, you are 25 per cent self-funded. Do you find it hard to make sure every school you have—158 schools?—can provide all the services that you need in those schools or are you still lagging?

**Ms Sayce:** No; we run a very lean organisation in terms of office staff. Our principals all get their bucket of money and, depending on the number of students they have, they will apportion that with a number. We have a formula for funding, if you like. The number of kids is to do with the number of staff. Apart from the Kimberley schools, the remote and community schools, they are separate, but all others have a school board. Under the Catholic Education Commission constitution, that board has a responsibility to oversee financial management. The principal will make decisions with their school board on capital development, on ensuring, obviously, all salaries are met, the maintenance and the running of the school and its operation are appropriately funded. There is never enough money. Principals will make some decisions on their priorities, for example, if music is a strong focus, they will not necessarily have the money to foot specialist and drama or, if the arts—depending on what —



**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Common sense rule.

**Ms Sayce:** They are, but it is the decisions of the school community.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Can they fund raise themselves?

**Ms Sayce:** Some schools do. Some schools in their spring fair will raise so much money and the board of the school committee will make some decisions on how that money is be expended. At the same time they cannot go to McDonalds and say, "Please fund raise and give us money for this." Sometimes schools would like to go a bit beyond that requirement. But by and large they do not go out there. They have to market themselves and they certainly have to attract enrolments, so their own funding arrangement, that 25 per cent private income, is made up of fees but also some of the other stuff that comes through.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** What percentage of your children on average do you believe are disabled or have special needs?

**Ms Sayce:** Funded we have two to three per cent. That is typical of the national average in Catholic education.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Is it adequately resourced?

**Ms Sayce:** I would say no. Schools do pick up, by and large, the salaries. We were talking about teaching assistants outside. They are invaluable when they work with children one on one. We know when a child works one on one with a person in, say, reading recovery, that is a labour-intensive and a very expensive thing to do. I would say that our children with disabilities could do with more funding.

**Ms Jackiewicz:** Certainly for our three-year-old programs, those children cannot access those programs without funding and we do not have government funding for that, so that is a big problem.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** How skilled are your teachers in differentiating which, in education lingo, describes the schools as being able to deliver content and curriculum to students at different levels at the same time, which is something I have asked before concerning the different standards of children in a class?

**Ms Sayce:** It goes back to one of the challenges confronting education as the quality of the teachers, and the support in developing young teachers and the attraction of people to the education profession, because you give, I think, more than financially will ever be rewarded for what a teacher gives in the education of a child. How do you quantify that? "Differentiating curriculum" is the buzz word. How do we meet the needs of that diverse range of kids in the classroom? It is always a challenge, and we work hard in skilling our teachers. But also, it is up to them. We were talking about the resilience and the ability of teachers to help themselves in their profession and their professional learning. It is a very broad question and a great question to ask. I think school leaders are certainly aware of offering opportunities for teachers to address diverse needs in the classroom.

**Ms Jackiewicz:** The Catholic Education Office has a range of consultants who work alongside teachers, with teachers, to up-skill them in whatever area they need. Recently, schools got together in their regional groups and provided two days professional development around the Australian curriculum, in particular this time, but pooling their resources, getting people in to do presentations, to assist their teachers and up-skill them across that whole area.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** How hard is it to retain teachers? Is yours a competitive salary with the state system?

**Ms Sayce:** It is the same.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Lisa, do you have any questions?

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** No; I am good. It was very interesting, thank you.

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**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Can you describe the advantage of the care system in your view and what the benefits would be of spending the care schools in different areas?

**Ms Sayce:** Yes, St Clare's has around 30 students and, I think, probably 50 to 60 per cent are Aboriginal students. It is very important, because some kids are totally disengaged with their schooling context. They come from such diverse backgrounds. I know we could replicate St Clare's and Clontarf and certainly the one in Geraldton, because not all kids will fit a mainstream education. If we are to meet the diverse needs of our kids, we need—we talk about access—access to a different type of environment to learn. Sometimes it is a maturation issue; sometimes the children struggle in their family life; they bring in big social issues. If you ever have an opportunity to go to St Clare's, it is a very serene, very quiet place. There are only girls there. I will be visiting in the next fortnight. They have very good attendance at the school and they work really hard at it; they do not wait for the children. They go out and get the kids, and no issue is too big or too small.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Where are they?

**Ms Sayce:** It is in Carlisle. It is right next to Perth football oval.

**Ms Jackiewicz:** Those girls from St Clare's will come to the Holy Name Centre and do some work there. We have a relationship with them. Their first thing will be in a couple of weeks' time when they come out to scrub chairs. They have washed the bus so now they are ready to wash chairs. They are coming out to start helping us prepare that centre and put the furniture and equipment into that centre. Once we are up and running they will come in on a regular basis and work with the families, the children and the staff in the centre. It gives them opportunities because many young girls like to go into child care. That is what happens for that age group. It will give them those skills and that experience to come in there and, hopefully, we may be able to employ those girls down the track.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Are there any innovative strategies improving educational outcomes that you are aware of that have proved to be particularly successful in that context other than what you talked about there? Are there any other things overall that you have done "left of centre", as they say?

**Ms Sayce:** We have retained, for example, Christian Service Learning or volunteering or service learning. When you provide kids with meaningful opportunities and they can see, "Yes, this makes sense and I can see something I'm doing", kids will switch on and get engaged very quickly. We have driven that for our secondary schools and the requirement for those 20 hours, and schools go above and beyond that. The diverse curriculum offerings in our schools, with their limited resources is quite impressive. Schools will try to tailor-make the locality of the school if it is a vocational area. You offer those opportunities, if it is an academic area. We do not want to limit kids, but sometimes we have to limit our offerings because of resourcing. Do not think the children at care schools are not intelligent; they are very capable, very street smart and very aware and they have strong partnerships with the universities. That is one of the innovative things. At Clontarf and St Clare's, Notre Dame University has students working in a unit that is not a supervised unit, but they work in literacy at Clontarf one on one. These young people who go from Notre Dame University into the school are getting a taste for the needs of kids. One of the things the commission has supported is the funding of prac students from Notre Dame, and we will be opening it up to other universities to go into the remote communities. You can imagine a young person thinking, "I want to work with Kimberley people" but the remoteness and geographic isolation are very daunting. Giving opportunities to pre-service teachers to see the expansive nature of what Catholic schools can offer—and public schools—makes things easier for them in the transition. That is a very strong partnership with the university sectors that I think can grow and grow. The sooner young people get involved in the school context, the better it is with regard to their preparation for teaching.

**Ms Jackiewicz:** It is important we have those partnerships across a variety of areas. We have a partnership with Curtin University at Sacred Heart, Thornlie. They are providing us with their

fourth-year students in the schools in OT, physio, speech and child health nurses. They come in for two years and work in that school with those children, under supervision of their lecturers and under the supervision of the staff in our school. That is providing a rich opportunity to our children in that school to have access to allied health professionals, which is something that is greatly needed, given the waiting list at the child development centres. That is through a partnership with Curtin University. It is the way of the future that we must reach out and have these strong partnerships with others, particularly with the university sector.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Is there anything else you would like to say?

**Ms Sayce:** No; I think we have said it all. We are really committed. Obviously, our Catholic education as I said is very committed and a very hands-on practical level in the improvement of children's outcomes to get them out in our community and be contributing members of society. We are very clear about what our responsibilities are.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** You are very enthusiastic.

**Ms Sayce:** It is a great place to be part of.

**Ms Jackiewicz:** From the early years' perspective, we are very committed to getting in there as soon as we possibly can —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** I think it is very important.

**Ms Jackiewicz:** — and making a difference from the beginning, working with those families in partnership, because we believe that the family is the first and foremost educator of the child and we need to support them to do that and they need to be ready when they get into the school.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Thank you very much for your time today. Thank you for your evidence before the committee. The transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days from the date of the letter attached to it. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. We thank you very much for your time today.

**Hearing concluded at 1.29 pm**

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