



EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

CHANGES TO THE POST COMPULSORY CURRICULUM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**Report No. 3
in the 37th Parliament**

2006

Published by the Legislative Assembly, Parliament of Western Australia, Perth, June 2006.

Printed by the Government Printer, State Law Publisher, Western Australia.



Education and Health Standing Committee

Changes to the Post Compulsory Curriculum in Western Australia

ISBN: 1 920830 74 X

(Series: Western Australia. Parliament. Legislative Assembly. Committees.
Education and Health Standing Committee. Report 3)

328.365

Copies available from:

State Law Publisher
10 William Street
PERTH WA 6000

Telephone:

(08) 9321 7688

Facsimile:

(08) 9321 7536

Email:

sales@dpc.wa.gov.au

Copies available on-line:

www.parliament.wa.gov.au



EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

CHANGES TO THE POST COMPULSORY CURRICULUM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Report No. 3

Presented by:

Hon T.G. Stephens, MLA

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly
on 29 June 2006

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman

Hon T.G. Stephens, MLA
Member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara

Members

Dr E. Constable, MLA
Member for Churchlands

Mrs D.J. Guise, MLA
Member for Wanneroo

Hon Dr K.D. Hames, MLA
Member for Dawesville

Mr J.N. Hyde, MLA
Member for Perth

Mr T.K. Waldron, MLA
Member for Wagin

Mr M.P. Whitely, MLA
Member for Bassendean

COMMITTEE STAFF

Principal Research Officer

Mr Michael Baker, BA (Hons)
(until 2 June 2006)
Dr Jeannine Purdy, BA, B Juris
(Hons), LLB, PhD (Law & Legal
Studies) (from 19 June 2006)

Research Officer

Mr Peter Frantom, BA

COMMITTEE ADDRESS

Education and Health Standing Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Harvest Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

Tel: (08) 9222 7494
Fax: (08) 9222 7804
Email: laehsc@parliament.wa.gov.au
Website: www.parliament.wa.gov.au

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS	i
COMMITTEE STAFF	i
COMMITTEE ADDRESS	i
COMMITTEE'S FUNCTIONS AND POWERS	v
INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE	vii
CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD	ix
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xi
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	xiii
FINDINGS	xix
RECOMMENDATIONS	xxvii
MINISTERIAL RESPONSE	xxix
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 THE NEW CURRICULUM	1
1.2 CHANGES TO SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA	2
1.3 THE TIMETABLE FOR CHANGE	5
1.4 BACKGROUND TO THE INQUIRY	7
1.5 SCOPE OF THE INQUIRY	8
1.6 THE OUTCOMES BASED EDUCATION DEBATE	9
(a) What does the term Outcomes Based Education mean?	10
(b) What are 'Outcomes'?	10
(c) Has Outcomes Based Education failed elsewhere?	11
(d) What are the objections?	12
1.7 CONCLUSION	13
CHAPTER 2 THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL	15
2.1 RATIONALE OF THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL	15
2.2 CONCERNS ABOUT THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL	21
(a) 'Not necessary'	21
(b) 'Artificially compared diverse subjects'	22
(c) 'Dumbing down the education system'	23
(d) 'Lead to an unsustainable workload for teachers'	28
(e) 'The vagueness of the language'	32
2.3 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL	35
CHAPTER 3 MORE RECENT CHANGES.....	39
3.1 ADJUSTMENTS OF 10 MAY 2006 AND SUBSEQUENTLY	39
3.2 HOW THE REFINED SYSTEM ADDRESSES CRITICISMS OF THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL	42
(a) Levels	42
(b) Syllabus	42
(c) Assessment	43
(d) A refined system	43
(e) Moderation and scaling	44
CHAPTER 4 THE READINESS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR CHANGE	47
4.1 INTRODUCTION	47
(a) Ministerial Taskforce	49
4.2 QUALITY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	51
4.3 SUPPORT MATERIAL	54
4.4 DELAY	63
CHAPTER 5 THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGES	69
5.1 COST OF THE CHANGES	69
(a) Professional development and related costs	71
5.2 ADDITIONAL COSTS	73

5.3	ON-GOING SUPPORT REQUIRED	74
CHAPTER 6	THE EFFECT OF THE AMALGAMATION OF TEE AND NON-TEE	
	SUBJECTS	77
6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	77
	(a) Continuity of standards.....	78
	(b) Parity of esteem of Courses of Study.....	79
	(c) Changes will enhance choice and increase flexibility.....	80
6.2	CONCLUSION	84
CHAPTER 7	CONCLUSION	87
	APPENDIX One	91
HEARINGS HELD		91
	APPENDIX Two.....	95
SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED		95
	APPENDIX Three.....	105
BRIEFINGS HELD		105
	APPENDIX Four.....	107
LEGISLATION		107

COMMITTEE'S FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

The functions of the Committee are to review and report to the Assembly on:

- (a) the outcomes and administration of the departments within the Committee's portfolio responsibilities;
- (b) annual reports of government departments laid on the Table of the House;
- (c) the adequacy of legislation and regulations within its jurisdiction; and
- (d) any matters referred to it by the Assembly including a bill, motion, petition, vote or expenditure, other financial matter, report or paper.

At the commencement of each Parliament and as often thereafter as the Speaker considers necessary, the Speaker will determine and table a schedule showing the portfolio responsibilities for each committee. Annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the Assembly will stand referred to the relevant committee for any inquiry the committee may make.

Whenever a committee receives or determines for itself fresh or amended terms of reference, the committee will forward them to each standing and select committee of the Assembly and Joint Committee of the Assembly and Council. The Speaker will announce them to the Assembly at the next opportunity and arrange for them to be placed on the notice boards of the Assembly.

INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

INQUIRY INTO CHANGES TO THE POST COMPULSORY CURRICULUM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

That the Committee examine, report and make recommendations on the proposed changes to the Years 11 and 12 curriculum. The Committee will pay particular attention to:

1. The merit and basis of the proposed changes;
2. The readiness of the education system for the proposed changes;
3. The financial implications of the proposed changes;
4. The effect of extending to upper secondary education the outcomes-based curriculum, assessment and reporting;
5. The effect of the amalgamation of TEE and non-TEE subjects and assessment; and
6. Any related matters that the Committee considers necessary to investigate.

The Committee will report its findings to the Legislative Assembly by 30 June 2006.

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present to the Legislative Assembly the Third Report of the Education and Health Standing Committee in the 37th Parliament. This report concludes the Committee's inquiry into changes in Years 11 and 12 curriculum, instigated by the Committee on 4 May 2005.

For me, and I hope for other members of the Committee and for the others who read this report, this inquiry has provided an opportunity for serious issues of public policy concern to have been canvassed and the key concerns addressed and resolved.

Without doubt our teachers and our school communities are amongst the most precious elements of our community. They hold the key to our future. They deserve to be valued and to know that they are valued and supported.

Teachers and the school communities have been put through much pressure as the changes in Years 11 and 12 complete the reform process to Western Australia's curriculum. This process of change and the debate around it has taken a toll, including a personal toll on many teachers. We should all regret that very much.

Much of the public debate has concentrated on the merits or otherwise of 'OBE'. The Committee has rejected the notion that the change process was inevitably an 'either/or' and we have welcomed the integration of aspects of the original proposal and the existing system into what the Department of Education and Training and the Curriculum Council refer to as 'Outcomes and Standards Education' - OSE.

Through an imperfect process of public debate, disagreement, negotiation, understanding and compromise a better system for Year 11 and 12 education has emerged. It contains much that is familiar and represents, amongst the changes, significant continuity - it is now truly 'evolutionary', rather than 'revolutionary'.

The application of both outcomes and standards through the new Courses of Study in Years 11 and 12 provides greater flexibility and more pathways beyond school to further education, training and employment opportunities.

This process of change was embarked upon to secure learning through good teaching. OSE aims at producing a focus on what is being taught AND what a student actually learns. It has been introduced to make school more creative, inspiring, relevant and meaningful for students.

Spelling, punctuation, grammar, accurate calculations, good reasoning and reading skills will be as important as they have always been in school.

There is no move to 'dumb-down' content and no shift from the intent to inspire achievement and give students the best education they can get.

This Outcomes and Standards approach benefits students by providing:

- consistent standards - across all courses;
- options for teachers to use marks, or the course standards, in making their assessments;
- more control over learning - students learn to think for themselves;

- an array of educational choices - catering to the needs of all students;
- greater employability skills - the development of critical thinking skills, as well as the opportunity to develop skills in specialist areas that provide a direct pathway to tertiary courses, training or the workforce;
- recognition of all student learning - in and out of school; and
- course content - new courses to build on content of current subjects.

Included amongst the key differences to the former system are:

- students will know what they need to do to achieve higher standards;
- courses are designed to be more relevant and challenging;
- all learning will be valued - both in and out of school;
- the new system provides multiple pathways for all students;
- every new course can now lead to either university, TAFEWA, apprenticeships, traineeships or employment; and
- introduction of new courses means students can now study areas they intend to pursue after school (eg. aviation, media, psychology, health and physical education etc).

This is the biggest curriculum change in more than 20 years. It is only natural that it attracts debate and discussion. Now is the time for the debate and discussion to cease and instead to complete the task upon which we have embarked as a community: delivering the best quality education system for our school communities - for the teachers and especially for the students.

I thank my fellow Committee members for their individual and collective contributions to this report. I thank the staff of the Committee for their dedication and support, including Dr Jeannine Purdy, the Principal Research Officer, and the former Principal Research Officer Michael Baker and the Research Officer, Peter Frantom. I commend this report to the House.

HON T.G. STEPHENS, MLA
CHAIRMAN

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACER	Australian Council of Educational Research
ACHPER	Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation
AISWA	Association of Independent Schools Western Australia
APEA	Affiliation of Professional Education Associations
AQTF	Australian Quality Training Framework
ARM	Assessment, Review and Moderation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CoS	Courses of Study
DET	Department of Education and Training
EARS	Examination, Assessment and Reporting Supplement
GAT	General Aptitude Test
HPE	Health and Physical Education
HSC	Higher School Certificate
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
NCoS	New Courses of Study
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PCER	Post-Compulsory Education Review
PD	Professional Development
SIRS	Student Information Records System
SSTUWA	State School Teacher's Union of Western Australia
STAWA	Science Teachers' Association of Western Australia
TAFE	Technical and Further Education

TEA	Tertiary Entrance Aggregate
TEE	Tertiary Entrance Examination
TER	Tertiary Entrance Rank
TES	Tertiary Entrance Subject
TISC	Tertiary Institutions Service Centre
UWA	University of Western Australia
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WACE	Western Australian Certificate of Education
WSA	Wholly School Assessed

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Outcomes and standards have been features of the education system of Western Australia long before the proposed curriculum changes. Outcomes focus on what students should know and be able to do; standards are more concerned with providing information about students' achievements in comparison to each other. The original proposal to move to what was referred to as 'Outcomes Based Education' (OBE) for the Years 11 and 12 curriculum saw a move away from the strict adherence to a set syllabus for subjects which had assisted in the comparative grading of students with a view to accessing university. The debate over this original proposal was polarised, and major adjustments were agreed as a result. The new curriculum for Year 11 and 12 education now includes features of OBE and has retained elements of syllabus driven numerically assessed curricula.

This inquiry had its origins in the development of a Curriculum Framework which was introduced in 1998 and is mandated for all Western Australian schools. The Curriculum Framework has been operating in the compulsory years (Kindergarten to Year 10) since its introduction, but was always intended to apply to all Years K - 12. The traditional tiered system for Year 11 and 12 students consisted of Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) subjects which counted towards a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) to assess eligibility for university entrance, and non-TEE subjects, undertaken as Vocational Education and Training (VET) or Wholly School Assessed (WSA), which did not. The system as it stood did not allow flexibility for students, who in some cases were required to select between academic and other pathways at 14 years of age. The three phase implementation of the new curriculum, which will move away from the two-tiered system and allow for all Courses of Study to count towards the TER, has already commenced, with four of the new courses currently in place, a further 17 proposed for Year 11 in 2007, and the remaining 26 Courses of Study intended to be implemented for Year 11 in 2008.

The Committee resolved to undertake this inquiry on 4 May 2005 and the focus has been the practical changes to the curriculum, as opposed to the theoretical underpinnings. There is an ongoing debate within the educational community regarding the relative merits of OBE. This is not a debate that the Committee can resolve; it is both philosophical and historical, and it is unlikely that any arguments put forward by the Committee will change the views of either OBE proponents or its detractors. This does not mean that the debate is not an important one, nor does it imply that many of the concerns of those who oppose OBE are not valid. However, in the Committee's view the label used to describe these changes is very much less important to Western Australian students than the development of a successful education system.

The Committee recognises that one of the key difficulties in inquiring into a system in development is that changes and refinements are being made constantly. Indeed for the purposes of clarity it is important to distinguish between the changes embodied in the 'original proposal' and the 'current changes' that are now proceeding for implementation, that are reflected in the decisions of the Curriculum Council since May 2006. Many submissions to this inquiry were made prior to May 2006, when significant adjustments to the original proposal were agreed, or

before Courses of Study were finalised and concerns may have been subsequently addressed; similarly, some of the concerns may also have been allayed as the changes become better understood. The Committee has sought to update information as the inquiry has progressed and has sought to keep its understandings current.

The original proposal

The Curriculum Council commenced a major review of what, at that time, was post compulsory education in May 1998. This review process led to the publication in 2001 of *Our Youth, Our Future*, effectively a blueprint for reform of the curriculum for Years 11 and 12. The first draft of the new Course of Studies was released in 2003. Under the Curriculum Council's original proposal the new courses had a focus on education outcomes instead of strict adherence to a set syllabus. This saw the original proposal, to change the curriculum for Years 11 and 12, being labelled as OBE and this led to substantial criticism from those who inherently disagree with an outcomes-based approach.

The Committee found there were serious issues affecting the existing TEE/VET/WSA system which required substantial reform. With the lowest retention rate of upper school students in Australia it was evident that there were problems with the existing curriculum for Years 11 and 12. These problems were likely to become more acute with changes to the school leaving age, requiring young people to remain at school longer.

The Committee believes that there was merit in some aspects of the original proposal, including its capacity to give those students who are bound for university the breadth of subject choice that is available in other States and to provide opportunities for more students to gain a TER. Currently only 37.3 per cent of WA students obtain a TER; almost half the rate in other States.

However, the Committee also found that there was a lack of refinement in the original proposal which hindered its capacity to accommodate consistency and comparability of student results, when this is seen as integral to assessing students' capacity to successfully take on more academic pathways. Fears of substantially increased workloads for teachers as a result of the new curriculum were also realised with the implementation of the four Phase I Courses of Study in 2005 and 2006. Creating further difficulties, the documentation prepared by the Curriculum Council for the Courses of Study was unnecessarily longwinded and full of jargon that confused and frustrated students, parents and even competent and experienced teachers.

More recent changes

Recent adjustments have been made in response to the concerns raised about the original proposal. Adjustments announced by the Curriculum Council on 10 May 2006 focussed on changes to the proposed assessment processes and enabled teachers to use numerical marks rather than outcome levels to assess student performance, and involved the external examination being used to moderate the school numerical scores for university entrance purposes. These adjustments, however, were insufficient to ensure widespread acceptance amongst the Education community and particularly teachers tasked with the implementation of the proposed Courses of Study.

As a result consultations occurred between the Premier, the Minister for Education, the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Curriculum Council, the Director of the Catholic Education Office of WA, the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools WA, the President of the State School Teachers' Union WA and the Secretary of the Independent Education Union. These consultations led to further modifications in regard to the new Courses of Study and professional support, and have enjoyed more widespread support.

The Committee believes that the modifications to the new courses offer clarity and protect the validity of assessments. With undertakings that *'Teachers will be able to use their existing teaching programs or lesson plans for those new courses that have been derived from existing TEE subjects'* and that all syllabi will be in the format of the existing TEE syllabus for each course, with specific subject content in the language of the discipline, these modifications should also significantly reduce the demands on teachers. Importantly too, the process of moderation and the introduction of a General Aptitude Test (GAT) under the new curriculum should enable students who perform with equivalent levels of competence to achieve the same TER. This will encourage students to choose Courses of Study for which they have an aptitude and interest rather than choosing courses because they are perceived to be relatively less demanding.

The readiness of the education system for change

Many of the submissions received by the Committee argued that the system is not ready for change. Concerns were raised about uncertainty caused by the lack of teaching materials, examples of examination papers and other resources. There were also comments made in submissions and evidence about professional development. This latter issue has implications that are broader than simply being ready to implement Courses of Study and touch on issues related to the financial implications and the on-going development of the new curriculum.

The Committee was particularly concerned to receive correspondence as late as March 2006 from the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA), a supporter in principle of the changes and itself a member of the Curriculum Council, which requested a change in timeline for the full implementation of the new curriculum. Subsequent to the correspondence from AISWA, however, a number of undertakings were made by the Curriculum Council which are intended to ensure that appropriate support materials will be available for teachers to implement change to the curriculum.

The Committee accepts evidence from both the Department of Education and Training and the Curriculum Council that a delay in implementation would not only result in the continuation of the disadvantages inherent to the TEE/VET/WSA curriculum but would disrupt school and students who have already acted on the implementation of Phase II Courses of Study for 2007. Recent adjustments should mean that:

- most new Courses of Study have retained the majority of the material of existing subjects;
- students will not be tested on any new content in Courses of Study during the transition period in 2007; and

- increased support will be available for teachers.

In light of these adjustments, the Committee recommends that the current timetable for the implementation of the proposed new Courses of Study for Years 11 and 12 should continue. The Committee also recommends that these be closely monitored and adjustments made before the implementation of Phase III in 2008, if necessary.

The financial implications of the changes

The financial implications for any change as significant as those in the curriculum for Years 11 and 12 are substantial. It is not possible to measure the total costs of the changes because they are not all borne by the government. In addition to the financial contribution made by the government, many schools both inside and outside the government system have to meet costs from their own budgets. Costs of teacher professional development including the employment of relief teachers are, in the case of non-government schools, met by the schools themselves. Similarly, the development of new materials for Courses of Study currently under development will incur additional costs that are unknown at this stage.

Many of the estimates of the costs provided to this inquiry were based on the original proposal. It may be that recent adjustments will reduce both the financial and human resource costs of implementing the new curriculum. What is clearer to the Committee, however, is that it is likely that professional development requirements will be on-going and will demand substantial resources after the Courses of Study are implemented. The establishment of Teacher Development Centres in government schools as well as the additional support for the non-government sector are positive recognition of the need for on-going support.

Although the cost to individual schools is difficult to quantify, support both at the school level and across sectors is required. The Committee recommends that the State Government ensures support for all classroom teachers by providing sufficient funding for the Teacher Development Centres and the equivalent support activities in the non-government school sector.

The effect of the amalgamation of TEE and non-TEE subjects

Under the new curriculum, instead of three different types of subjects (TEE, VET and WSA) there will be, subject to the exception of Curriculum Council endorsed subjects, one single curriculum with around 47 Courses of Study. Each course will be made up of six semester units, which will have different levels of difficulty. Unlike the TEE, VET and WSA system, all Courses of Study will count towards university entrance.

This comparability of Courses of Study, in that levels awarded across various courses will be equivalent, represents a key area of concern among opponents of the changes. Many submissions made the point that TEE and non-TEE subjects are clearly different in approach and content and any attempt to make them equal will lead to either a 'dumbing down' of the academic subjects to enable less academically able students to cope, or they will be made more difficult to justify their status as TER subjects. The Curriculum Council, however, has made it clear that there will be differentiation within Courses of Study which will enable students to manage harder courses or to be challenged by the work. The Council advises that all Courses of Study are designed to include

all learners, regardless of their post-school plans with each course comprising three sets of units 1A, 1B; 2A, 2B; 3A, 3B which typically represent the full range of achievement of students in Years 11 and 12.

Opponents of the amalgamation also argue that the change, rather than supporting a parity of esteem for all Year 11 and 12 students, will, in fact, place less able students at greater risk of being further marginalised as they have to study subjects that may be beyond them. Initiatives to accommodate the needs of less academically able students include what has been described as the ‘almost content-free, context-free environment’ to cater for students in the 1A, 1B units of the new Courses of Study, and Curriculum Council endorsed subjects which continue to be wholly school assessed. These efforts to accommodate the interests of less academically able students appear positive. However, the effectiveness of these efforts remains to be seen and will need to be monitored.

The Committee believes that the amalgamation of TEE and non-TEE subjects has the potential to remove the two-tiered education system which places a higher value on certain subjects over others. By making all Courses of Study eligible for a TER, and therefore counting towards university entrance, the amalgamation will mean subjects that can be studied at university to doctoral level will be given appropriate status at the secondary school stage. It will also result in a single system with the capacity to cater for diverse needs, yet allow students the flexibility to move across academic and vocational pathways.

Conclusion

The development of the original proposal for curriculum change was motivated by the desire for there to be a single system with the capacity to cater for diverse needs yet allow students the flexibility to move across academic and vocational pathways. Whilst acknowledging the need for change and accepting there was merit in aspects of the original proposal, the Committee believes the original proposal was significantly flawed. Indeed had the concerns about assessment, the lack of clear unit syllabi, teacher workloads and the values and ethics components of some courses, not been addressed, the Committee would have called for a delay in the implementation of Phase II. However, the Committee welcomes the agreed modifications that address these issues and has concluded that the timetable for implementation of the new curriculum should continue.

Much of the public debate surrounding the new curriculum has concentrated on the merits or otherwise of OBE. The Committee rejects the notion that it is ‘either/or’ and welcomes the integration of aspects of the original proposal and the existing system. The Committee believes these adjustments, backed up with a valid scaling and moderation process, have the capacity to deliver a refined system that incorporates the best features of the current system and OBE - a system now referred to as ‘Outcomes and Standards Education’.

FINDINGS

Page 20

Finding 1

There were significant issues with the Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) / Vocational Education and Training (VET) / Wholly School Assessed (WSA) curriculum and structure for Years 11 and 12. These issues included:

- The retention rate in post compulsory education in Western Australia was the lowest in Australia;
- The requirement that students make choices, in some instances at the age of 14, which could effectively lock them into educational pathways;
- The impact of raising the school leaving age created more urgency in the provision of appropriate learning opportunities to a wider cohort of students;
- The perceived status of the three different types of subjects in Years 11 and 12, with their different structures, processes and lack of comparable standards;
- The need to accommodate the effects of a rapidly changing knowledge environment, in which there are growing demands to include more content in an already overcrowded curriculum;
- The role of examinations for Year 11 and 12 students;
- The need for a system of education and training that gives those students who are bound for university the breadth of subject choice that is available in other States so that they can compete on a more equitable basis to gain entry to university;
- The need to enable the students studying a wider variety of courses to compete on a more equitable basis to gain entry to university; and
- The anomalies which exclude some subjects available at university level from counting towards the Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER).

Page 23

Finding 2

The Committee considers that equivalent recognition of performance with equal degree of difficulty across Courses of Study is a positive step. This will, over time, help to reduce the current two-tiered education system which makes certain students and subject areas appear less valued than others.

Page 28

Finding 3

The Committee considers that the shift to Courses of Study does not lead to the ‘dumbing down’ of subjects. With different units available in each Course of Study, based on levels of complexity, the Committee expects that it will be easier for students to work at their appropriate level than they can in the current system.

Page 28

Finding 4

Course selection by students will need to be monitored to ensure that perceived differences in difficulty do not result in enrolments falling in Courses of Study in areas such as mathematics and the physical sciences.

Page 32

Finding 5

The Committee shares the view that the original proposal would have involved a permanent increased workload for teachers, with the assessment processes being more time consuming than current processes. The first four Year 11 courses introduced in 2005 and 2006 (Aviation, Engineering Studies, English, and Media Production and Analysis) resulted in an increased workload for teachers, especially in the area of assessment.

Page 35

Finding 6

The Committee considers that the standard of communication during the development and implementation stages of the changes to the Years 11 and 12 curriculum has been somewhat haphazard and has contributed significantly to the current level of anxiety among teachers.

Page 37

Finding 7

In the Committee's view, the most significant cause of anxiety and stress amongst teachers and the community has not been the underlying principles of the changes, but their implementation.

Page 38

Finding 8

The Committee accepts there was a need to change the curriculum for Years 11 and 12. The Committee also believes that there was merit in some aspects of the original proposal, including its capacity to recognise that the vast majority of subjects should be valid for entrance to university, particularly when the study of those subjects is available at university. However, the Committee also finds that the original proposal for changes to Year 11 and 12 subjects was significantly flawed. In particular the lack of refinement of the original proposal hindered its capacity to meet the needs of students pursuing different educational pathways.

Finding 9

In order to meet teachers' concerns, there have been significant adjustments to the proposed reform of the curriculum for Years 11 and 12. These include:

- *There will be a syllabus for each course.*
- *The existing TEE [Tertiary Entrance Examination] syllabus format will be used for all new courses. Course specific refinements will be made.*
- *Teachers will be able to use their existing teaching programs or lesson plans for those new courses that have been derived from existing TEE subjects.*
- *Some adjustments will be made to content to allow for the semester unit structure and to ensure that content is updated.*
- *No new content will be assessed in the examination for the first cohort of Year 11 and Year 12 students for those courses replacing TEE subjects.*
- *Course design will be modified, where necessary, to suit specific course disciplines.*
- *Language used in each course syllabus will be discipline specific.*
- *Content will be made more explicit and clear for teachers.*
- *The nature and weighting of outcomes will be clarified and adjusted on a course by course basis.*
- *Course standards will be refined to guarantee clarity of student progression.*
- *Schools will submit a mark out of 100 for a unit and provide an indicative judgement of a level and band for the unit.*
- *Teachers will not be required to submit assessment evidence plans; however they will still be required to have evidence of their students' achievements during school moderation visits as they do now.*
- *Teachers will be provided with specific exemplars of assessment items, work samples and a template program for each new course, which will set out the teaching program for the course content, together with appropriate assessment items.*
- *Teachers may choose to adapt the template program as they see fit.*
- *Modifications to course design, content, assessment and course standards will be explained and exemplified at Day 4 Professional Development (PD) sessions.*

Page 42

Finding 10

In the opinion of the Committee the outcome levels outlined in the Courses of Study of the original proposal were vague and imprecise. The Committee considered the number of levels and bands of performance within a level in the original proposal were inadequate for the purpose of fine-grained ranking inherent in establishing a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER). The Committee welcomes the modification that as well as providing an indicative judgment of a level and band, teachers are obliged to provide a unit score out of 100.

Page 43

Finding 11

With the retention of plain English, content-specific subject syllabi, students and teachers will have a clear guide to what material is assessable and how it will be assessed.

Page 43

Finding 12

The Committee welcomes the guarantee that no new content will be assessed in the examination for the first cohort of Year 11 and 12 students for those courses replacing Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) subjects. The Committee believes this will allow time to ensure that if any values or ethics components of the physical sciences and other subjects are introduced they are relevant and have an appropriate weighting.

Page 44

Finding 13

The Committee believes these adjustments when backed up with a valid moderation and scaling process have the capacity to deliver a refined system that incorporates the best features of the current system and Outcomes Based Education (OBE).

Page 45

Finding 14

The process of moderation is considerably stronger for the current changes than for the Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) / Vocational Education and Training (VET) / Wholly School Assessed (WSA) system. Early moderation and the potential use of a General Aptitude Test (GAT) should result in school unit marks more closely reflecting the school's average performance in the external examination in that subject.

Page 46

Finding 15

The increase in the number of tertiary entrance Courses of Study from 22 to 47 has emphasised the need for a valid scaling process across all courses.

Page 46

Finding 16

The introduction of a General Aptitude Test (GAT) has the potential to considerably strengthen the scaling process.

Page 46

Finding 17

The Committee considers it likely that students will continue to gravitate to Courses of Study for which they have ability or have an interest.

Page 54

Finding 18

It has been difficult to provide teachers with definitive professional development while the new curriculum was changing and evolving. Although this has allowed the development of the new curriculum to be responsive to teachers' needs and concerns, it has not provided them with timely answers to their questions about the new curriculum. The sense of uncertainty about teachers' capacity to implement the new curriculum without detriment to students was aggravated by the late scheduling of professional development days relative to the implementation of new Courses of Study.

Page 62

Finding 19

In NSW, the development and early distribution of 'NSW HSC Standards Packages' in the format of integrated and detailed CD ROMs for each Course of Study assisted greatly in the acceptance of curriculum change in that State.

Page 62

Finding 20

The development of comprehensive and interactive DVDs for distribution to all teachers in Western Australia free of charge along the lines of the 'NSW HSC Standards Packages' CD ROMs in NSW would assist in the implementation of curriculum change in this State.

Page 65

Finding 21

In addition to the issues outlined in Finding 1, a delay in implementation of the new curriculum would also result in:

- Disruption to schools which have published handbooks, counselled students and commenced timetabling on the basis of the implementation of the new curriculum;
- Disruption for Year 10 students who are making their subject choices for Year 11 in 2007;
- Year 12 students in 2008 who undertake current non-TEE (non-Tertiary Entrance Examination) subjects will remain ineligible for a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER); and
- The potential for an unmanageable roll out of 37 new Courses of Study in 2008 which would place too many teachers outside of the schools on professional development at any one time.

Page 66

Finding 22

The Curriculum Council currently develops, distributes and evaluates curriculum documentation and it is recognised that this practice will continue as the new Courses of Study are refined.

Page 75

Finding 23

It is likely that professional development requirements will be on-going and will demand substantial resources after the Courses of Study are implemented. The establishment of Teacher Development Centres in government schools as well as the additional support for the non-government sector are positive recognition of the need for on-going support. Although the cost to individual schools is difficult to quantify, support both at the school level and across sectors is required.

Page 84

Finding 24

Initiatives developed by the Curriculum Council to accommodate the needs of less academically able students appear to be positive.

Page 85

Finding 25

The amalgamation of Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) and non-TEE subjects has the potential to remove the two-tiered education system which places a higher value on certain subjects over others. By making all Courses of Study eligible for a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER), and therefore counting towards university entrance, the amalgamation will mean subjects that can be studied at university to doctoral level will be given appropriate status at the secondary school stage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Page 28

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that course selection by students be monitored to ensure that perceived differences in difficulty do not result in enrolments falling in Courses of Study in areas such as mathematics and the physical sciences.

Page 35

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the State Government fund the Curriculum Council, to work in partnership with the government and non-government school sectors, to put in place a major communication program with the teachers and their school communities aimed at securing an understanding of the nature, direction and detail of the new Years 11 and 12 curriculum.

Page 46

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that:

- (i) Due to the increase of Tertiary Entrance Ranking subjects and the use of common levels for all Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Courses of Study, all Year 12 students in 2008 and 2009 should sit a General Aptitude Test (GAT) for the purposes of validating the scaling for TER; and
- (ii) Consideration should also be given to the use of a GAT to enable the calculation an index of educational performance that may be of use in helping to evaluate the performance of students headed towards employment or TAFE.

Page 63

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that there be investment in the development and distribution of comprehensive and interactive DVDs to all teachers in Western Australia free of charge, along the lines of the '*NSW HSC Standards Packages*' CD ROMs in NSW.

Page 67

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the current timetable for the implementation of the proposed new Courses of Study for Years 11 and 12 should continue and be closely monitored, particularly in the area of assessment processes. If necessary, adjustments must be made before the implementation of Phase III in 2008.

Page 75

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the State Government ensures support for all classroom teachers by providing sufficient funding for the Teacher Development Centres and the equivalent support activities in the non-government school sector.

Page 84

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the initiatives implemented to accommodate the needs of the less academically able students in the new curriculum be monitored to ensure their effectiveness.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE

In accordance with Standing Order 277(1) of the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly, the Education and Health Standing Committee directs that the Minister for Small Business representing the Minister for Education and Training report to the Assembly as to the action, if any, proposed to be taken by the Government with respect to the recommendations of the Committee.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The new curriculum

Outcomes and standards have been features of the education system of Western Australia long before the proposed curriculum changes. Outcomes focus on what students should know and be able to do; standards are more concerned with providing information about students' achievements in comparison to each other. The original proposal to move to what was referred to as 'Outcomes Based Education' (OBE) for the Years 11 and 12 curriculum saw a move away from the strict adherence to a set syllabus for subjects which had assisted in the comparative grading of students with a view to accessing university. The debate over this original proposal was polarised, and major adjustments were agreed as a result. The new curriculum for Years 11 and 12 education now includes features of OBE and has retained elements of syllabus driven numerically assessed curricula.

The modifications made to the original proposal for changes to the curriculum (discussed further in Chapter Three) include:

- *There will be a syllabus for each course.*
- *The existing TEE [Tertiary Entrance Examination] syllabus format will be used for all new courses. Course specific refinements will be made.*
- *Teachers will be able to use their existing teaching programs or lesson plans for those new courses that have been derived from existing TEE subjects.*
- *Some adjustments will be made to content to allow for the semester unit structure and to ensure that content is updated.*
- *No new content will be assessed in the examination for the first cohort of Year 11 and Year 12 students for those courses replacing TEE subjects.*
- *Course design will be modified, where necessary, to suit specific course disciplines.*
- *Language used in each course syllabus will be discipline specific.*
- *Content will be made more explicit and clear for teachers.*
- *The nature and weighting of outcomes will be clarified and adjusted on a course by course basis.*
- *Course standards will be refined to guarantee clarity of student progression.*
- *Schools will submit a mark out of 100 for a unit and provide an indicative judgement of a level and band for the unit.*

- *Teachers will not be required to submit assessment evidence plans; however they will still be required to have evidence of their students' achievements during school moderation visits as they do now.¹*

The Committee believes these adjustments, when backed up with a valid scaling and moderation process, have the capacity to deliver a refined system that incorporates the best features of the current system and OBE. This refined system can deliver a fair and transparent method of ranking students in the highly competitive process of university entrance and enables vocationally orientated students to acquire relevant skills. Furthermore, it enables students to move between vocational and academic pathways.

The Committee is particularly pleased with the undertaking, referred to above, that *'The existing TEE syllabus format will be used for all new courses. Course specific refinements will be made.'* The perceived absence of a 'common syllabus' for the original proposal, with plain English learning objectives and content, gave rise to concerns that comparisons of students' performance would be flawed and individual students advantaged or disadvantaged at the whim of individual teachers developing diverse curricula. The explicit weightings, plain language, brevity and dot point format make the current TEE syllabus document an essential, easily understood study guide to students, teachers and parents.

1.2 Changes to school curriculum in Western Australia

To understand how the Curriculum Council developed this current proposal it is necessary to detail the process by which changes to the curriculum are advanced.

The Curriculum Council is responsible for the implementation of the Curriculum Framework, which was introduced in 1998 and is mandated for all Western Australian schools. The Council was established as an independent statutory authority under Section 5 of the *Curriculum Council Act 1997* and under that Act is responsible to:

- (a) *control, direct and coordinate the development of a curriculum framework for schooling;*
- (b) *approve a curriculum framework for schooling;*
- (c) *evaluate, review and revise as it thinks fit the curriculum framework;*
- (d) *determine and coordinate arrangements to be used or followed for the implementation of the curriculum framework;*
- (e) *identify priorities and develop, distribute and evaluate curriculum documentation and other material which facilitate implementation of the curriculum framework;*
- (f) *develop professional development plans necessary to support implementation of the curriculum framework;*
- (g) *establish, in accordance with the approved curriculum framework, the minimum requirements for graduation from secondary school and for the issue of a certificate of student achievement; and*

¹ Memorandum to schools, 'Summary - Modifications to the new courses from Year 11 and 12', Curriculum Council, 18 June 2006, p2.

- (h) *establish, determine the criteria for, and administer, exhibitions and awards to be granted in recognition of student achievement.*²

The Curriculum Council is made up of a number of education stakeholders. In addition to a Chair and Chief Executive Officer, the Council's current membership consists of representatives of key groups, including:

- Community, Industry and Education;
- Department of Education and Training;
- Catholic Education Commission;
- Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia;
- Universities;
- Teacher interests; and
- Parent interests.

The representative nature of the Council is to ensure that all of the interest groups within the Education community have a voice in decision-making.

The Curriculum Framework has been operating in the compulsory years (Kindergarten to Year 10) since its introduction, but was always intended to apply to all Years K - 12. Recent changes to the compulsory education period have meant that Years 11 and 12 are no longer 'post-compulsory'. School attendance is now mandated until the end of the year a young person turns 16 and this will be increased in the future.³ Changes to the compulsory education period have implications for the curriculum which should be available for students, and these are discussed in Chapter Two. The changes to compulsory school attendance have also meant that the inquiry's title *Inquiry into Changes to the Post Compulsory Curriculum in Western Australia* is now something of a misnomer, although the term of reference, to 'examine, report and make recommendations on the proposed changes to the Years 11 and 12 curriculum,' is adequate to cover the current situation and the latter terminology will generally be used for the purposes of this report.

Between 2005 and 2009 a new Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) is being introduced for students graduating from school at Year 12. In some respects the new WACE will not change the existing system, including:

- There will still be exams, but instead of the TEE they will be the WACE exams, which will not be compulsory for students not intending to go to university;

² *Curriculum Council Act 1997*, section 9.

³ *School Education Act 1999*, section 6. From 2008, the compulsory education period will be until the end of the year a young person turns 17, and from 2014 will be increased further.

- Students will still receive a graduation certificate (if they meet the requirements); and
- Opportunities to do VET (Vocational Education and Training) will continue, including the School Apprenticeship Link Program and School Based Traineeships. Students will also be able to do the equivalent of VET versions of courses.⁴

In other respects, however, the WACE will introduce significant reforms to the Years 11 and 12 curriculum. Some of the changes published by the Curriculum Council on its website and in its published documents include that:

- Forty seven new courses will replace all of the more than 350 existing Year 11 and 12 subjects. The new courses are intended to be based on the same range of fields of study offered at Western Australian universities; and
- There will no longer be three types of subjects - Wholly School Assessed (WSA), TEE and VET. With the WACE, all Courses of Study will be considered for Tertiary Entrance Ranking,⁵ Technical and Further Education (TAFE) entrance and other further education opportunities (there will still be some pre-requisites or recommended courses for certain subjects).

The Curriculum Council's original intention was also that each new course would have a syllabus comprising:

- outcomes;
- essential content; and
- standards.

The Curriculum Council has stated that the focus of the change was that:

...there be one consistent standard for all students, state-wide, which is intended to ensure that students, parents, universities, training providers and employers all receive meaningful information about a student's standards.⁶

Other features of the new curriculum for students intending to seek entry into tertiary institutions include:

- A student's Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) will be based on their four best Course of Study results provided these subjects cover an identified 13 overarching outcomes; and

⁴ Curriculum Council of Western Australia website, available at: www.curriculum.wa.edu.au. Accessed November 2005.

⁵ The aggregate score based on a student's best four TEE subjects, used to assess university entrance.

⁶ Curriculum Council of Western Australia website, available at: www.curriculum.wa.edu.au. Accessed November 2005.

- Fifty per cent of a student's TER will be based on their performance at school and 50 per cent on final external examinations.

At the time of writing this report, the Committee was informed that many aspects of the original proposal for curriculum reform would be subject to adjustment, as outlined briefly at 1.1 above. The Curriculum Council agreed that procedures and guidelines from these policy changes would be tabled for Council members' information at a future meeting. The Curriculum Council also advises, however, that there are no policy changes which require further consideration but that operational detail is being worked through across the sector to ensure a smooth implementation.⁷

1.3 The timetable for change

Schools will select which of the 47 Courses of Study to offer their students to meet their interests and needs within school resources.

Students will generally choose five or six Courses of Study, including one from the English area (English; English as a Second Language; or Texts, Traditions and Cultures - English Literature). Students will select units of study, from within a course, appropriate to their entry levels.

Four Courses of Study have commenced, namely Aviation Studies (commenced in Year 11 in 2005), Engineering Studies, English, and Media Production and Analysis (commenced in Year 11 in 2006), with a further 17 Courses of Study for Year 11 in 2007. The remaining Courses of Study are intended to be implemented for Year 11 in 2008.

⁷ Email from the Curriculum Council, 20 June 2006, p1.

Figure 1 Timetable for Implementation of the new WACE

NEW COURSES		
Phase I courses	Phase II courses	Phase III courses
Year 11 in 2005	Year 11 in 2007	Year 11 in 2008
Year 12 in 2006	Year 12 in 2008	Year 12 in 2009
Aviation	Accounting and Finance	Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies
	Applied Information Technology	Agriculture
Phase I courses	Biological Sciences	Australian Indigenous Languages
Year 11 in 2006	Chemistry	Automotive Engineering and Technology
Year 12 in 2007	Computer Science	Building and Construction
Engineering Studies	Drama	Business Management and Enterprise
English	Earth and Environmental Science	Career and Enterprise
Media Production and Analysis	English as an Additional Language/Dialect	Children, Family and the Community
	Geography	Dance
	History: Ancient and Modern	Economics
	Human Biological Sciences	Food Science and Technology
	Music	Health Studies
	Physical Education Studies	Integrated Science
	Physics	LOTE: First Language
	Politics and Law	LOTE: Second Language (Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian and Japanese)
	Texts, Traditions and Cultures (English Literature)	LOTE: Small Candidature Languages
	Visual Arts	Marine and Maritime Technology
		Materials Design and Technology
		Mathematics – Chance and Data
		Mathematics – Number and Change
		Mathematics – Space and Movement
		Philosophy and Ethics
		Psychology
		Recreational and Environmental Studies
		Religion and Life
		Visual Communication Design

Source: Curriculum Council Website (accessed 21 June 2006)

1.4 Background to the inquiry

The Education and Health Standing Committee resolved to undertake an inquiry into *Changes to the Post Compulsory Curriculum in Western Australia* on 4 May 2005. The Committee advertised in *The West Australian*, *The Australian* and various local and community newspapers in May calling for submissions, with a closing date of 1 July 2005. It continued to receive submissions up to and, in some cases after, that date and by the end of 2005 had received 182 submissions. There have been a number of submissions provided after this date, including some as the report has been prepared; while they have not been listed in the list of submissions, they have been read and considered as part of this report.

The submissions received were from a variety of people and organisations including classroom teachers, schools, educationalists and education associations. Some submissions had multiple signatories, and one submission was presented 29 times by different people. These have been taken as separate submissions and have been counted individually, despite being verbatim facsimiles. Where this 'pro forma' submission has been quoted in this report, it has been cited as by the original authors.

A very high level of public interest and media attention on matters related to the inquiry led to the Committee determining that on one of the terms of reference an interim report should be produced. Specifically, the issue of readiness of the system for the changes was addressed as the Committee considered there was some urgency as a range of new Courses of Study were about to commence and there were concerns in the community about the level of readiness for Phase I of the changes. The Committee believed it was important that issues of support materials and professional development (PD) for teachers were flagged to enable steps to be taken to avoid similar problems in the Phase II implementation.

On 22 December 2005, the Committee adopted and tabled its *Interim Report on Changes to the Post Compulsory Curriculum in Western Australia*. In tabling this report, the Committee commented on issues of readiness and made one recommendation, namely:

- *By the commencement of the Professional Development program in 2006, the Curriculum Council publish a timetable for the commencement of each Course of Study, including a detailed listing of what complete support material will be provided for each Course of Study and by what date the material will be provided;*
- *That the core support material be provided by the last day of first term in the year preceding the commencement of the Course of Study; and*
- *That any Course of Study due to commence in 2007 or later, for which the support material are not provided by the end of the preceding first term, be delayed until the following year.*⁸

⁸ Western Australia, Legislative Assembly, Education and Health Standing Committee, *Interim Report on Changes to the Post Compulsory Curriculum in Western Australia*, 23 December 2005, p13.

Three of the Courses of Study due to commence in 2007 (Economics, Religion and Life and Integrated Science) were delayed for a year.

While the Committee has not reproduced the Interim Report in its entirety in this report, some of the content has been included to ensure completeness. The Committee believes that this report should be able to stand alone and that a reader need not obtain a separate report to acquire the Committee's complete view. In addition, elements of the readiness of the system have changed and these changes are reflected principally in Chapter Three of this report.

1.5 Scope of the inquiry

The focus of this inquiry has been the practical changes to the curriculum for Years 11 and 12 in Western Australia, as opposed to the theoretical underpinnings. Many of the submissions and some of the opposition, although by no means all of the opposition to the changes, reflect a philosophical objection to OBE rather than specific problems with what is being proposed. Many of the most vociferous opponents were in teaching and learning areas that were not due to commence for three years and Courses of Study had not been developed. The Committee acknowledges that the philosophical objections are part of a global educational debate and that both sides of the debate have passionate proponents, as well as equally passionate detractors. It is not the Committee's intention to engage in this debate. There is already a plethora of learned and detailed literature on the subject of OBE and the Committee does not consider it would add value to the debate, nor would it assist the students and teachers in Western Australia to do so. The Committee has, therefore, provided a brief description in this introductory chapter on OBE to provide context to the public debate. The rest of the report will focus largely on the practical implementation of the changes.

In focussing on the practical changes, the Committee has taken a systemic view, rather than looking in detail at specific Courses of Study. This approach is necessary for a number of reasons. Firstly, with more than 47 Courses of Study either in the process of being implemented or in development, resources and the timeframe for the inquiry simply preclude such an analysis. Secondly, the changing and developing nature of Courses of Study makes it an extremely difficult task to analyse individual subjects until they are operating. Thirdly, there have been some well-publicised disagreements regarding elements of specific Courses of Study, with some high profile resignations from development panels. These resignations have been for different reasons, but have usually related to professional differences among experts on the panels developing Courses of Study. It is not the role of this Committee to be the arbiter in such disputes.

The Committee has focussed instead on the macro and system-wide elements of the changes. Where specific Courses of Study illustrate fundamental systemic problems, in relation to their assessment for example, they are discussed, but as a general rule the Committee has sought to look at system-wide concerns.

Throughout this report, the Committee has referred to Curriculum Council and Department of Education and Training documents, submissions and evidence because they represent the 'official positions', and it in no way indicates the automatic Committee endorsement of those positions.

Similarly, the Committee has used specific quotes from submissions and evidence received, sometimes from the same submissions. On many issues, there have been literally hundreds of possible quotes and points made. To include a comprehensive coverage of all of the arguments would make the report prohibitively large and repetitive.

Instead, the Committee has identified what it considers to be the core issues and has illustrated the arguments with selected quotes. The submissions to the inquiry have already been published on the Committee's website and readers can access them on www.parliament.wa.gov.au/committees to gain more details on the arguments presented here.

The Committee recognises that one of the key difficulties in inquiring into a system in development is that changes and refinements are being made constantly. Indeed for the purposes of clarity it is important to distinguish between the changes embodied in the 'original proposal' and the 'current changes' that are now proceeding for implementation, that are reflected in the decisions of the Curriculum Council since May 2006. Many submissions were made prior to May 2006 or before Courses of Study were finalised and concerns may have been subsequently addressed; similarly, some of the concerns may also have been allayed as the changes become better understood. The Committee has sought to update information as the inquiry has progressed and has sought to keep its understandings current.

Finally, in order to assist it with some of the technical aspects of the assessment issue, the Committee engaged the services of Professor Jim Tognolini, Research Director, System and School Testing, for the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). The Committee is aware that assessment has concerned many people and that it represents one of the key issues in this inquiry. It is also one that requires a level of expertise that is not available in the general community. The Curriculum Council itself has engaged a consultant of substantial internationally-recognised expertise to address assessment issues. In order for the Committee to feel confident in addressing these issues, it was necessary to do the same. The Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Tognolini for his invaluable assistance in this regard.

1.6 The Outcomes Based Education Debate

Much of the public debate in Western Australia during this inquiry has surrounded the merits or otherwise of OBE, or Outcomes Based Education. A focus on education outcomes instead of strict adherence to a set syllabus saw the original proposal to change the curriculum for Years 11 and 12 being labelled as OBE and this led to substantial criticism from those who inherently disagree with an outcomes-based approach.

The debate about OBE is a very polarised one. Its supporters argue that by focusing on what students need to be able to do - rather than on simply teaching a set syllabus culminating in an examination - the education will be more relevant for more students. It has been characterised during this inquiry as 'teaching the kids, not the course'. Opponents of OBE see it as too value driven and not academically valid, too vague to be properly assessed and accuse it of 'dumbing down' the curriculum.

The original proposals for the Years 11 and 12 curriculum in Western Australia had strong links to OBE. The Curriculum Council stated that its Curriculum Framework:

...makes explicit the learning outcomes which all Western Australian students should achieve. This focus on outcomes represents a major shift in school curriculum from a focus on educational inputs and time allocation toward one that emphasises the desired results of schooling.

The Curriculum Framework establishes learning outcomes for all students, regardless of who they are, which school they attend, where they are from, or what approach their school takes to help them achieve those outcomes. These learning outcomes are set out in this document within the Overarching and eight Learning Area Statements.⁹

(a) What does the term Outcomes Based Education mean?

As stated previously, it is not the Committee's intention to engage in a detailed debate about the merits or otherwise about OBE. However, given the significance placed on the term in the public debate in Western Australia, a brief description of the principles underpinning the OBE model is necessary.

OBE means clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. This means starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organizing curriculum, instruction, and assessment to make sure this learning ultimately happens. According to its best known proponent, William Spady, the keys to having an outcomes-based system are:

- 1) Developing a clear set of learning outcomes around which all of the system's components can be focused; and
- 2) Establishing the conditions and opportunities within the system that enable and encourage all students to achieve those essential outcomes.

(b) What are 'Outcomes'?

According to Spady, outcomes are clear learning results that we want students to demonstrate at the end of significant learning experiences. In his view they are not, as many of the critics of the model assert, values, beliefs, attitudes, or psychological states of mind. Instead, outcomes are supposed to be what learners can actually do with what they know and have learned - they are the tangible application of what has been learned.

In an outcome-based system, standards are clearly defined and known and all students potentially are eligible to reach and receive full credit for achieving any performance standard in the system.

⁹ Overarching Statement of the Curriculum Framework, Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998, p6.

OBE's two key purposes reflect its underlying 'Success for all students and staff' philosophy. They are:

- Ensuring that all students are equipped with the knowledge, competence, and qualities needed to be successful after they exit the educational system; and
- Structuring and operating schools so that those outcomes can be achieved and maximized for all students.

OBE is based on three key assumptions or premises, which are:

- All students can learn and succeed, but not on the same day in the same way;
- Successful learning promotes even more successful learning; and
- Schools control the conditions that directly affect successful school learning.

The literature identifies three key models of OBE:

- Traditional OBE, which is the closest to established educational models, and is the least radical. In the traditional OBE model clear criteria are established without substantially altering the structure of the curriculum or the school;
- Transitional OBE, in which subject matter become more of a vehicle to assist in the cultivation and integration of higher order competencies. The model places greater emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving, and effective communication skills than on specific facts; and
- Transformational OBE, the most radical form, which is based on the belief that there is too much emphasis on the schooling structure and curriculum that has traditionally made youngsters good students, and not enough emphasis on what is really going to make a difference in a complex 21st Century world.

The difficulties with the current debate on the merits or otherwise of OBE as a basis for an education system are twofold. Firstly, it is largely an ideological or philosophical debate which may be important to those who engage in it, but that ultimately does nothing for the students who rely on our education system to prepare for adult life or for the teachers who have to help them. Secondly, the term has been used so loosely that any new approach to teaching that may move away from the traditional syllabus approach is labelled OBE.

(c) Has Outcomes Based Education failed elsewhere?

It has been claimed many times during this inquiry that OBE has been tried elsewhere and has failed and, consequently, has been abandoned. In a submission provided by a number of different people, it was stated regarding OBE that:

England has abandoned it in favour of a set curriculum with exams and percentages. The USA still struggles with it in various States but is on the verge of abandoning it. Victoria has reverted to a content-driven syllabus, NSW converts percentages to levels for reporting purposes, and Queensland is reintroducing core subjects and content.¹⁰

The Committee visited Victoria, NSW and Queensland as part of this inquiry and while there were different labels used, there was an outcomes focus in every jurisdiction and many of the features of the new system in WA are evident in the other States. No two States' systems are the same and this makes it difficult to make like-with-like comparisons. However, the assertion that the other States have abandoned OBE is simply not sustainable.

There are elements of OBE in most modern education systems, just as there are elements of traditional curricula. The Curriculum Council has argued that the claim that OBE has been tried in other jurisdictions and 'failed' is wrong. In response to the claim, the Curriculum Council has stated that contrary to outcomes being abandoned elsewhere, in fact:

'...all States and Territories in Australia have organised their curriculum around learning outcomes. The Commonwealth, States and Territories have agreed to develop a nationally consistent curriculum based on outcomes and this is now a condition of the Commonwealth funding agreement.'¹¹

The ambiguous nature of the term 'OBE' and the fact that different elements have been used in different jurisdictions, particularly in the vastly diverse US education system that has more than 30,000 autonomous school districts, renders any assertions about the overall success or failure of OBE *per se* rather inane.

The Committee endorses the comments made by Professor Max Angus in his submission to the inquiry that:

To argue that the ideas behind the post-compulsory changes have been tried in the US and found to have failed is far too sweeping a claim to take seriously. There has been no systematic evaluation of OBE because it is such an amorphous concept and because it has never been applied systematically on a large scale.¹²

In the Committee's view there are clearly elements of OBE in the new curriculum for Years 11 and 12, including the development of outcomes and explicit standards and the proposed assessment regime.

(d) What are the objections?

Opposition to OBE comes in a number of forms. At one end of the spectrum and at its most radical, opponents claim that OBE is an attempt to socially-engineer our society and is designed to

¹⁰ Submission No 35 from Mr G. Williams and Mr M. Vojkovic, 18 June 2005, p1.

¹¹ Curriculum Council website, available at: www.curriculum.wa.gov.au. Accessed on 4 May 2006.

¹² Submission No 49 from Professor Max Angus, 26 June 2005, p3.

undermine our traditional values. Most of the objections received by the Committee are of a more practical nature, and are considered as appropriate throughout this report. They include:

- The vague and ambiguous nature of the documentation upon which teachers have been expected to develop their teaching programs. The ambiguity is, according to opponents of OBE, a feature of the system designed to ensure success for all;
- The treatment of all Courses of Study as equal, in both status and difficulty, is of concern to those who consider that OBE does not recognise differences in abilities amongst students. They consider that OBE represents a ‘one size fits all’ approach and will disadvantage both academically-gifted and less able students alike; and
- The use of levels to enable students to be compared not to others in their cohort, but against their own progress. Opponents argue that competition is a major incentive in all human activity and is particularly important for students. Removal of competition in an OBE environment is a de-motivating force.

1.7 Conclusion

This inquiry has taken place in a highly charged environment, due to the controversial nature of the changes being made and the well-publicised objections to the changes. In the Committee’s view, one of the most important roles an inquiry such as this can play is to provide a forum for views to be expressed and made public, and to be considered in decision-making. The public debate that has taken place in the media, as well as in this inquiry, has made concerns about the changes publicly open for scrutiny. The Committee has no doubt that this public spotlight on a developing system has made it very difficult for those with the legislative responsibility for managing education in Western Australia, particularly the Curriculum Council. However, the Committee is also sure that amendments to Courses of Study, assessment regimes, teacher support and professional development have occurred because of this public debate. It has therefore enhanced the process.

As stated earlier, the Committee has focussed on the changes being made to the curriculum for Years 11 and 12 in Western Australia as they are, without further reference to any theoretical model upon which they may or may not be based. This does not mean that the debate is not an important one, nor does it imply that many of the concerns of those who oppose OBE are not valid. However, in the Committee’s view the label used to describe these changes is very much less important to Western Australian students than the development of a successful education system.

CHAPTER 2 THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL

2.1 Rationale of the original proposal

The major goals propelling the proponents of change from the current system to the proposed outcomes focused curriculum include:

- Increasing student retention rates through to Year 12;
- Removing unnecessary early obstacles between academic and vocational pathways;
- Encouraging the study of mathematics and science;
- Catering for less able students;
- Valuing vocational subjects leading to training for trades skills;
- Removing existing inequities between Courses of Study;
- Encouraging increased awareness and analysis of values; and
- Allowing the inclusion of all subjects in TER.

It is clear that educational professionals had identified significant weaknesses, failures and inequities within the current TEE/VET/WSA¹³ system, and – while not wanting to diminish the worth of the existing curriculum – overwhelmingly supported a move to a curriculum framework to better respond to the educational needs for the contemporary world.

Changes to the curriculum for Years 11 and 12 have been planned for a substantial time. In its evidence to the Committee, the Department of Education and Training advised that the draft statement for a new curriculum was written in 1988 and that ‘*outcomes were trialled*’ in 1992. In 1998-99 the final outcome statements were released and the Curriculum Framework published.¹⁴

The Curriculum Council told the Committee that there had been seven years of consultation and planning prior to arriving at the current stage. In its submission to the inquiry, the Curriculum Council stated that:

¹³ This system consists of three different types of subjects – subjects assessed through the Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE), Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects and Wholly School Assessed (WSA) subjects.

¹⁴ Ms L. Joll, Director, Senior Schooling Academic Standards and Support, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, pp6-7.

*In 1998, with the introduction of the K-12 Curriculum Framework ... it was clear that current subjects in Year 11 and 12 would need to be reviewed to align them with the Curriculum Framework.*¹⁵

It was within this context that the Curriculum Council embarked on a major review of what, at that time, was post-compulsory education, in May 1998. This review process led to the publication in 2001 of *Our Youth, Our Future*, effectively a blueprint for reform of the curriculum for Years 11 and 12.

The first draft of the Course of Studies was released in 2003.¹⁶ The Curriculum Council advised, however, that:

*In some cases, it was as small as only 25 or so teachers who responded to earlier drafts and various versions and to the results of consultation. The result of that was that the council determined that, on the basis of the information we had, no response was a favourable response. We have now been engaged in producing the courses and running professional development. We have now run three professional development days with teachers of these courses. Some 6 000 have been involved in the courses... As a result of that, we have received a vast amount of feedback. The majority of that feedback is about fine-grain detail of courses and requests for some points of clarification and some refinement to some aspects of the courses. We have undertaken to do that.*¹⁷

In its submission to the inquiry, the Curriculum Council told the Committee that there were a number of reasons why the change to the curriculum was needed. These include:

- An increasing proliferation of subjects to over 350 of varying quality, to accommodate the growth of numbers of students in Years 11 and 12;
- Calls from schools and students to address issues about the perceived status of the three different types of subjects in Years 11 and 12, with their different structures, processes and lack of comparable standards;
- Accommodating the effects of a rapidly changing knowledge environment, in which there are growing demands to include more content in an already overcrowded curriculum;
- Growth in the vocational education and training sector and changing expectations from industry in terms of the knowledge, skills and values required of school leavers; and

¹⁵ Submission No 175 from Curriculum Council, 16 August 2005, p1.

¹⁶ Ms L. Joll, Director, Senior Schooling Academic Standards and Support, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, pp6-7.

¹⁷ Mr David Axworthy, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, p1.

- Current courses not engaging all students to remain at school, with Western Australia identified with the lowest retention rate (67 per cent) for Australian States. This demands that the current structure be revised to be more flexible and adaptive to change.

The Curriculum Council told the Committee that:

*The new WACE will implement outcomes and standards in Years 11 and 12. It will be a system not just about what students learn but what they understand, what they can do and what they value.*¹⁸

Specifically, the Council identified some key reasons for change. These included:

- The need to have a system that accommodates all students and provides for continuity between K to 10 and Years 11 and 12;
- The impact of raising the school leaving age and the necessity to provide appropriate learning opportunities for the whole cohort of students. This is supported by the apparent lack of relevance of the current curriculum for students with high drop out rates in Years 11 and 12;
- The need to have a system of education and training that allows students to move more easily from one pathway of study to another. Currently students are 'locked into' pathways when they choose their Year 11 subjects in Year 10 and it is virtually impossible for a student who has done well in WSA subjects in Year 11 to switch to a Tertiary Entrance Subject (TES), enabling the student to sit the TEE, in Year 12;
- The need for a system of education and training that gives those students who are bound for university the breadth of subject choice that is available in other States;
- The need for a system of education that provides opportunities for more students to gain a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER). Currently only 37.3 per cent of WA students obtain a TER as opposed to 65 per cent, 69.7 per cent and 71.2 per cent in NSW, Victoria and Queensland respectively; and
- The need to overcome the disadvantage experienced by some students who do TES, who do not get a high TER and still do not meet TAFE requirements for entry which are based on grades. For example, an 'A' for Vocational English and an 'A' for English Literature TES are considered to be the same value for TAFE entry. This means that a student who achieves a 'B' in English Literature, which is more difficult than Vocational English, will be ranked lower than the student achieving an 'A' in Vocational English. The content for the two subjects is not the same and there is no common standards framework.

¹⁸ Submission No 175 from Curriculum Council, 16 August 2005, p4.

These reasons were further supported by other submissions received by the Committee. For example, the Association of Independent Schools WA (AISWA) supported the thrust of the changes and said in its submission that the advantages of the proposed new system were:

- A seamless transition from Kindergarten through to Year 12;
- Greater flexibility of the Courses of Study over existing subjects;
- The ability to access more learning environments;
- The reduced pressure on students to make decisions in Year 10 that restrict their pathways in Years 11 and 12 and beyond; and
- The removal of an examination-driven Year 12 for students - from the pressure of the examination to the shortening of the school year to accommodate the exams, the latter impacting all Year 12 students, and some students in lower years, regardless of whether they take the exams or not.

While AISWA have since raised concerns about the implementation of the changes, its support for the underlying principles has been unequivocal. In evidence before the Committee, Mrs Audrey Jackson, Executive Director of AISWA said:

As an association, we strongly believed when the change was mooted that this was something that was in fact going to benefit the majority of students who proceed through to years 11 and 12 - that it would take the focus away from the 30 or 40 per cent who want to go to university. The problem for the association has been in the implementation.¹⁹

Similarly, Ms Alison Woodman, Principal of Merredin Senior High School told the Committee that:

This is my forty-first year as an educator. I have lived and worked through many changes in education in that time. I have entered into and championed all those that were relevant to my teaching. The change to outcomes-focused education is unquestionably the best change I have seen and been involved in. The curriculum framework, outcomes and standards framework, progress maps, the standards and support materials provide the clearest and most comprehensive documentation for excellent teaching, accountability and a good education for all that I have experienced in my career.²⁰

The Department of Education and Training told the Committee in its submission that the impetus for the change grew from the concerns of teachers and parents that the TEE/VET/WSA subjects were not meeting the needs of WA students and that those who do not complete Year 12 are at a significant disadvantage in their post-school and employment prospects.²¹

¹⁹ Mrs Audrey Jackson, Executive Director of AISWA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 31 August 2005, p6.

²⁰ Ms Alison Woodman, Principal of Merredin SHS, *Transcript of Evidence*, 19 October 2005, p1.

²¹ Submission No 177 from Department of Education and Training, 27 July 2005, p1.

Other organisations with more specific mandates also saw substantial merit in the changes. The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education & Recreation (WA Branch) (ACHPER) told the Committee that in its view, currently many academically able students who are considering university studies aligned with careers in Health and Physical Education (HPE) teaching, sports science and the sport, leisure and health industries are dissuaded from studying the non-TEE Year 11 and 12 subjects in the learning area. They are effectively denied opportunities to gain skills, knowledge and understandings in Years 11 and 12 that would be the ideal foundation for university studies aligned with the learning area.²²

ACHPER told the Committee that it:

*...welcomes the flexibility inherent in the changes, ensuring that teachers will be able to develop units and learning, teaching and assessment tasks that reflect the specific learning needs and interests of their students.*²³

Individual schools, too, have expressed support for the changes based largely on the increased flexibility and the continuity the changes offer. In its submission to the inquiry, Corpus Christi College said:

*It is our belief that when this change has been implemented it will provide a greatly improved educational system for students in Western Australia. The changes will complete the implementation of the Curriculum Framework K-12 and will provide an Outcomes Based Education system that is consistent with the needs of students in the 21st Century. It is also consistent with current educational trends and research regarding how students learn.*²⁴

The Catholic Education Office, too, supported the changes on the grounds that they establish ‘a learning, teaching and assessment structure that is consistent with common practice in years 8 to 10 and therefore establishes a consistency of approach in all secondary years’.²⁵ The Chief Executive Officer told the Committee that:

*The proposed system addresses this issue (of dual pathways) by creating a unitary system which allows students to select a range of courses which contribute equally to all post-secondary destinations. Existing TEE students will have an increased range of courses from which to select, especially in the technology and health and physical education learning areas and non-TEE students will be able to keep all study options open.*²⁶

There was also support on theoretical educational grounds with Curtin University’s submission saying that:

²² Submission No 83 from ACHPER, 29 June 2005, p1.

²³ *ibid*, p2.

²⁴ Submission No 140 from Corpus Christi College, 4 July 2005, p1.

²⁵ Submission No 126 from Catholic Education Office, 1 July 2005, p1.

²⁶ *ibid*, p3.

The proposed changes can be supported from an educational perspective in that modern curriculum design and development theory and practice reflects the focus on learning and teaching processes. Given the explosion in knowledge and research in all discipline areas, and the increased access and availability of on-line knowledge systems, the post-compulsory curriculum must reflect this change. This rapid expansion of knowledge systems is resulting in education systems designing and developing more flexible approaches to curriculum, teaching and learning.²⁷

Finding 1

There were significant issues with the Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) / Vocational Education and Training (VET) / Wholly School Assessed (WSA) curriculum and structure for Years 11 and 12. These issues included:

- The retention rate in post compulsory education in Western Australia was the lowest in Australia;
- The requirement that students make choices, in some instances at the age of 14, which could effectively lock them into educational pathways;
- The impact of raising the school leaving age created more urgency in the provision of appropriate learning opportunities to a wider cohort of students;
- The perceived status of the three different types of subjects in Years 11 and 12, with their different structures, processes and lack of comparable standards;
- The need to accommodate the effects of a rapidly changing knowledge environment, in which there are growing demands to include more content in an already overcrowded curriculum;
- The role of examinations for Year 11 and 12 students;
- The need for a system of education and training that gives those students who are bound for university the breadth of subject choice that is available in other States so that they can compete on a more equitable basis to gain entry to university;
- The need to enable the students studying a wider variety of courses to compete on a more equitable basis to gain entry to university; and
- The anomalies which exclude some subjects available at university level from counting towards the Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER).

²⁷

Submission No 138 from Curtin University of Technology, 4 July 2005, p1.

2.2 Concerns about the original proposal

Although there was support for the original proposal among the submissions, there was also substantial opposition. As discussed in the previous chapter, some of the opposition was based on a philosophical objection to OBE. There were also some very specific objections to the changes, particularly in the area of assessment. These arguments will be canvassed in Chapter Three relating to the most recent changes to the curriculum. This section will be restricted to general arguments against the original proposal other than the philosophical objections.

(a) ‘Not necessary’

One of the key arguments against the introduction of the curriculum changes has been that the changes are simply not necessary and that there has been a huge amount of time, money and work spent on something that will bring few, if any, benefits. Those that subscribe to this view have argued that the current system may have some deficiencies, but these can be fixed without a total overhaul of the system.

Mr Greg Williams, one of the most vocal opponents of the original proposal, told the Committee in his submission that:

*We currently have a system which serves the dual needs of university aspirants and prospective skilled workers remarkably well. I can see the need to devise a system whereby students who have a change of heart during their post compulsory years at school are still able to access university, but it hardly requires the dumping of the perfectly useful system that currently exists.*²⁸

Mr Williams rejects the idea that the current system is not flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of students. In his submission he stated that:

*The system we have at this point in time looks significantly different to the one that was introduced in 1984. However, the changes have been gradual and evolutionary. The fact that these changes have occurred are indicators that the current system does have the flexibility to meet change but the durability to continue fulfilling its designed function.*²⁹

He also did not accept the argument that the new system would reduce the inequalities that are claimed exist in the current system. He told the Committee that:

*With the current proposals for the new system one has to wonder if it will create more anomalies and inequities than it will remove. For example, courses like Materials and Design to be classified as equal in difficulty as Literature or Physics appears to be anomalous.*³⁰

²⁸ Submission No 17 from Mr Greg Williams, 8 June 2005, p1.

²⁹ *ibid*, p10.

³⁰ *ibid*, p13.

The claim that the current system has served the State well and can, with minor modifications, continue to do so was a common theme amongst submissions. In the Committee's view, it does not stand up to scrutiny. The most recent figures available to the Committee suggest that only 37.3 per cent of WA students obtain a TER as opposed to 65 per cent, 69.7 per cent and 71.2 per cent in NSW, Victoria and Queensland respectively.³¹

While obtaining a TER is not the only determinant of educational success it seems reasonable to assert that it provides a greater level of choice for students. It has been argued by opponents of the original proposal that to increase the number of those who have the option of tertiary education will risk robbing the society of skilled workers in industry. The Committee has seen no evidence to suggest that skilled worker shortages are greater in the States where higher percentages of students qualify for university.

(b) 'Artificially compared diverse subjects'

Another criticism of the original proposal was that it sought to artificially make courses comparable that were inherently different. Some of the concerns related specifically to the issue of assessment, and in particular, to the allocation of levels that are equal in obtaining a TER but which clearly have different degrees of intellectual difficulty. These concerns go to the core of the merits of the new system. In a submission, Ms Bernadette Dell told the Committee that:

*The idea that you can compare subjects that are inherently practical with ones that are inherently intellectual and use a grading system that will show that student work in each is comparable is utterly ridiculous.*³²

The Curriculum Council argues that the fact that a scale has been developed that provides comparability of performance within a subject does not mean that there is an attempt to directly compare the subjects themselves. In correspondence with the Committee, the Council said that:

*The courses have been designed to have comparable levels of difficulty applied to each level on the scale. This does not mean, as some respondents claim, that calculus is the same as food science. If for example, we take Olympic sports, we know there may be a ten-point scale for different sports, which set a standard for athletes to achieve. We do not believe that achieving '8' on the scale for equestrian sports is akin to the same skill set as achieving '8' on the scale for those involved in the diving. What is recognised is that there is a comparable standard to achieve the '8' on the scale for the different sports. The same principle is applied to the new courses. The council has committed to statistically adjusting school results as a back-up should the results not match the set standards.*³³

The perceived assumption that Courses of Study are equal is also extended, in the eyes of some critics, to the students themselves. A criticism of the original proposal has been that it tried to be

³¹ Submission No 175 from Curriculum Council, 16 August 2005, p4.

³² Submission No 103 from Ms Bernadette Dell, 28 June 2005, p1.

³³ Letter from Curriculum Council, November 2005, p4.

all things to all people and that it attempted to make all students equal. For example, in a submission from Ms Catherine O'Toole, the Committee was told that:

Currently we have a system in which Year 11 and 12 students have a choice of some 415 subjects. The new system is going to reduce that choice to about 47. This system cannot be all things to all people and to suggest that all can be levelled in the same way is essentially unworkable. According to the assessment framework all students are equal and capable of anything and while there is nothing terribly wrong with this ideal, it is just that and it is not a reality and will never become one.³⁴

The Committee accepts that equivalence simply means that a Level 8 in Calculus represents an educationally equivalent performance to a Level 8 in Physical Education. It does not mean that one uses the same set of skills, or that one student could achieve equally in either Course of Study. A rifle shooter at the Olympics has a different set of skills and characteristics to a gymnast, and yet both can earn very high marks and a gold medal. The same should be true in education.

Finding 2

The Committee considers that equivalent recognition of performance with equal degree of difficulty across Courses of Study is a positive step. This will, over time, help to reduce the current two-tiered education system which makes certain students and subject areas appear less valued than others.

(c) 'Dumbing down the education system'

While most submissions acknowledged that the academically able students would continue to do well under the new model, they were concerned for the student who struggled in these subjects. There was a view that either the students who are not academically able would fall by the wayside, thus defeating one of the key rationales of the new system, or the courses would be reduced in difficulty, or dumbed down, in order to allow all students to achieve.

This dumbing down was said to potentially take two forms: firstly, subjects that are traditionally academically rigorous would be watered down and made easier to enable students of a wider range of abilities to do them; secondly, by removing the requirement to do subjects from two separate lists, students would be able to avoid the difficult subjects completely.

In regard to concerns about the reduction of the academic rigour applied to Courses of Study, the Committee heard from a number of teachers that it was inevitable. For example, in the submission of Messrs Williams and Vojkovic, which was used as a pro forma by a large number of contributors to the inquiry, it was stated that:

³⁴ Submission No 153 from Ms Catherine O'Toole, 4 July 2005, p1.

...the Physics course will be dumbed-down to give these students a vague chance of success. Because it requires a high level of mathematical skills to rearrange Physics formulae, the suggestion was made that they be taken out of the course. They now appear in an appendix as 'potential' elements of the course.³⁵

This concern was echoed a number of times. In his submission, Mr David King stated that:

It is simply not possible to make the likes of history, literature, chemistry, calculus, etc equivalent in difficulty and status as the non-TEE subjects without 'dumbing them down'.³⁶

More specifically, a submission from Mr Tim Poga said that:

If the current TEE exam system scales courses because of their difficulty - how is it that the new courses will be equal in difficulty, that a level 8 in one course will be the same as a level 8 in another. Simple logic dictates that unless some courses are being 'dumbed down' or other courses are being made more difficult then not all courses can be of equal difficulty. If a course has been dumbed down - then standards have dropped. If a course has been made more difficult then what are the implications in terms of qualified or retrained staff teaching these courses.³⁷

This view is balanced by an alternative position that suggests that difference does not necessarily mean dumbing down. In a submission to the inquiry, Mr Geoffrey Middleton argued that:

A review of the scales of achievement for courses such as Physics, Chemistry, English Literature, etc. reveals that these courses demand a much greater level of cognitive ability and demand a much more complex understanding of concepts than their TEE equivalent subjects ever did. It will also give academic credibility to courses that, only as a result of their treatment by the school system, have been perceived to be the 'easier' subjects, a tag that professional Geographers, Accountants, Physiologists and Statisticians would vehemently disagree with.³⁸

The Committee agrees that while certain courses may require particularly high level skills, other subjects are equally important to the society and should be equally valued. However, many of the submissions received did differentiate between subjects largely on intellectual lines.

The Dean of Education from UWA, Associate Professor Marnie O'Neill, told the Committee in her submission that:

In some text-based courses such as English, Texts, Traditions and Cultures, and possibly other humanities types of courses, it is possible to demonstrate achievement of outcomes with relatively simplistic texts that do not provide either the intellectual or linguistic

³⁵ Submission No 35 from Mr Greg Williams and Mr Marko Vojkovic, 18 June 2005, p6.

³⁶ Submission No 4 from Mr David King, 23 May 2005, p4.

³⁷ Submission No 31 from Mr Tim Poga, 16 June 2005, p12.

³⁸ Submission No 135 from Mr Geoffrey Middleton, 1 July 2005, p8.

demand suggested by the outcomes for the courses of study, and therefore allow an inflated assessment to be made.³⁹

Associate Professor O'Neill did acknowledge that the same claim could be made under the current system, too. However, she argued that the difference between the original proposal to change the Years 11 and 12 curriculum and the existing TEE/VET/WSA system is that:

Teachers in many smaller schools are expected to manage the full range of levels in the one classroom.⁴⁰

There were substantial numbers of submissions that expressed concerns for the less able students under the original proposal, where non-academic subjects are going to count towards university entrance and therefore, it is feared, would become more academic than some students would be able to manage. For example, Dr Glenda Parkin of St Stephens School and AISWA, told the Committee that:

The NCoS (New Courses of Study) have the potential to either 'dumb down' courses or leave less capable students floundering e.g. Health Studies where there could be students looking to do child care currently studying Early Childhood Studies, nursing or medicine. How does the teacher reasonably cater for this range of students?⁴¹

Concerns were also raised that the changes may be a 'cop out' for less able or committed teachers. In her submission to the inquiry, Ms Bernadette Dell suggested that:

Teachers in various subject areas complain of a 'dumbing down' of the curriculum to make the material accessible to all. I also worry that it will allow less competent or lazy teachers to do whatever they like in the classroom claiming that it meets their students 'needs and interests'.⁴²

The capacity of competent teachers to manage the new Courses of Study was also an issue for some submissions. It was suggested to the Committee that:

If you add metallurgy studies / chemistry into metalwork where with all due respect teachers are expert fitters and turners or boilermakers not chemists you will get an outcome where metalwork WILL be being taught by people without the science background. If you get science teachers to teach it you won't get the metalworking skills taught to the required level. The problem is not in the comparison of levels but in the opportunity to learn from qualified teachers.⁴³

³⁹ Submission No 60 from Dr Marnie O'Neill, Dean, Faculty of Education, UWA, 23 June 2005, p7.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Submission No 114 from Dr Glenda Parkin, 30 June 2005, p7.

⁴² Submission No 103 from Ms Bernadette Dell, 28 June 2005, p9.

⁴³ Submission No 31 from Mr Tim Poga, 16 June 2005, p12.

Another concern was that students would abandon the more difficult subjects in favour of ‘easier’ subjects, because all would count towards a TER. This would, it was feared, see a reduction in students undertaking subjects such as Physics, Calculus and Literature and would lead inevitably to a less educated population.

In a submission, the Committee was told that:

Students will not choose our subjects History, Economics, Political and Legal Studies, Geography because the ‘List 1’ subjects of the old TEE are gone and students will be able to choose whatever courses of study they like to achieve a TEA (Tertiary Entrance Aggregate). It follows that students will choose courses they see as easier such as Media, Computing, Early Childhood Studies, Dance - subjects which previously did not attract a TEE score. The same problem may well occur for Maths and Science teachers unless the Universities impose ‘pre-requisite’ courses of study. We cannot see how this will not lead to a ‘dumbing’ down of our upper school education compared with what we currently have.⁴⁴

Two of the universities have advised the Committee that it is their intention to continue to apply pre-requisites to some of their courses.⁴⁵ The application of pre-requisites will reduce the risk of students avoiding difficult subjects that they wish to study at university. However, there will need to be on-going monitoring of this issue to ensure that particular subjects do not see a significant fall in enrolments. As suggested by Professor Max Angus of Edith Cowan University, some of the concerns about dumbing down of the system and reduction of standards and academic rigour stem from a fear that ‘bright’ students will select new courses so that the numbers of able students enrolled in a ‘difficult’ course will be depleted, thereby forcing teachers to drop the more challenging content.⁴⁶

The Committee agrees with Professor Angus that course selections by students will obviously need to be monitored and that enrolment drifts away from some of the current high status TEE subject areas will require investigation. The Committee also agrees that there will need to be a degree of dynamism in the operation of the new system as there would in any other system.⁴⁷

The Committee also notes that in June 2006, the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, Mr Paul Albert, advised that the proposed new syllabus for sciences had originally incorporated a values content. It was thought this would make these subjects more stimulating and attractive for students and address the ‘*diminished number of students going into those*

⁴⁴ Submission No 54 from Society and Environment teachers, Kelmscott SHS, 22 June 2005, p8.

⁴⁵ Letter from Prof. Jane den Hollander, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Curtin University of Technology, 17 May 2006; Letter from Mr Alan Robson, Vice-Chancellor, University of Western Australia, 18 May 2006. Edith Cowan University advised that it will evaluate the need for pre-requisites as new courses become available (Prof. Kerry O Cox, Vice-Chancellor, Edith Cowan University, 18 May 2006). No response on this issue was available from Murdoch University.

⁴⁶ Submission No 49 from Professor Max Angus, 26 June 2005, p7.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

areas'.⁴⁸ Although the proposed weighting given to this content (at 25 per cent of the total assessment for the course) was disputed and is being reduced, Mr Albert stated that:

*A lot of science teachers believe there should be some weighting to it because it is an attraction for students and makes the science courses quite interesting and less dry.*⁴⁹

This issue was also taken up with the Curriculum Council when it gave evidence to the Committee in June 2006. The Council's Acting Chief Executive Officer, Mr Axworthy, stated:

*...we have gone to some lengths to do a couple of things with the science courses. First of all, people can recognise the traditional science courses that were always there, so there is no loss in that sense. Physics, chemistry, biology and human biology are recognisable immediately. Integrated science is an opportunity to do something that physical science never really allowed; namely, to integrate across the various scientific domains. We have also been able to introduce content. For the past four or five years, there has not been the usual syllabus change in TEE because they were waiting for the new courses. ...That opportunity to update it, and to make things more relevant to students and to be able to tailor the course a little more to the particular group of students opens opportunities.*⁵⁰

When asked whether there was potential for the increased range of subjects available to count towards the TER to reduce the number of students enrolling in science subjects and thereby making course unviable, Mr Axworthy agreed this was of concern. However, it is hoped that the changes being advanced to make sciences more attractive to students will counteract this to some extent.

As a general stance, however, the Curriculum Council rejected the argument that there would be a dumbing down of Courses of Study in order to cater for all students. It told the Committee that in current subjects teachers have student achievement ranging from 35 - 100 per cent in their classes and that all students are taught the same content. According to the Council, the original proposal provided flexibility to adjust the content to match student needs.⁵¹

Further, the Council told the Committee that courses were designed to outline the level of complexity of content that is appropriate for students achieving at different levels. The first set of units was designed to support students to achieve levels 4 - 5, whereas the third set of units was designed to support students achieving levels 6 - 8. So rather than 'dumbing down' the content in a course, the Curriculum Council has asserted that teachers have been supported to pitch the appropriate level of complexity of content to particular groups of students.⁵²

⁴⁸ Mr Paul Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, p29.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Mr David Axworthy, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, p21.

⁵¹ Letter from Curriculum Council, November 2005, p5.

⁵² *ibid*, p5.

Finding 3

The Committee considers that the shift to Courses of Study does not lead to the ‘dumbing down’ of subjects. With different units available in each Course of Study, based on levels of complexity, the Committee expects that it will be easier for students to work at their appropriate level than they can in the current system.

Finding 4

Course selection by students will need to be monitored to ensure that perceived differences in difficulty do not result in enrolments falling in Courses of Study in areas such as mathematics and the physical sciences.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that course selection by students be monitored to ensure that perceived differences in difficulty do not result in enrolments falling in Courses of Study in areas such as mathematics and the physical sciences.

(d) ‘Lead to an unsustainable workload for teachers’

Another key issue amongst a large proportion of submissions was that of teacher workload. It is clear from the input of teachers that there was both an expectation and a concern that the workload under the original proposal would be unmanageable. The concerns raised were about both the current workload as teachers attempt to come to grips with a new and different system, and about the future where teachers did not see the workload decreasing over time. This was largely because many teachers saw the OBE approach as being extremely administration-heavy, and believe that they would spend more time undertaking what they saw as bureaucratic assessment tasks instead of teaching students.

The first concern related to the nature of assessment under an OBE model. One submission described the mathematics assessment regime thus:

If we just take a look at one of these courses, say, Number and Change. This course has 5 outcomes with 19 aspects. I am expected to assess all of these 19 outcomes twice over a period of a single semester. Let's examine what this means. I can reasonably expect

students doing one of the units of Number and Change to span 4 levels. I have to find the appropriate statement that can be used to allocate the level for 19 aspects across 4 levels. It doesn't take much Maths skill to work out that I have to read 76 statements, then somehow decide which statements apply to each of the aspects, and then assign the levels for [each] single child. Then I have to go ahead and do it for the next one, then the next and so on. On top of that I have to do it twice per semester.⁵³

While that workload sounds enormous, it is likely that some of the tasks the teacher concerned has identified explicitly would also be done in the TEE/VET/WSA system in allocating marks. Teachers already analyse student work and make judgements about them based on their own criteria. It was the degree of the analysis and the prescriptive nature of the assessment model under the original proposal that caused so much angst amongst teacher.

The level of concern was exacerbated by the fact that much would be taking place while the rest of the teachers' duties were still being performed. According to one teacher, this on-going work is not recognised. In a submission he said:

The onus is on the teacher to decide on the local contexts and also the underpinning content to facilitate student learning and achievement of outcomes. A major practical problem which has not been addressed by the curriculum council or school administrations is that after an intense real-world teaching day spent preparing, delivering, marking, collecting evidence of achievement, debating with colleagues over on balance judgments and making sense of the plethora of Curriculum Council documents, a teacher may have the intellect but not the energy to devise their own contexts and content.⁵⁴

There was a significant degree of anger and frustration amongst teachers regarding the expectations that they would have had placed upon them in this development stage. Another submission told the Committee:

What the Curriculum Council seems to have forgotten is that teachers are still teaching full time loads. They will still be teaching TEE students in 2006, 2007 and 2008. They will still have to prepare lessons, make and mark assessments, and attend their personal PD that allows them to keep up with developments in their subject area.⁵⁵

One teacher told the Committee:

At the moment there are thousands of teachers who are still chopping the wood whilst having to sharpen the axe. Do not believe for one moment that the increased workload is an additional five days professional development as this is only the start of the process that will see teachers working hard to make the post compulsory curriculum work as well as they can... Course content is yet to be written, assessment material yet to be determined,

⁵³ Submission No 17 from Mr Greg Williams, 8 June 2005, p1.

⁵⁴ Submission No 45 from Mr Andrew Witkowski, 24 June 2005, p6.

⁵⁵ Submission No 153 from Ms Catherine O'Toole, 4 July 2005, p6.

*reports to parents designed, untold departmental meetings to determine strategies, processes, internal moderation, etc. Most of this work cannot be done in school hours.*⁵⁶

On top of the on-going work, there was also concern about just learning the new system. A teacher told the Committee that:

*A quick calculation estimates that I will have about 500 pages of information to interpret and synthesize as these changes are implemented.*⁵⁷

A group of teachers told the Committee that their workload would increase dramatically as the original proposal took effect, with the Curriculum Council suggesting to teachers that they keep a journal on each student. According to the teacher concerned, if one has five classes with 25 students in each, this would be absolutely impossible.⁵⁸

Some submissions acknowledged that there may be a reduction in the workload as teachers become more familiar with the changes, however it has been suggested that the nature of the originally proposed assessment regime would always ensure a greater workload than is currently the case. Dr Glenda Parkin told the Committee that:

*Clearly the time spent in preparation of materials and lessons for NCoS (new Courses of Study) will decrease as teachers become more familiar with the courses, however, the proposed fine-grained assessment model will continue to be very time consuming, unwieldy, unreliable and invalid. We are yet to be convinced that all the extra effort to implement the changes will result in better outcomes for all our students.*⁵⁹

The level of frustration about the increased workload appeared to be exacerbated by the fact that many of the teachers expressing it did not see the benefit to the students. A number of submissions stated clearly that the authors would be happy to put in the extra hours if they believed that the effort would result in an improved system. Unfortunately, many of them did not hold that belief and felt exploited.

One teacher told the Committee that much of the additional work would not go into teaching the students. She said:

The work load for teachers is enormous and none of it goes to helping students or improving reporting to parents... A very considerable amount of time is required to create rubrics within the outcomes and then accurately assess about 3 levels for each of these rubrics. Teachers need to spend a lot of time creating completely new and quite different assessments and then recording in detail the performance of each student on each of these

⁵⁶ Submission No 78 from Mr Ralph Bradstreet, 28 June 2005, p4.

⁵⁷ Submission No 10 from Mr Anthony Robb, 25 May 2005, p3.

⁵⁸ Submission No 112 from Canning College English Department teachers, 30 June 2005, p2.

⁵⁹ Submission No 114 from Dr Glenda Parkin, 30 June 2005, p2.

*rubrics. None of this time is useful to the student or helps the teacher to prepare better lessons.*⁶⁰

Another consequence of an increased workload raised in submissions was the necessary reduction in the extra-curricula and unpaid work that teachers do. For example, the Committee heard that:

*... teachers will be forced to forgo involvement in other important extra curricula activities eg coaching sporting sides. This would be a catastrophe if it were to occur.*⁶¹

Of even more concern was the possibility of a large number of teachers leaving the profession, either by retirement or career change. The Dean of Education at UWA told the Committee that the statistics available on the ageing workforce indicate that a significant proportion of teachers will be in a position to retire as the curriculum change is phased in; any such surge in retirements would result in a shortfall of competence in the senior secondary school workforce.⁶²

The personal impact on teachers was also brought to the Committee's attention in submissions. One teacher made an impassioned statement that reflected her level of frustration. She said to the Committee:

*Personally, even though I love engaging students in an active manner and then teaching them exciting and interesting information and skills, I am actively looking for another job, and I won't care if it is less well paid with less holidays. I am already too tired and way too stressed with what is being asked of us now, without this added work load. At this time, all I do is work and sleep to recover. I have no social or recreational life.*⁶³

The Curriculum Council recognised that there would be an increase in the workload of teachers as a result of the original proposal. In evidence before the Committee, the then Chief Executive Officer of the Council, Ms Norma Jeffery, said:

*When any change is made, the workload is affected. I have no doubt about that, because everyone must look at the current curriculum and make the changes that are needed. ... In the short term there will definitely be an increased workload. ... Yes; any change that is made will initially bring extra work.*⁶⁴

However, in Ms Jeffery's view the increase would be short term. She told the Committee that:

*I do not think that will continue into the long term; that is, after people have settled into the new programs that they write.*⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Submission No 152 from Ms Julie Martin, 4 July 2005, p2.

⁶¹ Submission No 89 from St Mary's Anglican Girls' School, 29 June 2005, p2.

⁶² Submission No 60 from Dr Marnie O'Neill, Dean, Faculty of Education, UWA, 23 June 2005, p4.

⁶³ Submission No 90 from Mrs Mary Syme, 28 June 2005, p4.

⁶⁴ Mrs Norma Jeffery, Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 15 June 2005, p3.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

As stated earlier, this is not a view shared by many of the teachers who made submissions to the inquiry. There was also the potential for there to be more work involved in a greater focus on the needs of individual students, although supporters and opponents of the changes alike made it clear that this is what good teachers have always done.

It became obvious to the Committee through the public debate that with the implementation of the Phase I courses there was a significant increase in workload in the schools associated especially with assessment.

Finding 5

The Committee shares the view that the original proposal would have involved a permanent increased workload for teachers, with the assessment processes being more time consuming than current processes. The first four Year 11 courses introduced in 2005 and 2006 (Aviation, Engineering Studies, English, and Media Production and Analysis) resulted in an increased workload for teachers, especially in the area of assessment.

The Committee is given to understand that teachers in Western Australia have received three pay increases on the basis of the original proposal; therefore the extra work is not entirely uncompensated. Nevertheless the extra work associated with the original proposal was clearly substantial and the Committee was concerned that it may, in many cases, be unsustainable. Changes announced by the Curriculum Council in May and June 2006, and discussed in Chapter Three of this report, have the potential to lessen the impact on teachers by enabling them to continue many of their current practices in assessment.

(e) ‘The vagueness of the language’

A further concern for teachers, and one that relates to the previous issue of teachers’ workload was the vagueness of the language used in the original proposal and the complexity of the documentation that teachers were required to read and understand. The Committee heard repeatedly that the outcomes were very vague and could be interpreted any number of ways. For some teachers, this may be a positive step as it enabled them to develop work programs for students that better suit the developmental stage of the student. For others, however, it was a cause of anxiety as it placed on them the responsibility for determining what should be taught to achieve an outcome that they themselves did not completely understand.

The Committee was told by a teacher involved in developing the Engineering Course of Study that:

At the end of the engineering reference group process, for the engineering course of study, we produced four outcomes which are so generic and vague that you could easily replace the word ‘engineering’ with the words history, art, science, media studies, technology, or pretty well any other topic, and still make some meaning of the outcomes. In short, the

*outcomes-based new courses of study are too generic, effectively authorising teachers to eliminate basic educational building blocks.*⁶⁶

This vagueness was not only relevant to the development of Courses of Study, but was also an issue in the assessment process. One teacher told the Committee that:

*...levelling cannot be made to work effectively because of the inherent problems in translating the written descriptions and this vagueness leads to unreliable assessments. Also, the broadness of each category means that the levels are virtually meaningless as discriminators in determining relative performance and ability.*⁶⁷

This teacher went on to say:

*We have group marking sessions in English and cannot achieve complete consensus because the descriptors are so vague.*⁶⁸

The Committee sought examples from teachers who were concerned about the clarity of outcomes. Teachers of the Aviation Course of Study, the only new course actually running when the inquiry commenced, appeared before the Committee in a formal hearing. In evidence, one of the Aviation teachers provided the following example of indicators of levels of achievement:

*Apply theoretical frameworks to critically evaluate decision-making processes resulting from and affecting interactions among aviation systems, personnel, operations and the environment.*⁶⁹

It was the view of a number of teachers that the wording of these indicators, and of the outcomes themselves, made it difficult for teachers to know what they were supposed to teach. The Mathematics Department at John XXIII College stated in its submission to the inquiry that the outcomes written for the draft Courses of Study for Mathematics were too vague and that except for some reference to Calculus, the outcomes could be written for a Year 8 or 9 or 10 course as well as a Year 11 or 12 one.⁷⁰

To illustrate the point, the faculty provided the Committee with the outcomes as provided in the draft Course of Study. These were:

1. *Students use general problem solving strategies and forms of expression, reasoning and justification appropriate to number algebra and calculus.*

⁶⁶ Submission No 45 from Mr Andrew Witkowski, 24 June 2005, p7.

⁶⁷ Submission No 103 from Ms Bernadette Dell, 28 June 2005, p1.

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p8.

⁶⁹ Mr Nigel Bednall, Teacher Aviation Studies, Kent Street SHS, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 November 2005, p9.

⁷⁰ Submission No 163 from John XXIII College, Mathematics Department, 6 July 2005, p3.

2. *Students choose and use numerical, algebraic, symbolic and graphical models to solve problems and make decisions and judge the appropriateness of their use.*
3. *Students choose and efficiently use quantitative representations of situations.*
4. *Students understand the use of numerical, symbolic and graphical forms to represent generality and constraints in situations and apply this understanding to undertake calculations and solve equations.*
5. *Students understand the concepts of variation and change, represent them mathematically and use their understandings to calculate and explain.*

According to the faculty, outcomes 3 and 5 above could even be applied to a Kindergarten mathematics course.⁷¹

There were other comments made in submissions, many blaming the nature of OBE for the vagueness and subjectivity of the language. Mr Greg Williams said in his personal submission that:

...classical OBE prides itself on being largely syllabus free. It is plagued with vagaries. Nearly all classes of activities with almost minimal effort can be subsumed under one or more outcome statements. Outcomes are usually so vague that almost anything a child does can be manipulated to suit one or other outcome.⁷²

Many of the concerns raised by teachers in submissions relating to the language used in outcomes were in draft Course of Study documents which were part of a consultative process. The Mathematics Course of Study referred to above was provided to teachers in the first half of 2005. The Course of Study is not due to commence until 2008. This timeframe provides an opportunity for teachers to raise concerns about a lack of precision and clarity.

It is also the Committee's view that what is incomprehensible to some teachers is reasonably clear to others. Given the context of the content that teachers already teach, at least some of what appears verbose to the casual reader may well make perfect sense to someone with expertise and knowledge in the field.

It is also reasonable to assume that those who are not supportive of the changes generally may be less inclined to do the work involved in understanding what are quite different forms of documentation to that with which they are familiar. The submissions from teachers who were in support of the original proposal made little mention of the language used in Curriculum Council documentation. As with any new process, the initial phase of learning and deciphering new material may be arduous but this is not an on-going problem. Once understood and applied in a practical way, it is likely that teachers will become less concerned by the 'open-ended' nature of the language. However, it was clear from the concern expressed during the inquiry that the level

⁷¹ Submission No 163 from John XXIII College, Mathematics Department, 6 July 2005, p3.

⁷² Submission No 17 from Mr Greg Williams, 8 June 2005, p24.

of clarity of language used in Curriculum Council documentation could have been greatly improved. There is no point in producing documentation that is not understood by its readership.

The communication by the Curriculum Council generally during the implementation of the changes to the curriculum was also poor and has left teachers feeling that they are peripheral to the process. This deficiency in communication was recognised by the Curriculum Council itself in 2005 and led to the employment of a full-time communications consultant. Good communication needs to remain a priority.

Finding 6

The Committee considers that the standard of communication during the development and implementation stages of the changes to the Years 11 and 12 curriculum has been somewhat haphazard and has contributed significantly to the current level of anxiety among teachers.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the State Government fund the Curriculum Council, to work in partnership with the government and non-government school sectors, to put in place a major communication program with the teachers and their school communities aimed at securing an understanding of the nature, direction and detail of the new Years 11 and 12 curriculum.

2.3 Strengths and weaknesses of the original proposal

While there were some submissions and witnesses strongly supportive of the original proposal to change the curriculum for Years 11 and 12, statistically the majority of submissions opposed the proposal. This is not surprising, as any inquiry will usually draw most interest from those that are against a proposal, particularly when it is felt that the proposal is a *fait accompli*. However, the Committee considers that many of the concerns raised by the submissions and witnesses were valid and demanded due consideration, not only by its own inquiry, but also by the Department of Education and Training and the Curriculum Council.

Many of the critics of the changes have been philosophically opposed to OBE and therefore their objections were based on general grounds. As discussed in the previous chapter, while these arguments may have validity, it is not the Committee's intention to engage further in this debate but rather is to focus only on specific criticisms.

The key specific arguments that the original proposal had little merit rested on the following:

- There was no need for the changes as the TEE/VET/WSA system has served Western Australian students well over a number of years;
- The changes were based on the false premise that all subjects are equal and that students have equal capacity;
- The changes would not benefit the less academically able students as intended, but would further undermine their place in the school cohort; and
- The changes would lead to a ‘dumbing down’ of the education system.

The Committee considers that the claim that the current system served the State well and can, with minor modifications, continue to do so is not supported by the evidence. The lowest retention rate in Australia indicates clearly that Western Australia’s current system is not serving its students, and therefore the community, well. Change is needed to ensure that Western Australia has a modern education system that is preparing all of its young people for life in the 21st Century, not simply one that caters for a particular group of students.

The Committee also believes that aspects of the original proposal had some merit. Currently, of more than 350 subjects available for study in Years 11 and 12, only 22 subjects attract a tertiary entrance score. In the Committee’s view, there is no justification in making the vast majority of subjects invalid for entrance to university, particularly when the study of those subjects is available at university. A good example of this is in Physical Education, Media Studies and Health Science, all subjects that are offered at university level but do not attract a TER. Should a student with talent and an interest in Physical Education be denied the opportunity to study that subject at university because he or she lacks aptitude in other more academic disciplines? Should a student who is interested in pursuing a career as a journalist be prevented from having Media Studies at Years 11 and 12 count towards their eligibility to embark on Media Studies at university level? In the Committee’s view the answer to both questions is no.

TAFE or work bound students require practical and relevant vocational skills. The raised leaving age has made it even more essential that 16 and 17 years old who are required to attend school do not experience an additional two years of alienation in a competitive academic environment. OBE is well suited to vocational education where students can demonstrate competency through practical and performance tasks rather than competing for a higher ‘ranking’ in an academic environment. OBE allows greater flexibility in curriculum design to reflect student (and teacher) interests and experience. In the Committee’s view, it is likely that students who do not wish to attend university would undertake Courses of Study appropriate to their interests and aptitudes, just as they do now. They would, however, be more likely to have a chance to attend university.

The Committee also does not accept the argument that the changes are based on the premise that all subjects are equal. No-one argues that Health Science or Drama require exactly the same intellectual processing capacity as Calculus, any more than anyone argues that rifle shooting requires the same athletic ability than the 100m sprint. However, like those sports, all subjects have recognisable and measurable standards of excellence within their own context. They are all

valuable and need to be recognised as such. The society needs health scientists as well as mathematicians.

In the Committee's view, however, there were a number of core concerns which went beyond whether or not the original proposal would improve the existing system. The fundamental concern was the application of a common purist OBE approach. Many critics believed that this failed to recognise that students headed towards university and TAFE or work have different needs. In particular the Committee had concerns about the extent to which the original proposal could accommodate consistency and comparability of student results, when this is seen as integral to assessing students' capacity to successfully take on more academic pathways.

Entrance to university courses is highly competitive and requires that students be assessed fairly on common clearly defined material. Pure OBE might be viewed as an impediment for academically orientated students for two reasons. Firstly and most importantly it is more difficult to discriminate performance sufficiently through levelling. Secondly, many university courses particularly in the sciences require specific pre-requisites; this indicates that pre-requisite courses with a common content-rich core curriculum may best be suited to meeting these tertiary course requirements.

The OBE purist approach inherent in the original proposal failed to recognise that OBE 'levelling' is better suited to determining if students are making appropriate progress, and for Years K to 10 or vocationally orientated Year 11 and 12 students, but it is inadequate in itself for ranking students in the competitive race for university entrance.

Creating further difficulties, the documentation prepared by the Curriculum Council for the Courses of Study was unnecessarily longwinded and full of jargon that confused and frustrated students, parents and even competent and experienced teachers. The strength of the existing TEE course outlines is they are concise documents that tell students and teachers what they need to know and teach.

Finding 7

In the Committee's view, the most significant cause of anxiety and stress amongst teachers and the community has not been the underlying principles of the changes, but their implementation.

Finding 8

The Committee accepts there was a need to change the curriculum for Years 11 and 12. The Committee also believes that there was merit in some aspects of the original proposal, including its capacity to recognise that the vast majority of subjects should be valid for entrance to university, particularly when the study of those subjects is available at university. However, the Committee also finds that the original proposal for changes to Year 11 and 12 subjects was significantly flawed. In particular the lack of refinement of the original proposal hindered its capacity to meet the needs of students pursuing different educational pathways.

CHAPTER 3 MORE RECENT CHANGES

3.1 Adjustments of 10 May 2006 and subsequently

Beginning on 10 May 2006 adjustments have been made in response to the concerns raised about the original proposal (as outlined in Chapter Two).

The 10 May adjustments focussed on changes to the proposed assessment processes and enabled teachers to use numerical marks rather than outcome levels to assess student performance, and involved the external examination being used to moderate the school numerical scores for university entrance purposes. Advice from the Curriculum Council to teachers included clarification that only two formal judgements of student achievement of each outcome in a unit were required, although this did not mean that the student be rated on every aspect of the outcome. Teachers were also informed that they were required to keep evidence to substantiate their judgment of students' level and band of achievement for each outcome. The original proposal was also modified to allow teachers to use marks for assessment tasks which could be 'mapped' to the standards.

These adjustments were insufficient to ensure widespread acceptance amongst the Education community and particularly teachers tasked with the implementation of the proposed Courses of Study.

As a result consultations occurred between the Premier, the Minister for Education, the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Curriculum Council, the Director of the Catholic Education Office of WA, the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools WA, the President of the State School Teachers' Union WA and the Secretary of the Independent Education Union.⁷³ These consultations led to further modifications in regard to the new Courses of Study and professional support, which have enjoyed more widespread support. These changes specifically are:

New Courses

- *There will be a syllabus for each course.*
- *The existing TEE syllabus format will be used for all new courses. Course specific refinements will be made.*
- *Teachers will be able to use their existing teaching programs or lesson plans for those new courses that have been derived from existing TEE subjects.*
- *Some adjustments will be made to content to allow for the semester unit structure and to ensure that content is updated.*

⁷³ In the preceding week the Premier had also met with the relevant professional associations.

- *No new content will be assessed in the examination for the first cohort of Year 11 and Year 12 students for those courses replacing TEE subjects.*
- *Course design will be modified, where necessary, to suit specific course disciplines.*
- *Language used in each course syllabus will be discipline specific.*
- *Content will be made more explicit and clear for teachers.*
- *The nature and weighting of outcomes will be clarified and adjusted on a course by course basis.*
- *Course standards will be refined to guarantee clarity of student progression.*
- *Schools will submit a mark out of 100 for a unit and provide an indicative judgement of a level and band for the unit.*
- *Teachers will not be required to submit assessment evidence plans; however they will still be required to have evidence of their students' achievements during school moderation visits as they do now.*

Professional support

- *Teachers will be provided with specific exemplars of assessment items, work samples and a template program for each new course, which will set out the teaching program for the course content, together with appropriate assessment items.*
- *Teachers may choose to adapt the template program as they see fit.*
- *Modifications to course design, content, assessment and course standards will be explained and exemplified at Day 4 Professional Development (PD) sessions.⁷⁴*

The Committee believes these adjustments, when backed up with a valid scaling and moderation process, have the capacity to deliver a refined system that incorporates the best features of the TEE/VET/WSA system and OBE. This refined system can deliver a fair and transparent method of ranking students in the highly competitive process of university entrance and enables vocationally orientated students to acquire relevant skills. Furthermore, it enables students to move between vocational and academic pathways.

⁷⁴ Memorandum to schools, 'Summary – Modifications to the new courses for Year 11 and 12', from the Curriculum Council, 18 June 2006.

Finding 9

In order to meet teachers' concerns, there have been significant adjustments to the proposed reform of the curriculum for Years 11 and 12. These include:

- *There will be a syllabus for each course.*
- *The existing TEE [Tertiary Entrance Examination] syllabus format will be used for all new courses. Course specific refinements will be made.*
- *Teachers will be able to use their existing teaching programs or lesson plans for those new courses that have been derived from existing TEE subjects.*
- *Some adjustments will be made to content to allow for the semester unit structure and to ensure that content is updated.*
- *No new content will be assessed in the examination for the first cohort of Year 11 and Year 12 students for those courses replacing TEE subjects.*
- *Course design will be modified, where necessary, to suit specific course disciplines.*
- *Language used in each course syllabus will be discipline specific.*
- *Content will be made more explicit and clear for teachers.*
- *The nature and weighting of outcomes will be clarified and adjusted on a course by course basis.*
- *Course standards will be refined to guarantee clarity of student progression.*
- *Schools will submit a mark out of 100 for a unit and provide an indicative judgement of a level and band for the unit.*
- *Teachers will not be required to submit assessment evidence plans; however they will still be required to have evidence of their students' achievements during school moderation visits as they do now.*
- *Teachers will be provided with specific exemplars of assessment items, work samples and a template program for each new course, which will set out the teaching program for the course content, together with appropriate assessment items.*
- *Teachers may choose to adapt the template program as they see fit.*
- *Modifications to course design, content, assessment and course standards will be explained and exemplified at Day 4 Professional Development (PD) sessions.⁷⁵*

⁷⁵

Memorandum to schools, 'Summary – Modifications to the new courses for Year 11 and 12', from the Curriculum Council, 18 June 2006.

3.2 How the refined system addresses criticisms of the original proposal

Teachers have traditionally used outcomes and standards from a subject syllabus to design tests that are marked using a numerical scale. This process results in the outcomes of the course being embedded in the tests, but does not require teachers to directly identify the outcomes that students have achieved. Teachers identify and inform students of their strengths and weaknesses in performance from feedback provided on numerically assessed pieces. In areas like mathematics and the physical sciences this should lead to extra study by the students of the material in which they performed poorly. For more interpretive subjects like English, students would generally receive and take note of specific feedback provided by teachers.

(a) Levels

Theoretically, OBE levelling is superior as it identifies student performance against specific outcomes criteria. In practice, however, outcomes and levels are often vague and can be applied inconsistently. Teachers, particularly when determining high stakes rankings like the TER, can spend an inordinate amount of time attempting to achieve consistent judgements.

Finding 10

In the opinion of the Committee the outcome levels outlined in the Courses of Study of the original proposal were vague and imprecise. The Committee considered the number of levels and bands of performance within a level in the original proposal were inadequate for the purpose of fine-grained ranking inherent in establishing a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER). The Committee welcomes the modification that as well as providing an indicative judgment of a level and band, teachers are obliged to provide a unit score out of 100.

The Committee also acknowledges the flexibility provided to teachers to determine how they will arrive at the score. Assessment tasks in subjects like Mathematics, Physics and Accounting often have a single correct response where there is rarely a single correct response in Literature, History and English. This flexibility recognises the professionalism of teachers and the different assessment styles are appropriate to different subjects.

(b) Syllabus

The Committee welcomes the commitments that there will be a syllabus in the format of the existing TEE syllabus for each course, with specific subject content in the language of the discipline. The Committee is particularly pleased with the undertaking that *'The existing TEE syllabus format will be used for all new courses. Course specific refinements will be made.'* The perceived absence of a 'common syllabus' for the original proposal, with plain English learning objectives and content, gave rise to concerns that comparisons of student's performance will be

flawed and individual students will be advantaged or disadvantaged at the whim of individual teachers developing diverse curricula. The explicit weightings, plain language, brevity and dot point format make the current TEE syllabus document an essential, easily understood study guide to students, teachers and parents.

Finding 11

With the retention of plain English, content-specific subject syllabi, students and teachers will have a clear guide to what material is assessable and how it will be assessed.

(c) Assessment

The Committee believes that there is merit in including a values and ethics component in a range of subjects including the physical sciences. However, the Committee was concerned at the arbitrary weighting and the lack of subject specific context of the values and ethics introduced as an assessed component for the first time in some courses in the original proposal.

Finding 12

The Committee welcomes the guarantee that no new content will be assessed in the examination for the first cohort of Year 11 and 12 students for those courses replacing Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) subjects.⁷⁶ The Committee believes this will allow time to ensure that if any values or ethics components of the physical sciences and other subjects are introduced they are relevant and have an appropriate weighting.

(d) A refined system

The modifications to the new courses and professional support outlined above offer clarity and protect the validity of assessments. In light of the undertakings that *‘Teachers will be able to use their existing teaching programs or lesson plans for those new courses that have been derived from existing TEE subjects’* and that all syllabi will be in the format of the existing TEE syllabus for each course, with specific subject content in the language of the discipline, these modifications should also significantly reduce the demands on teachers.

⁷⁶ Memorandum to schools, ‘Summary – Modifications to the new courses for Year 11 and 12’, from the Curriculum Council, 18 June 2006, p2.

Finding 13

The Committee believes these adjustments when backed up with a valid moderation and scaling process have the capacity to deliver a refined system that incorporates the best features of the current system and Outcomes Based Education (OBE).

(e) Moderation and scaling

A key feature of a valid and fair Tertiary Entrance Ranking is that students who perform with equivalent levels of competence achieve the same TER regardless of which subjects they study and which schools they attend.

Moderation is designed to ensure that equivalent student performance within a subject at different schools receive the same TER mark for that subject. This prevents students attending schools with tough markers who underestimate their performance being disadvantaged. Conversely it prevents students at schools with easy markers who overestimate their performance being unfairly advantaged.

Scaling is designed to ensure that students performing at equivalent academic levels in different subjects receive the same TER. Effective scaling means that the range of marks received by a subject cohort reflects the ability of students studying the subject. Subjects with academically capable cohorts will receive a higher distribution of TER marks compared to subjects with less academically capable students.

In effect, valid and reliable moderation and scaling means that students will maximise their TER score by choosing subjects for which they have an aptitude and interest.

(i) Moderation

The current TEE system only uses formal moderation at the end of Year 12 by comparing the marks attained by a school subject cohort in the external examination to the school awarded marks. If the distribution of school marks is higher than the performance in the examination, the school marks are moderated down. Conversely, if the school has underestimated the performance of its students in that subject, the school marks will be moderated up.

The current changes and the original proposal both strengthened the moderation process by conducting continuous moderation throughout Years 11 and 12. This is achieved in three ways.

1. Firstly, a school's marks and levels for a subject are reviewed on a regular basis throughout Years 11 and 12 by external moderators who give guidance designed to achieve consistent judgements across schools;
2. The introduction of a General Aptitude Test (GAT) in Year 11 will enable the comparison of student ability to student performance within subjects across schools. Higher subject

marks than GAT scores for a school within a subject does not necessarily mean that the school is marking too easily in that subject. It may be that students, because of superior instruction or study habits, are performing above their ability, as indicated in the GAT, in that subject. The GAT however does indicate potential anomalies which can then be investigated through the process of external moderation described at 1 above; and

3. The current practice of comparing school subject marks with performance in the externally assessed final examination will continue.

Finding 14

The process of moderation is considerably stronger for the current changes than for the Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) / Vocational Education and Training (VET) / Wholly School Assessed (WSA) system. Early moderation and the potential use of a General Aptitude Test (GAT) should result in school unit marks more closely reflecting the school's average performance in the external examination in that subject.

(ii) *Scaling*

Under the current TEE system there is no General Aptitude Test (GAT) used for scaling. Scaling is achieved by comparing the performance across subjects for students who do common subjects. For example, if students who do subject A and subject B tend to outperform students who do subject C and subject B in the common subject, subject B, scaling will ensure the average TER mark in subject A is higher than subject C.

The current changes and the original proposal both have the potential to strengthen the scaling process through the introduction of a GAT. This is particularly important as the increase in course numbers that can count for a TER from 22 to 47 will mean that fewer students do common subjects.

The GAT has the potential to operate like the Australian Scaling Test which was used in the 1970s to scale marks across subjects to ensure the range of marks within a subject reflected the ability of students doing those subjects.

The introduction of a GAT has the potential to not only enhance the validity of the scaling process for TER purposes but also to enable the calculation of a valid index of educational performance which may be of use in evaluating the performance of students headed towards employment or TAFE.

Finding 15

The increase in the number of tertiary entrance Courses of Study from 22 to 47 has emphasised the need for a valid scaling process across all courses.

Finding 16

The introduction of a General Aptitude Test (GAT) has the potential to considerably strengthen the scaling process.

Finding 17

The Committee considers it likely that students will continue to gravitate to Courses of Study for which they have ability or have an interest.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that:

- (i) Due to the increase of Tertiary Entrance Ranking subjects and the use of common levels for all Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Courses of Study, all Year 12 students in 2008 and 2009 should sit a General Aptitude Test (GAT) for the purposes of validating the scaling for TER; and
- (ii) Consideration should also be given to the use of a GAT to enable the calculation an index of educational performance that may be of use in helping to evaluate the performance of students headed towards employment or TAFE.

Chapter 4 includes further discussion of the implications of the recent changes as these relate to the readiness of the system for change.

CHAPTER 4 THE READINESS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR CHANGE

4.1 Introduction

Many of the submissions received by the Committee argued that the system is not ready for change. Concerns were raised about uncertainty caused by the lack of teaching materials, examples of examination papers and other resources. There were also comments made in submissions and evidence about professional development. This latter issue has implications that are broader than simply being ready to implement Courses of Study and touch on issues related to the financial implications and the on-going development of the new curriculum.

As part of its support for professional development of teachers, the Curriculum Council has produced a Professional Development Plan for 2006, which is designed to inform teachers about the training available for 17 Courses of Study commencing in 2007. While this Plan is welcome the fact that it was not published until November 2005 left a number of teachers, already anxious about the impending changes, unsure about what support they could expect.

There were delays in getting the course material out to teachers of English, some of whom were reporting not having completed their professional development late in 2005. In evidence the Committee was told that:

It was in that context that there was considerable discomfort about English teachers being required to put into practice next year a course of study for which they still have not seen exams and for which they did not receive professional development until late this year.⁷⁷

The anxiety felt by some teachers was exacerbated by a perception that the new curriculum was still being developed. This increased the sense of un-readiness among some teachers.

In its submission to the inquiry, the Association of Independent Schools (WA) stated that many independent schools were supportive of the outcomes approach and the Curriculum Framework. However, it likened the development of the system to the Mandurah Railway line. It said:

This was many years in the planning and, prior to starting construction, all plans were in place, the route mapped out, the locations for stations and related parking and road works were identified, and in time the tracks will be laid and construction will go according to the overall plan.

Only once all is complete will the trains start running and passengers use the rail line. In the case of this education project, there does not seem to be a final overall plan but rather the train is already in motion and decisions are being made as needed while the actual route is still being determined. The big issues have not been solved, yet here are a small

⁷⁷ Mr Mike Keely, President, State School Teachers' Union of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 November 2005, p3.

*group of students (Aviation) already in the system and next year many thousands will join them on a trip yet to be adequately mapped out.*⁷⁸

A problem for any inquiry that is being undertaken in the development phase of a new system is that changes and refinements are regularly taking place. The Committee is aware that some of the concerns raised in submissions, received up to twelve months ago, may have been addressed in subsequent changes. However, regardless of these changes, some of the concerns of teachers and schools remain valid and there needs to be recognition that both the stress levels of teachers and the educational needs of students are not addressed by Courses of Study being commenced with insufficient resources.

In order to determine readiness, the Committee sought to identify which criteria may be used to define readiness, and what timetable needs to be met. Throughout the inquiry the Committee has had a number of criteria for readiness suggested, in submissions and in formal evidence.

The Department of Education and Training, in response to a question from the Committee, suggested that the criteria for 'readiness' are whether:

- new understandings and content in the relevant course(s) affect the delivery of the course of study for schools/teachers and students;
- an effective learning program for a unit(s) of a Course of Study can be developed;
- the content is appropriate for the unit(s);
- the focus for each unit is meaningful;
- the needs of experienced and relatively new teachers in implementing the course are met;
- the Scales of Achievement and their respective Aspects are effective in enabling teachers to distinguish between levels; and
- the Scales of Achievement can be used to assess students.⁷⁹

In correspondence to the Committee, the Curriculum Council told the inquiry that:

*...it is important to note that preparations for the new system have resulted in teachers, more than ever before, having adequate time and extensive support to be ready to implement the new WACE. It was signalled in 1998, with the introduction of the Curriculum Framework and the beginning of the post-compulsory education review, that change was on the educational horizon.*⁸⁰

Further, the Curriculum Council told the Committee that:

...curriculum guides were developed for each Curriculum Framework learning area outcome across all phases of schooling so teachers know what they need to teach for each. These guides have been distributed to every teacher in Western Australia. In addition to the guides, the teachers have been provided with either Curriculum Framework progress

⁷⁸ Submission No 111 from Association of Independent Schools (WA), 30 June 2005, p5.

⁷⁹ Letter from Department of Education and Training, 3 November 2005, p2.

⁸⁰ Letter from Curriculum Council, 15 November 2005, p2.

maps or the Department of Education and Training's Outcomes and Standards Framework to support them in measuring student achievement of the outcomes. In preparing teachers to implement the new English course there are collectively over 250 pages of support materials.⁸¹

The Committee acknowledges that teachers have received substantial material for the Courses of Study that are being implemented in 2006, however not always in a timely fashion. The Committee also recognises that many of the teachers who have felt unready are in the science and mathematics areas which are not due to commence until 2007 or 2008. However, the lack of certainty has led to substantial levels of anxiety among teachers and a perception of a system being implemented before it is fully developed.

(a) Ministerial Taskforce

The Minister for Education and Training established a Ministerial Taskforce on Issues Surrounding Proposed Changes to Post-Compulsory Education in May 2005, chaired by Mr Greg Robson, to investigate concerns expressed about the proposed changes to the curriculum in Years 11 and 12. In its report, published in July 2005, the Taskforce recognised the importance of support to teachers, and that the support must be of practical assistance rather than simply reinforcing the need for change. It stated that:

The Curriculum Council will need to continue to play a central role to ensure common messages and to establish the base for material support. In particular, it must be acknowledged that the implementation support must move quickly from the emphasis on the general rationale for change and a focus on developing a broad awareness about the changes. Teachers will need a great deal of practical support especially in the area of assessment.⁸²

In supporting the findings of the Taskforce, the Minister for Education stated that:

I am well aware that professional development for teachers is necessary to help them better understand the benefits and assist with the implementation of the new courses... Assessment and support materials for teachers will be brought forward as a priority.⁸³

In accepting the report and endorsing all of its recommendations, the Minister announced an allocation of an extra \$19m to implement them. This led to a substantial increase in the material being made available to teachers and schools. It also led to a commitment from the Government that:

There will also be fully funded professional development, a pupil-free day in term one next year, paid teacher relief, more rigorous evaluation and closer monitoring of the implementation will also accompany the introduction of new courses.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Letter from Curriculum Council, 15 November 2005, p2.

⁸² *Report of The Ministerial Taskforce on Issues Surrounding Proposed Changes To Post-Compulsory Education*, July 2005, p11.

⁸³ Media Statement, Minister for Education, 29 July 2005.

The Minister for Education has explicitly acknowledged the importance of support for teachers. In a speech to the Secondary School and College Principals Forum in July 2005, she said:

*Teachers need reassuring that there will be adequate support materials and professional development to enable them to confidently implement the changes.*⁸⁵

Further the Minister strongly indicated that:

*The support materials and professional development must be available well before the new courses commence.*⁸⁶

The Committee has been advised that since then the Curriculum Council has worked with all school sectors to address the recommendations articulated in the *Report of the Ministerial Taskforce on Issues Surrounding Proposed Changes to Post-compulsory Education*.

The Committee is given to understand that the Taskforce has continued to closely oversee the implementation, assessment and resourcing of the new subjects and to assist in making any necessary adjustments to ensure it is carried out successfully.

Since the Taskforce Report, the level of resourcing has increased to assist in the development of support materials to help teachers in preparing for the implementation of the new Courses of Study.

Teachers have also been given extra professional development days to help them plan for the successful implementation of the new courses.

According to advice received from the Curriculum Council, by 13 April 2006 the first day of the professional development for teachers of courses to be implemented in 2007 would have been delivered to over 5 800 teachers State-wide.⁸⁷

Specifically, the Curriculum Council advised the Committee on 10 April 2006 that subsequent professional development would involve practical activities including:

- *Day 2 teachers work through two outcomes and actively build their understandings of the outcomes and engage in small-group activities throughout the day to understand the structure of the course.*
- *Day 3 teachers spend the first 2 hours engaged in a series of activities to build understanding of 2 of the course outcomes and the rest of the day planning units.*

⁸⁴ Media Statement, Minister for Education, 29 July 2005.

⁸⁵ Speech to the Secondary School and College Principals Forum, 29 July 2005.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Letter from Mr David Axworthy, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, 10 April 2006, p2.

- *Day 4 the teachers spend the morning sharing their planning for a unit. In the afternoon of Day 4 the teachers choose to attend a planning session for Units 3A and 3B or for a VET version of the course,*
- *Day 5 the teachers will have time to share their planning and explore the consultation draft exam and provide feedback for the external examination panel.⁸⁸*

According to advice received from the Curriculum Council dated 18 June 2006, the Professional Development Program has now been modified so that the recent

Modifications to course design, content, assessment and course standards will be explained and exemplified at Day 4 Professional Development (PD) sessions.⁸⁹

The Curriculum Council also advised that information about the latest changes would be provided to schools in a letter from the Minister of Education and Training in the week commencing 20 June 2006 and that this would be followed by the distribution of more detailed information about the changes.⁹⁰

4.2 Quality of professional development

It is, however, not enough that professional development is provided in the prescribed time. There is also a requirement that the quality of the seminars, both in presentation and content, is sufficiently high to leave teachers feeling confident to teach their new Courses of Study. The Committee is concerned that this may not have been the case and that there may still be a level of uncertainty and anxiety at least among some teachers with reference to the quality of professional development.

From the beginning of the inquiry, the Committee has been told of concerns over the quality of professional development provided, including questions of:

- The resourcing of the professional development program; and
- The vagueness of some of the responses to questions and the changing nature of the responses.

Many teachers who have contacted the inquiry have suggested that presenters at professional development seminars appeared under-resourced and poorly prepared.

The Committee was told that:

⁸⁸ Letter from Mr David Axworthy, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, 10 April 2006, p2.

⁸⁹ Memorandum to schools, 'Summary - Modifications to the new courses for Year 11 and 12, from the Curriculum Council, 18 June 2006, p2.

⁹⁰ Email from the Curriculum Council, 20 June 2006, p2.

Trainers charged with the delivery of professional development for teachers are under resourced and over-worked, and bear more of the burden of implementation than they are paid or given credit for, and have been forced to deliver training to teachers with insufficient and conflicting information and time.⁹¹

This issue of resourcing was of concern not only in relation to the trainers employed to run professional development seminars, but also in relation to the whole professional development process. As one submission put it:

During 2005, teachers of English will be involved in attending days 2 to 4 as will any teachers of Engineering Studies and Media Production and Analysis. The commitment during 2006 in preparation for the 20 or so courses implemented in 2007 will be significant. Most schools will implement at least 16 of the proposed courses in 2007 and will need to release teachers for the five days of professional development during 2006. Days 1 and 2 are currently proposed to be funded by the Curriculum Council and schools will be required to fund days 3, 4 and 5. For an average Catholic school with a year 11/12 cohort of approximately 300 students it is likely that approximately 180 days would be required in 2006 and a similar amount in 2007. While the cost of teacher relief is one factor, the availability of relief teachers for the 200 or so year 11/12 schools in the State will create serious problems.⁹²

It is likely that this macro resourcing issue is not going to go away for schools. Getting adequate relief teachers is difficult for schools under normal conditions, both due to cost and availability. During a period of profound change these difficulties are greatly increased. Increased funding to the Curriculum Council is an acknowledgement of these difficulties. However, in the Committee's view the support for professional development will need to be on-going and it may be that the planned five days will not be sufficient in all cases and there will need to be contingencies in place to provide further support. This issue will be discussed further in the next chapter.

In addition to resourcing issues, the Committee has had many submissions that have complained that responses to questions were very vague. For example, one submission suggested that:

The PD days for English have been too vague to address real concerns. When teachers ask questions about aspects of the Course we are expected to teach from next year, we are fobbed off with 'That is still to be decided' or if you point out that a rare definite statement contradicts something you were told the previous PD, they say 'Nothing's set in concrete'.⁹³

These comments were common in the early submissions received by the Committee and were based on professional development provided in previous years. The Curriculum Council has told the Committee that the process is evolving and is being improved by on-going feedback. In correspondence, the Committee was told that:

⁹¹ Submission No 144 from Department of English, Perth College, 4 July 2005, p2.

⁹² Submission No 126 from Catholic Education Office, 1 July 2005, p7.

⁹³ Submission No 103 from Ms Bernadette Dell, 28 June 2005, p6.

*The Council acknowledges that the professional development provided to teachers in 2006 has evolved and been improved by the feedback from previous professional development delivered in 2005 and earlier. Similarly, the professional development that will be delivered in 2007 will benefit from the feedback of those teachers who were involved in the 2006 program.*⁹⁴

The Curriculum Council further told the Committee that in 2006, over 320 trainers have been trained to facilitate the first two of the four days of the professional development workshops. According to the Council, the feedback of these trainers about the content and the support materials used in the sessions has been very positive.⁹⁵

The Committee does accept that the professional development has been an evolving process and that some of the concerns about its quality may have been addressed over the past several months. However, some concerns still exist.

In a letter to the Committee in March 2006, the Association of Independent Schools (WA) advised that:

*Day Two Professional Development was not well designed. It deviated from the agreed pattern, covered material that had been covered in Day One and failed, in many cases, to extend the understanding of teachers since facilitators were required to follow a very rigid structure which was not responsive to the needs of teachers. Of particular concern, was the poor quality of the sample assessment tasks required to be used in a number of COSs.*⁹⁶

While the issue of assessment has been addressed in Chapter Three, the Committee considers that it was the lack of finality in some of the key elements of the new curriculum that was the cause of concerns over professional development. AISWA stated in its letter that:

*...the new structure for assessment will make redundant some of the assessment processes included in Day One Professional Development and that used in the Assessment Seminars for Phase One Courses of Study. This will appear to teachers to signify that the support structures for the implementation of the new curriculum are not yet in place.*⁹⁷

It seems that while major components of the new system were changing and evolving, providing teachers with definitive professional development was inevitably very difficult.

⁹⁴ Letter from Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council 10 April 2006, p2.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Letter from Executive Director, AISWA, 26 March 2006, p2.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

Finding 18

It has been difficult to provide teachers with definitive professional development while the new curriculum was changing and evolving. Although this has allowed the development of the new curriculum to be responsive to teachers' needs and concerns, it has not provided them with timely answers to their questions about the new curriculum. The sense of uncertainty about teachers' capacity to implement the new curriculum without detriment to students was aggravated by the late scheduling of professional development days relative to the implementation of new Courses of Study.

4.3 Support material

The Committee cannot be too prescriptive about what needs to be available for teachers in order to ensure their readiness. Different Courses of Study may require different support material, and may put different emphasis on the same support material. Support material may include such things as:

- sample tasks;
- a student brief pro forma;
- a sample evidence plan;
- an evidence plan pro forma;
- sample schemes of assessment;
- a scheme of assessment pro forma;
- a detailed sample program;
- a program pro forma;
- exemplars of student work; and
- sample examination questions.

According to the English Teachers' Association in evidence before the Committee, some of the materials that are required for teachers to be ready include:

*... sample programs of study, sample schemes of assessment, sample tasks that suit the assessment types and the course of study...*⁹⁸

The Science Teachers' Association of WA (STAWA) also told the Committee that teachers need clear support material. In evidence, the President of the Association, Ms Julie Weber, told the Committee that:

There should be some specific guidance about what to teach ... they also need some examples of the different types of assessments for students. I am not talking about setting the exams but we have to assess as we go along to see how students are going and what we

⁹⁸ Ms Kelly Klymiuk, President, English Teachers' Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 November 2005, p9.

*need to do. Eventually the teachers will want a copy of an exam so they can see what they are aiming to take their kids to if their students will be doing units 2A and 2B and want to sit the exam.*⁹⁹

The issue of support material has also been recognised by the Ministerial Taskforce. The report stated that:

*Concerns have also been expressed by groups of teachers about the need for support materials and a wide range of practical examples of assessment tasks, marking rubrics and annotated work samples to assist them in this area. In particular there have been some examples where the sample assessments provided to teachers have not been sufficiently illustrative of a particular level.*¹⁰⁰

The Task Force also indicated that many teachers have said that they will need additional resources to ensure that they can implement the Courses of Study effectively. While some positive feedback was received about the quality of most of the resource packages for English, Media, Engineering and Aviation - the Courses of Study underway in 2006, there have been suggestions for improvement.

As important as the form and nature of the support material, is the timing of when it is provided to teachers.

In evidence to the Committee, Mr Andrew Syme, the Headmaster of Scotch College told the Committee that research indicated that:

*...a minimum of 12 months was required for materials to be made available to schools, and for clarity about the final position and things to do with assessment and examples of work. However, we are now heading towards late August for implementation in February of media and English, etc, and those things are not available.*¹⁰¹

He also said in the hearing that:

*In the original post-compulsory review, commitments were made by the Curriculum Council about the provision of materials, examination information and examples of assessment 18 months before the implementation.*¹⁰²

In his evidence before the Committee in October 2005, the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, Mr Paul Albert, made a very clear and unambiguous statement about readiness. He said:

⁹⁹ Mrs Julie Weber, President, Science Teachers Association of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 November 2005, Session 3, p7.

¹⁰⁰ *Report of The Ministerial Taskforce on Issues Surrounding Proposed Changes To Post-Compulsory Education*, July 2005, p7.

¹⁰¹ Rev A. P. Syme, Headmaster, Scotch College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2005, p2.

¹⁰² *ibid.*

...we are not prepared to support the introduction of a new course if that new course is not ready for introduction. We have made that very clear to the Curriculum Council.¹⁰³

The Director General also told the Committee that:

It makes sense to delay a specific course of study that is not ready ... my strong view, is that if a course is not ready - that is, the assessment materials are not ready and there have been some delays or whatever with the schedule for the development of teachers - the readiness factor would apply. That is the issue and that is when you would delay.¹⁰⁴

The Director General went on to say in a response to the question of when such material should be provided, that:

I would want it at least a year beforehand...¹⁰⁵

The Department acknowledged in evidence to the Committee that there had been some problems with the readiness of the English Course of Study which commenced in 2006. In evidence, Ms Lois Joll, then Acting Director of Post Compulsory Academic Standards and Support, told the Committee that:

There is no question that they were not ready. ... They are now... My understanding is that English has put out a sample exam paper and that all of them are now ready.¹⁰⁶

The Committee supports the view that it is unreasonable to expect teachers to prepare their programs and to approach a new system with any confidence without both the professional development and the necessary support material being provided in a timely manner.

Although the English Teachers' Association acknowledged that materials had been provided and that it was reasonably comfortable with the current position, it also acknowledged that the timing of the support could have been better. In evidence, the Committee was told that:

I think we would have been better served if the sample materials and the sample exam had been received six months prior to when they were released... Eighteen months prior to implementation.¹⁰⁷

It is likely that a significant amount of the anxiety and stress on teachers could have been avoided if support material was provided earlier.

¹⁰³ Mr Paul Albert, Director General of Education, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 October 2005, p11.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, p13.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, p14.

¹⁰⁶ Ms Lois Joll, Acting Director, Post Compulsory Academic Standards and Support, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 October 2005, p14.

¹⁰⁷ Ms Kelly Klymiuk, President, English Teachers' Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 November 2005, p10.

This view was also expressed in submissions. Wesley College said in its submission to the Committee that:

*Timelines for implementation of the new English Course of Study were not met (they did not get the material 18 months prior as decreed). This has put English teachers under enormous pressure.*¹⁰⁸

Although not due to commence their Courses of Study until 2007 and 2008 respectively, the science and mathematics teachers' professional associations also considered the issue of getting support material in time to be important. In evidence before the Committee, the spokesperson for the Mathematics Association of Western Australia, Ms Noemi Reynolds, said of support materials that:

*I think most members would be happy to have the stuff at least one year before they have to begin implementing it.*¹⁰⁹

Ms Weber of the STAWA also indicated that the teachers needed this information in sufficient time to approach their programs with confidence. She said:

*They really need to have them the year before the courses actually come in. For those science subjects coming out in 2007, they would need to have those things next year so they could start planning their courses.*¹¹⁰

In addition to the problems of timeliness, there has been something of an *ad hoc* and fragmented approach in Western Australia to the provision of material. In NSW, in 1999 before the first year of the new assessment system became operational (2001) the Board of Studies produced for each subject an 'Examination, Assessment and Reporting Supplement' (EARS) to show teachers and students what a new examination paper would look like and how it would be assessed. The EARS document included a specimen paper, marking guidelines and the draft course band descriptors. These were available before 2000 for teachers and students to access. CD-ROMs were distributed to teachers within a few months of the first examination so they could see samples of student scripts aligned to the performance bands (the standards) which, of course, were not available until after the first candidates had sat the examination in 2001.¹¹¹ The CD-ROMs, entitled '*NSW HSC Standards Packages*', were prepared for every Course of Study and contained:

- An examination paper that showed each question students were required to answer or task they were required to perform;
- Marking guidelines that show the criteria applied to allocate marks to the student responses in line with the quality of responses;

¹⁰⁸ Submission No 130 from Wesley College, 30 June 2005, p2.

¹⁰⁹ Ms Noemi Reynolds, Mathematics Association of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 November 2005, p9.

¹¹⁰ Mrs Julie Weber, President, Science Teachers Association of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 November 2005, Session 3, p8.

¹¹¹ Information from NSW Board of Studies, December 2005.

- Syllabus;
- Band descriptions that summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding typically demonstrated by students who achieve each band;
- Samples of student responses for all compulsory questions and some of the optional questions on the examination that illustrate the nature and quality of the responses typically produced by students whose marks in the examination placed them at the borderline between each pair of bands. The material was organised in such a way that if a particular section or question is selected, and then a particular borderline selected, it would be possible to view or hear the responses of a sample of students at that borderline;
- Tables and graphs for questions where students are required to select an answer, such as multiple choice and true/false items. These tables provide statistics on the response patterns of students. The material was organised in such a way that for the groups of students whose marks were equal to the borderline between two bands, the percentage of each group that selected each of the responses A, B, C and D was given; and
- Exemplar samples of non-multiple choice items. The 2002 Standards Packages included in a separate area an exemplar sample for all questions and options where a suitable exemplar sample was available.¹¹²

In discussions with a range of education professionals in NSW, both in the Board of Studies and the schools sectors, these integrated and detailed information packages assisted greatly in the reasonably widespread acceptance of the change. While the packages were expensive, costing in excess of \$6 million to produce for the two years they covered, the advantage appears to have been a teaching cohort that approached change with confidence. This was particularly marked as the changes in NSW were implemented very quickly, with the full roll out of the new system being in place within three years of its announcement.

It is not suggested that the Curriculum Council in Western Australia has not provided similar material. The Council's website, as well as the packages sent to teachers and provided during professional development days, have provided a lot of the same material. However, it appears to have been provided piecemeal as it was developed. This may have been largely due to the staggered approach to implementation, which has been a different approach to that taken in NSW.

The advantage of the NSW approach is the fact that all of the material was provided at once for all of the Courses of Study. It was, in effect, a consolidation of the material in an easily accessible form.

The Curriculum Council in Western Australia has also provided assistance in the form of *Assessor II*, a computer program that is intended to enable teachers to upload marks given direct to the

¹¹² NSW HSC Standards Packages, 2002, English Advanced.

Curriculum Council database. While the Committee commends the Curriculum Council for developing this tool to assist teachers, concerns have been expressed that it is not ‘user friendly’ and has technical limitations. For example, the Committee understands that the program will not operate in the Macintosh environment, thus making it unusable for many teachers.¹¹³ The Curriculum Council has advised that it is developing a new version of this program, *Assessor III*, which will be ‘platform free’; that is able to work in any computer environment. It will also address some teachers’ concerns that the current program was configured in such a way that it inhibited the option of undertaking holistic assessments of student outcomes. The Council advised that it hoped that the new version of *Assessor* would be ready for next year, but may be available earlier after being trialled this semester.¹¹⁴

Teachers feel understandably uncertain about teaching new Courses of Study when the content and samples of what the work will look like are not available to them a few months prior to the courses starting. In its Interim Report, the Committee recommended that the core support material be provided by the last day of first term in the year preceding the commencement of the Course of Study and that any Course of Study for which that support material was not provided should be delayed until the following year.

It is the Curriculum Council’s view that it met that recommendation fully. In correspondence to the Committee in April 2006, the Council said:

*A Curriculum Council meeting of course experts was held on 6 April to confirm the readiness of new courses. Seventeen panels recommended the implementation of their course, however, the Economics ARM panel recommended a delay of the Economics course. The support materials for all 17 courses that will commence implementation for Year 11 students in 2007 are ready.*¹¹⁵

Specifically, the Council advised the Committee that the following support materials had been provided to teachers:

- *For the 17 courses, teachers have been supplied with a course file including support materials that include for units 1A - 2B:*
- *Sample schemes of assessment that show how to collect evidence on student achievement;*
- *Evidence plans;*
- *Course (unit) outlines and materials that describe the relationship between different parts of the course;*
- *Student task samples;*

¹¹³ Letter from Executive Director, AISWA, 26 March 2006, p2.

¹¹⁴ Communication with Mr David Axworthy, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, 21 June 2006.

¹¹⁵ Letter from Mr David Axworthy, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, 10 April 2006, p3.

- *Student task briefs and assessment rubrics;*
- *Teaching, learning and assessment programs; and*
- *Annotated work samples for course outcomes.*

In addition to these materials, the Council has advised that the file provided to teachers also contained:

- *An introduction to the new course which also provides teachers with a process for planning tasks in a unit;*
- *The design brief for the examination; and*
- *Exploratory examinations items.*¹¹⁶

In subsequent correspondence to the Committee, some teachers have cast doubt about whether or not the Curriculum Council had implemented the recommendation. The Committee was told by one teacher that:

*I am a teacher who attended the 'day 2 professional development' provided by the Curriculum Council for the physics course of study, on Thursday 13th April. There was no sample exam in the materials we were supplied, and we were informed that it would not be ready until term 2 at the earliest.*¹¹⁷

Further, the Committee was advised that:

*Physics teachers also agreed that the Level Indicators we were given were too vaguely worded to be useful, and that they needed re-writing. There were only two work samples provided, both of poor quality and at a low level.*¹¹⁸

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some people were not happy with the quality of the materials provided. It is, however, not appropriate for the Committee to adjudicate whether materials provided were adequate. That judgement may vary from teacher to teacher at any time, with different teachers having different requirements.

During a hearing in October 2005, the then Chief Executive Officer of the Curriculum Council told the Committee that:

I can honestly say that a delay in this set of changes is tantamount to saying that they should not proceed. These changes have been carefully considered. They are very important. I think that a delay is tantamount to saying that this really should not proceed.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Mr David Axworthy, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, 10 April 2006, p3.

¹¹⁷ Email from Peter de Lacey, 16 April 2006, p1.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

If we do not proceed, all the good reasons that make this set of changes absolutely imperative will be lost.¹¹⁹

The Committee accepts the Curriculum Council's view that the changes currently being implemented are needed and will in the longer term lead to a more comprehensive and effective education system for the 21st Century.

In the Committee's view, however, without support from teachers and parents and the Education community, these changes will not have the positive impact intended. In the Committee's view, that support will be forthcoming when teachers clearly understand what processes are to be used and what Courses of Study look like. While some level of anxiety is inevitable with major change, and a certain level of attrition is also to be expected, the level of concern about a system under development had to be addressed in order to secure its long term success.

The Committee was particularly concerned to receive correspondence as late as March 2006 from the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, a supporter in principle of the changes and itself a member of the Curriculum Council, which said:

The Association is not requesting a change in direction but simply a change in timeline... The Association is committed to assisting schools to implement the COSs (Courses of Study) but is most concerned that the timeline is too short for implementation to be effective.¹²⁰

This followed a previous call from AISWA for a delay in Phase II Courses of Study after the full implementation of Phase I courses, with 'structural problems' being resolved and the development of 'appropriate support materials' for Phases II and III.¹²¹ It was the contention of AISWA that the workload of teachers was unreasonable and that:

This workload can only be reduced by access to high quality support materials, a fully developed model and well constructed professional development. It is evident that these are not currently available.¹²²

Subsequent to the correspondence from AISWA, however, a number of undertakings were made by the Curriculum Council which are intended to ensure that appropriate support materials will be available for teachers to implement change to the curriculum.

Support materials will now include:

- A syllabus, based on the existing TEE syllabus format and using discipline specific language, for each course; and

¹¹⁹ Mr Greg Robson, Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 October 2005, p13.

¹²⁰ Letter from Mrs Audrey Jackson, Executive Director, AISWA, 26 March 2006, p2.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² *ibid.*

- Specific exemplars of assessment items, work samples and an adaptable template program for each new course which will set out the teaching program for the course content together with appropriate assessment items.¹²³

The agreement enabling teachers to use their existing teaching programs or lesson plans for new courses that have been derived from existing TEE subjects¹²⁴ should also reduce the need to rely upon new support material in some areas.

The Committee notes also that in recent evidence from the Department of Education and Training, reference was made to the development of a DVD through West One, to provide teachers with information on an online interactive basis. This appears to be a positive development. As highlighted above, the CD-ROMs were a crucial part of the integrated and detailed information packages distributed to teachers with the implementation of the new curriculum in NSW, and were reported to have assisted greatly in the reasonably widespread acceptance of the change in that State. It is of concern to the Committee, however, that it appears the intention is that this resource is only guaranteed for government school teachers.

Finding 19

In NSW, the development and early distribution of '*NSW HSC Standards Packages*' in the format of integrated and detailed CD ROMs for each Course of Study assisted greatly in the acceptance of curriculum change in that State.

Finding 20

The development of comprehensive and interactive DVDs for distribution to all teachers in Western Australia free of charge along the lines of the '*NSW HSC Standards Packages*' CD ROMs in NSW would assist in the implementation of curriculum change in this State.

¹²³ Memorandum to schools, 'Summary - Modifications to the new courses for Years 11 and 12', from the Curriculum Council, 18 June 2006, p2.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that there be investment in the development and distribution of comprehensive and interactive DVDs to all teachers in Western Australia free of charge, along the lines of the 'NSW HSC Standards Packages' CD ROMs in NSW.

4.4 Delay

On Monday 12 June 2006, the Committee conducted hearings with both the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, and the Chair and Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Curriculum Council, and took what in effect were their closing submissions. A key area of evidence provided during these hearings was the detrimental impacts of delay to the implementation of reform.

The Director General highlighted a number of characteristics of the existing system as being relevant to any proposed delay in the roll-out of changes to the curriculum:

- The current system primarily caters for the 27 percent of students who went on to university;
- Existing and future changes to the school leaving age will result in a much increased cohort of students in Years 11 and 12, from 20,000 to 27,000; and
- The current system requires 14 and 15-year-olds to make 'career life choices' in Year 10; locking them into a TEE pathway, a VET pathway, or a WSA pathway. There was very little flexibility to enable them to change courses.¹²⁵

The Director General advised that the new system would also address many of the anomalies in the existing system, providing examples including those students who start on a TEE pathway and either drop out or end with a C or D. Such students, according to the Director General, are currently penalised for TAFE entrance¹²⁶ and there was also '*some psychological consequences for the students, who consider themselves as failures, unable to handle that pathway and so on*'.¹²⁷ Other benefits associated with the new curriculum identified by the Director General were as follows:

¹²⁵ Mr Paul Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, pp2-3.

¹²⁶ The example, referred to previously, was of English where a C is, in fact, higher than an A in Senior English or an A in Vocational English.

¹²⁷ Mr Paul Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, p2.

- It will deal with the problem of small-candidature TEE subjects where, under the current system, results are standardised around a mean of 61 percent. As a result the level of achievement attained by a student was not recognised;
- It will also increase the breadth of choice for university-bound students. There are 22 subjects that count, and under the new system it will increase to 47 and align this State with the options available in New South Wales and Victoria. For example, currently students from New South Wales or Victoria can get into university in Western Australia on the basis on marks from doing English as a second language, but this is not recognised as counting towards the TEE in Western Australia;
- It will address the anomaly in which many students in VET can achieve only a C grade because the Curriculum Council cannot determine the standard of those subjects; and
- It will also recognise pathways such as apprenticeships, which currently do not count towards graduation.

The Director General stated on 12 June 2006 that:

*We have met with our principals. They have all said to us that they are ready to introduce the changes. Schools have already decided the courses that they are going to offer. They have already published their year 10 handbooks. They have already begun the counselling procedures with year 10 students, and, centrally, we are putting into place revised reporting arrangements for the new courses.*¹²⁸

He continued:

*... schools have already entered into detailed counselling processes with their students. Students are already making the choices for next year. Schools are already putting into place the necessary timetabling and so on. If there were a delay, it would result in significant disruption at the school level. In relation to that, it needs to be understood that if there were a delay, we would face the prospect of 37 new courses of study being introduced the following year. In our view that would be unmanageable... I come back to the issue of students. We have to remember that the existing system has a whole range of anomalies that disadvantage students.*¹²⁹

The Curriculum Council also gave evidence on this issue of possible delays in the implementation of curriculum changes to the Committee. Responding to a question from Mr Waldron, Committee member, about which would potentially be of greater detriment to students, Mrs Temby, the Chair of the Curriculum Council, responded:

¹²⁸ Mr Paul Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, p3.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

I think that for the students, and they are coming to perhaps three areas, that a delay would disadvantage them. I think in terms of schools, they have been gearing up for this. Many schools have published their handbooks and have had parent evenings, and all of that process that they have done is out there. Students have selected where they are going, what subjects they are doing and what courses they are doing next year. There is the whole process happening for year 10s at the moment, so I think that would all have to be undone. In terms of the students that are TEE students at the moment, if there was to be delay considered, those students would be disadvantaged, because the idea is that students now can count all of the subjects for their tertiary entrance rank. If we were to delay it, it would keep that very narrow focus of TEE subjects that we have, unlike other states. So, that widening of the courses available for students would not be available. For the what we call non-TEE students, the other group of students, they would be locked into the pathways that they are locked into at the moment, making these decisions at year 10 and not having the capacity to move one way or the other, and I think that would be a disadvantage. So for those students, a delay would mean that the cohort students would not have the capacity then to move this way or that way. So I think they are three areas that I can see that we really should be going forward on.¹³⁰

Responding to further questions by Committee member Dr Hames, however, Mr Axworthy, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Curriculum Council, agreed that if the new curriculum was delayed students would not be any more disadvantaged than those students who had just completed Year 11, although he also believed that they would be ‘disadvantaged’ in an ‘absolute sense’ and that ‘there are opportunity costs attached to doing that’.¹³¹

Finding 21

In addition to the issues outlined in Finding 1, a delay in implementation of the new curriculum would also result in:

- Disruption to schools which have published handbooks, counselled students and commenced timetabling on the basis of the implementation of the new curriculum;
- Disruption for Year 10 students who are making their subject choices for Year 11 in 2007;
- Year 12 students in 2008 who undertake current non-TEE (non-Tertiary Entrance Examination) subjects will remain ineligible for a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER); and
- The potential for an unmanageable roll out of 37 new Courses of Study in 2008 which would place too many teachers outside of the schools on professional development at any one time.

¹³⁰ Mrs Therese Temby, Chair, Curriculum Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, p12.

¹³¹ Mr David Axworthy, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, p13.

The Committee considers that a fully developed model is required to ensure that teachers and the community have confidence in the education system. This does not mean that every document required during a Course of Study is beyond modification; nor does it suggest that there will be no fine-tuning or refinement to be done as courses proceed.

Finding 22

The Curriculum Council currently develops, distributes and evaluates curriculum documentation and it is recognised that this practice will continue as the new Courses of Study are refined.

Ideally fundamental documents must be ready well in advance of a course's commencement, professional development must be in place that is meeting the needs of the teachers undertaking it and, most importantly, processes such as assessment must be 'bedded down' and understood.

The Committee notes that with the recent agreements between the Curriculum Council, Department of Education and Training and the State Government, with the support of other major stakeholders – including the SSTUWA and the Catholic Education Office – the Phase II Courses will allow teachers to use existing teaching programs, courses will use more traditional syllabus formats and assessment will be cut back, reducing the marking and paperwork requirements that teachers had feared, with the content of new courses clarified for teachers.

It would appear that most new Courses of Study have retained the majority of the material of existing subjects and students will not be tested on any new content in Courses of Study during the transition period in 2007.

The SSTUWA President, Mr Mike Keely, is reported as describing the agreement positively with most teachers being able to use their existing teaching and assessment programs next year.

Reports indicate that as well as the Teacher Development Centres for the 17 Courses of Study commencing in 2007 that will be operating in the government school system and providing expert teachers to assist classroom teachers,¹³² extra resources will be made available for the Catholic and independent school systems (discussed further in the next chapter).¹³³

¹³² Mr Paul Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 October 2005, p8.

¹³³ Email from Mr Paul Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training, 19 June 2006, p2.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the current timetable for the implementation of the proposed new Courses of Study for Years 11 and 12 should continue and be closely monitored, particularly in the area of assessment processes. If necessary, adjustments must be made before the implementation of Phase III in 2008.

CHAPTER 5 THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGES

5.1 Cost of the changes

The financial implications for any change as significant as those in the curriculum for Years 11 and 12 are substantial. It is not possible to measure the total costs of the changes because they are not all borne by the government. In addition to the financial contribution made by the government, many schools both inside and outside the government system have to meet costs from their own budgets. Costs of teacher professional development including the employment of relief teachers are, in the case of non-government schools, met by the schools themselves. Similarly, the development of new materials for Courses of Study currently under development will incur additional costs that are unknown at this stage.

In its submission to the inquiry, the Department of Education and Training has acknowledged that significant funding may be required to train teachers to teach Courses of Study which are new or which have significantly higher academic demands than in the past. The Department has stated that:

Many current teachers may not feel adequately prepared to teach courses which in the past have not required the high levels of academic rigour as defined in levels 7 and 8 of the new scales of achievement. These courses will increasingly attract students who wish to gain tertiary entrance. This will be particularly the case in the Technology and Enterprise Learning Area where many of the existing course have been wholly school assessed.¹³⁴

The Department recognises that the costs of professional development will be substantial, with the Department funding three of the five days under the Curriculum Council model.

The Department also recognised that professional development was not the only cost. It stated in its submission that the provision of appropriate examinations and their marking for all 47 Courses of Study will be a significant cost to the Curriculum Council. Council funding will also need to be allocated for the new Assessment, Review and Moderation Panels to resolve Courses of Study issues and develop sample examination papers, as well as to generate appropriate samples of level 6, 7 and 8 level exemplars of student work.¹³⁵

Specifically, the Curriculum Council has advised the Committee that between 1998 and 2004 \$3.5 million has been spent on the Post-Compulsory Education Review, course development and preliminary stages of professional development.¹³⁶

For the period 2005/06 to 2008/09, \$19 million has been allocated in the forward estimates for the overall implementation of the new system. This funding is additional to the Curriculum Council's

¹³⁴ Submission No 177 from Department of Education and Training, 27 July 2005, p9.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ Submission No 175 from Curriculum Council, 16 August 2005, p17.

general operating budget. The implementation of the new WACE over the four budget years includes extra expenditure for course development, support materials, moderation, WACE examinations and professional development.¹³⁷

The following tables detail specifically what has been spent to date and what is budgeted until the end of the implementation process in 2009.

Figure 2 Recurrent Operations from Commencement to 30 June 2005 – Actual Funding and Expenditure

Financial Year	Funds Exclusively for Post-Compulsory Education Review (PCER) Implementation				
	Original Provision	Cabinet approved Additional	Total CF Funding For FY	Funded by Internal Savings	Total Expenditure
1998/99				72,502	72,502
1999/2000				211,731	211,731
2000/01	100,000		100,000	189,948	289,948
2001/02	100,000		100,000	58,657	158,657
2002/03	100,000	800,000	900,000	-481,806	418,194
2003/04	100,000	907,000	1,007,000	615,152	1,622,152
2004/05	100,000	1,253,000	1,353,000	890,719	2,243,719
Total to 30/06/05	500,000	2,960,000	3,460,000	1,556,903	5,016,904

Source: Curriculum Council of WA

¹³⁷

Submission No 175 from Curriculum Council, 16 August 2005, p17.

Figure 3 Recurrent Operations - 2005/06 and Future Years - Approved / Estimated

Financial Year	Total Including Variation	Additional Approved In 2005/06 State Budget	Additional Funding 24/8/05	Approved Total CF For FY	Expenditure Funded By Internal Savings	ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE
2005/2006	1,345,000	2,000,000	1,106,000	4,451,000	1,134,000	5,585,000
2006/2007	2,043,000	1,000,000	1,890,000	4,933,000	INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE	
2007/2008	1,980,000	874,000	2,138,000	4,992,000		
2008/2009	2,858,000	438,000	1,018,000	4,314,000		
TOTAL	8,226,000	4,312,000	6,152,000	18,690,000		

Source: Curriculum Council of WA

In addition to the recurrent expenditure, the Committee has been advised that the Curriculum Council has received additional capital funding to upgrade the Student Information Records System (SIRS). The following table details the total capital funding for that Project.

Figure 4 Total Funding for SIRS

EXPENDITURE	
ACTUAL, 30/6/05	983,605
ESTIMATED, 30/6/06	1,101,000
ESTIMATED, 2006/2007	2,126,395
TOTAL ACTUAL AND ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE	4,211,000

Source: Curriculum Council of WA

Since the establishment of this inquiry the Minister for Education and Training has granted a number of extra pupil free days to provide additional support to schools to plan for implementation. On 11 September 2005, the Minister announced additional funding of \$6 million to the Curriculum Council to support further professional development and assist teachers and schools in assessment through providing more extensive sample tasks and support materials.¹³⁸ This brings the Government funding of the changes to \$25 million for the next four years.

These figures recognise only the government component of the funding. The cost to individual schools whilst less easy to quantify is expected to be significant.

(a) Professional development and related costs

According to the Catholic Education Office, the financial commitment during 2006 in preparation for the 20 or so courses to be implemented in 2007 will be significant. In its submission to the inquiry, the Catholic Education Office claimed that most schools will implement at least 16 of the proposed courses in 2007 and will need to release teachers for the five days of professional development during 2006. *'...For an average Catholic school with a year 11/12 cohort of*

¹³⁸ Letter from Curriculum Council, November 2005, p6.

*approximately 300 students it is likely that approximately 180 days would be required in 2006 and a similar amount in 2007.*¹³⁹

The Catholic Education Office stated in its submission that:

*Schools will face significant financial and resource issues in providing for these commitments. Some strategies will be considered such as limiting the number of teachers of new courses who can attend professional development.*¹⁴⁰

Clearly, such a strategy risks reducing the effectiveness of the Professional Development Program and could well impact negatively on the students. As the Catholic Education Office suggested it does not represent an ‘optimum solution’.

Several schools expressed concerns about the funding of the Professional Development Program, particularly as the government funds only two of the five days. The balance must come out of the school’s own budget. This was particularly an issue for independent schools. For example, Hale School told the Committee that it has been calculated, from experience as a trial school for the Engineering Course of Study and based on the original proposal for curriculum change, that it took between 40 and 60 hours to write a unit of Course of Study. In most Courses of Study there are six units 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B.¹⁴¹

In its submission, St Hilda’s Anglican Girls’ School estimated that teachers responsible for the introduction of new units of Courses of Study under the original proposal should be allocated two periods (110 minutes) each week to develop programmes, assessment items and student resources for the first year of the unit.

According to their calculations, these two periods would be considered to be 2/26 of a teaching load and equivalent to 0.077 of a teaching salary. Currently St Hilda’s runs 33 subjects at Year 11 and the same number at Year 12, amounting to 66 new courses. On the basis of the new Courses of Study as originally proposed, the impact on the schools’ teaching allocation would be $66 \times 0.077 = 5.07$ teachers over the implementation period. At an average salary of \$55 000 the cost to the school was estimated to be \$278 000.¹⁴²

In addition to these costs, St Hilda’s asserted that an unknown cost would be incurred by the time taken for teachers to moderate achievement between schools. At the time of their submission, they understood that this would be undertaken every semester in the first instance. They estimated that at a minimum, this moderation could involve approximately 70 teachers attending a half-day meeting each semester. This was estimated to be 70 teacher days per year which would be equivalent to a relief cost of \$18 200 ($70 \times \260).¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Submission No 126 from Catholic Education Office, 1 July 2005, p7.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Submission No 121 from Hale School, 30 June 2005, p3.

¹⁴² Submission No 142 from St Hilda’s Anglican Girls’ School, 4 July 2005, p3.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

The Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) will also incur additional costs as a result of the curriculum change. TISC is an incorporated body established in 1975 by Curtin University of Technology, Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University and the University of Western Australia which provides the following services:

- *Processing of applications for admission to undergraduate courses at the above Universities and the Graduate Diploma in Education.*
- *Conducting the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT); and*
- *Administering the West Australian Universities Foundation Program.*¹⁴⁴

TISC advised the Committee that a '*business analysis of the TISC changes required has estimated the cost to be \$400,000*'.¹⁴⁵

It should be noted that many of the estimates outlined above were based on the assessment of teacher workloads in relation to the original proposal. As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, recent changes have seen undertakings made which have the potential to significantly reduce the workload implications of the curriculum changes for teachers, particularly in the area of assessment.

In the absence of estimates based on the most recent changes, the above figures, in particular those based on estimates of the workload implications for teachers, should be considered as only broadly indicative of the costs involved in the implementation of the new curriculum.

5.2 Additional costs

In addition to the costs of professional development for schools and the government, there are other costs in introducing the changes. For example, it may well be that parents will have to bear some additional charges as Courses of Study develop. In its submission to the inquiry, Mazenod College suggested that Engineering Studies will have a significant increase in practical work compared with the subject it replaces. This, it is claimed, will lead to an increase in costs to parents. Mazenod College also suggested that the English Course of Study will require a significant number of texts for the students in order to meet the interests of the students as allowed for with the flexibility of the new structure.¹⁴⁶

This expectation of increased costs in support materials is shared by a number of schools. In its submission to the inquiry, Perth College suggested that it had:

... built up an extensive amount of resource material over a long period of time, including textbooks, reference books, electronic resources and teachers' files... With such a major

¹⁴⁴ TISC website, available at: www.tisc.edu.au. Accessed on 20 June 2006.

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Executive Officer TISC, 28 April 2006.

¹⁴⁶ Submission No 78 from Mazenod College, 28 June 2005, p2.

*change being proposed, however, much of this material will suddenly become unusable in its current form.*¹⁴⁷

Similarly, individual teachers have told the Committee that they are concerned that materials that they have been using for a number of years will no longer be usable which will have implications of both cost and time. In his submission, Mr Greg Williams said:

*Because the assessment of the new courses is so different to the current ones, then we will find that our current textual and digital resources are all but useless. Quite apart from the fact that the provision of resources from external sources will be minimal, the huge wastage that will occur within departments is a big worry.*¹⁴⁸

Again, the recently agreed changes to the new curriculum may reduce both the human and financial resource implications of implementation.

5.3 On-going support required

According to the Curriculum Council, included in the \$19 million is an amount of \$3.2m in the 2008/09 budget year which is expected to be required as an on-going amount to fund the new system. This funding is related to increased moderation requirements and increased WACE examination costs.¹⁴⁹

This on-going commitment is an essential factor in the long-term success of the changes to the Years 11 and 12 curriculum.

According to the AISWA, once the initial professional development has taken place, teachers will need on-going support during the first few years to refine their programs, to be confident about making judgements and to continually strive to improve student outcomes. In its submission to the inquiry, AISWA said that teachers have indicated that opportunities for networking in the first few years of implementation will be essential and, if systems and sectors are to do this, additional resources will be required.¹⁵⁰

According to the Department of Education and Training, this on-going support is already planned. In evidence before the Committee, the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, Mr Paul Albert, said:

We will actually be putting \$12 million over the next four years into providing that additional support. The first component of it was setting up the team in central office, and the second critical component, which I think will go a long way towards addressing the issue you have raised, is the establishment of teacher development centres in a number of

¹⁴⁷ Submission No 144 from Perth College, 4 July 2005, p3.

¹⁴⁸ Submission No 17 from Mr Greg Williams, 8 June 2005, p2.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Submission No 111 from AISWA, 30 June 2005, p6.

*our schools throughout the state. Those centres will play a key role in providing over and above the professional development that will be provided through the Curriculum Council.*¹⁵¹

More recently, the Department of Education and Training has advised that the Catholic and Independent sectors will also be provided with additional resources ‘*to assist their teachers*’.¹⁵²

Finding 23

It is likely that professional development requirements will be on-going and will demand substantial resources after the Courses of Study are implemented. The establishment of Teacher Development Centres in government schools as well as the additional support for the non-government sector are positive recognition of the need for on-going support. Although the cost to individual schools is difficult to quantify, support both at the school level and across sectors is required.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the State Government ensures support for all classroom teachers by providing sufficient funding for the Teacher Development Centres and the equivalent support activities in the non-government school sector.

¹⁵¹ Mr Paul Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 October 2005, p8.

¹⁵² Email from Mr Paul Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training, 19 June 2006, p2.

CHAPTER 6 THE EFFECT OF THE AMALGAMATION OF TEE AND NON-TEE SUBJECTS

6.1 Introduction

Previously in Western Australia there were three types of curricula for Years 11 and 12, commonly known as TEE and non-TEE subjects. Students could enrol in subjects from a particular type or a combination of types:

- Tertiary Entrance Examination subjects (TEE);
- Wholly School Assessed subjects (WSA); and
- National Training Modules/units of competency in Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Each of these streams has different sets of standards and there has been a substantial increase in the number of subjects offered.

A Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) for university entrance was based on achievement in a range of 22 TEE subjects, excluding subjects in Languages other than English (LOTE). This is a substantially more limited range than other jurisdictions. For example, in Victoria students are able to access 48 subjects for the purpose of university entrance, and in New South Wales the figure is slightly higher. According to the Curriculum Council, Western Australia *'stands out because of the small number of courses it permits to count for university entrance'*.¹⁵³

This has been seen by the Curriculum Council as a significant limitation of the current system and one that reduces the options for students. For example, under the current framework the Curriculum Council has argued that:

- A student selecting only WSA subjects will, no matter how able their performance, find it extremely difficult to access university courses;
- A student selecting TEE subjects will, if his or her performance is inadequate for university selection, often find that - despite the relative difficulty of the subjects attempted - selection into TAFE has been jeopardised; and
- A number of valuable disciplines (Economics, for example) and VET elements are inaccessible to many students.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Curriculum Council of WA, *Our Youth, Our Future*, November 2001, p19.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

Under the new curriculum, instead of three different types of subjects (TEE, VET and WSA) there will be, subject to the exception of Curriculum Council endorsed subjects which are discussed further below, one single curriculum with around 47 Courses of Study. Each course will be made up of six semester units, which will have different levels of difficulty. To complete a Course of Study, students will complete between two and four units.¹⁵⁵ Unlike the TEE, VET and WSA system, all Courses of Study will count towards university entrance. Examinations for university entrance will still be held, but they will only be compulsory for students wishing to go on to university. Students will be able to decide at the time whether they sit the exams. This is intended to keep the pathways open for students right up until the time they finish school.

There are a number of issues related to the amalgamated TEE and non-TEE courses that have been addressed in the submissions received by the Committee. As in the rest of the inquiry, the submissions represent a wide and divergent range of opinions. The key issues are covered in the following sections.

(a) Continuity of standards

It is the view of the Curriculum Council that the lack of comparable standards across subject types means that the existing standards-based model is compromised and its value reduced. As a result, under the new curriculum model, standards across subjects, schools and other jurisdictions will be comparable and therefore are intended to be more meaningful in assessing a student's achievements.

In its submission to the inquiry, the Curriculum Council advised the Committee that standards with levels 4-8, based on the standards from Kindergarten to Year 10, have been developed for each Course of Study. Teachers will use these standards to measure student progress. The standards across courses are intended to be of comparable levels of difficulty. The standards will be used diagnostically to determine a student's level of achievement and to plan for the most appropriate content that should be taught to assist the student in their progress in a course.¹⁵⁶

This comparability of Courses of Study represents a key area of concern among opponents of the changes. Many submissions made the point that TEE and non-TEE subjects are clearly different in approach and content, and any attempt to make them equal will lead to either a 'dumbing down' of the academic subjects to enable less academically able students to cope, or they will be made more difficult to justify their status as TER subjects. According to the opponents of the change, either scenario will damage the educational outcomes for one set of students.

As an example of the concerns expressed during the inquiry, in its submission Canning College Science Department said that there is a risk that:

... in order to achieve parity with traditional TEE courses, VET and WSBA subjects will be forced to become more academic. It is thought that most students currently taking WSBA or VET subjects would find it very difficult to achieve higher level outcomes comparable to

¹⁵⁵ Curriculum Council, *The New WACE Brochure*, p5.

¹⁵⁶ Submission No 175 from Curriculum Council, 16 August 2005, p12.

*those proposed for the Sciences. Many of these courses, originally designed for students not seeking tertiary entrance, are now subsumed by Courses of Study.*¹⁵⁷

However, the Curriculum Council has made it clear that there will be differentiation within Courses of Study which will enable students to manage harder courses or to be challenged by the work. For each outcome, student achievement will be measured against five levels, levels 4 – 8. The higher levels show higher standards of achievement at increasing degrees of complexity. So while students may occupy the same class, they will not necessarily be working at the same pace and level of difficulty.

The Curriculum Council also has advised the Committee in its submission that all of the 47 new Courses of Study are designed to include all learners, regardless of their post-school plans. Each course comprises three sets of units 1A, 1B; 2A, 2B; 3A, 3B, and English has extra units 1C and 1D, which typically represent the full range of achievement of students in Years 11 and 12.¹⁵⁸

It is intended that this will enable students to select units that best suit their interests and abilities.

(b) Parity of esteem of Courses of Study

There is a perception that the status of the three different types of subjects in Years 11 and 12 has an impact on the students undertaking them. The TEE subjects are seen to be of greater value than the non-TEE subjects and this can lead to a stigma being attached to the non-academic streams.

It has also been of concern that with the current tiered system (generally known as a ‘two-tiered’ system because of the status of VET and WSA subjects as non-TEE), students with an interest in non-academic subjects cannot count their studies in these areas towards a TER, even if the subject is available at university. The example of health sciences, which can be studied at university but at school does not attract a TER score and so cannot assist in getting a student into university, has been referred to previously.

This concern has been supported and expanded by the Curriculum Council. The Council claimed that not only should students wishing to study these subjects be able to count them in the TER, but they should also be able to do traditionally academic subjects as well. In its submission to the inquiry the Curriculum Council said that:

*There is no reason why studies in disciplines like Physical Education, Health and Materials Design cannot include high academic achievement. Each of these disciplines is available in the universities. Similarly, there is no reason why students who are not intending to go to university may pursue their learning interests in disciplines such as Economics, History, Financial Management, Chemistry, Human Biology and Physics which tend to be seen as only being studied for university entrance.*¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Submission No 112 from Canning College Science Department, 30 June 2005, p3.

¹⁵⁸ Submission No 175 from Curriculum Council, 16 August 2005, p13.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

This view was also strongly supported by the State School Teachers' Union of WA (SSTUWA), which said in its submission:

It is hard to understand why a student who achieves to a very high standard in the current Senior English course should be excluded from seeking university entrance when a student who achieves a relatively low standard in English can gain entrance to a university. It is certainly not fair or equitable. Nor is it fair or indeed logical that studies which can be undertaken at university to degree level and beyond are not permitted, if taken in year 11 and 12 enable you to qualify for university entrance.¹⁶⁰

Opponents of the amalgamation argue that the change, rather than supporting a parity of esteem will, in fact, place less able students at greater risk of being further marginalised as they have to study subjects that may be beyond them. The situation of less academically able students under the new curriculum is discussed further in the section below.

(c) Changes will enhance choice and increase flexibility

The Curriculum Council has argued that one of the key benefits of amalgamating the TEE and non-TEE streams will be that students will not have to decide whether they want university entrance during Year 10 when some are only 14 years of age. The Council considers that this is too young to make such a decision, and that the current system makes it very difficult for a student who has opted for a non-TEE pathway to change his or her mind and switch to a TEE subject list. Under the new system, there will be no need to shift as all Courses of Study will count towards a TER.

In its submission to the inquiry, the Curriculum Council explained:

The new system's design provides for those students, who find that after a few months the content is too difficult, when enrolled in subjects in the current system. They are faced with having to continue and risk failure, change subjects or drop out altogether. Students will now be able to enrol in units more suitable to progress their level of achievement and work towards enrolling in units suitable to achieve at higher-levels when they are more ready and if they choose to do so. In essence there is a seamless transition for curriculum that is provided for students as they progress in their learning in Year 11 and 12.¹⁶¹

Some of the critics of the changes argue that this amalgamation is a reversion back to the days when only university entry was considered of value. They argue that the development of a dual pathway with TEE and non-TEE has de-stigmatised the non-academic students and has given them a choice that is both relevant to them and has a post-secondary future. In a submission to the Committee, the Society and Environment Department of Mercedes College said:

We have spent years convincing both students and parents that WSA and VET courses were a viable and, for many, a positive direction for the students to take. Now we will

¹⁶⁰ Submission No 167 from SSTUWA, 7 July 2005, p4.

¹⁶¹ Submission No 175 from Curriculum Council, 16 August 2005, p14.

*throw them all back into the same classroom where the clear message will be that university is the prized goal for all, when this should clearly not be the case.*¹⁶²

This concern about a focus on university entry was a common theme among submissions.

In addition to concerns about the less able students and their potential inability to cope with more challenging Courses of Study, there was also some concern expressed about the effect that this would have on the academically-talented students. One submission suggested that:

*The mix of the range of abilities that will present in the amalgamation referred to will seriously compromise the huge benefits and real advantages that the present academic students enjoy... If one tries to cater for the lower ability students then this will mean watering down the level of rigor in these disciplines. If one does not cater for the lower ability students then they will quickly become alienated and frustrated with content that they can not understand and they will in turn become a disruption...*¹⁶³

This view assumes that units within Courses of Study cannot be prepared that cater for less academically able students – an assertion for which there is little evidence. If courses currently exist that cater for these students, and much of the content of these courses will be retained, then it follows that units can be developed that provide the challenge for students at an appropriate level.

The Committee was told that in the current system, students who are not university-bound are offered a range of Wholly School Assessed subjects to enable them to be better prepared for the work place and training in various practical jobs. It was suggested that the new system will reduce their choice and often force them into classrooms with those with university aspirations.¹⁶⁴

The Association of Independent Schools (AISWA) said during the inquiry that the current system actually works to the advantage of less-academic students. In evidence to the Committee, AISWA representative Dr Glenda Parkin said:

*...despite the best intentions, ... the lower-ability students will be worse off. Our reasoning is that currently a dual system operates under which lower-ability students take courses that are suited to their needs. They are practically focused and they achieve well. Because they are achieving, they enjoy being at school. They stay at school and leave school in many cases with VET certificates or recognition for prior learning and then go on to TAFE colleges.*¹⁶⁵

Dr Parkin told the Committee that AISWA's concern was that:

... the concept of a 'course that all students undertake' will mean that students with a minimum entry level into those courses will struggle with literacy and numeracy. Possibly

¹⁶² Submission No 149 from Mercedes College, Society and Environment Department, 4 July 2005, p6.

¹⁶³ Submission No 178 from Mr Robert Higgins, 22 August 2005, p5.

¹⁶⁴ Submission No 103 from Ms Bernadette Dell, 28 June 2005, p1.

¹⁶⁵ Dr Glenda Parkin, Principal, St Stephen's School and Representative, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 31 August 2005, p1.

*students with learning difficulties - I do not mean disabilities - will be with other students who are high-flyers wanting to gain university entrance.*¹⁶⁶

This concern about the effect of placing students into an academic environment for which they are ill-equipped was widely held in the submissions. One of the school departments that deals with non-TEE students said in its submission:

*Students currently studying Wholly School Assessed subjects and are not university bound, will no longer have courses suited to their needs but will be required to study the new courses of study only at the lower levels. Gone will be the rewards for their endeavours such as the 'A' grade and special end of year awards. What goals and motivations will be left for these students?*¹⁶⁷

However, the Director General of the Department of Education and Training advised the Committee that:

...schools will still be able to offer wholly-school assessed subjects as curriculum [Council]-endorsed units. In other words, where there are particular circumstances that suit a particular set of students...

*I know of one school that has a very successful football program. It is credited as a wholly-school assessed subject. In the early years their intention is to keep that program as it is, because it is basically dealing with kids who have very low literacy and numeracy. However, their intention is over time to develop up the literacy and numeracy components so that at some stage they might be able to fit it into the phys ed course of study.*¹⁶⁸

In its evidence to the Committee, the Curriculum Council was also hopeful that Council endorsed subjects would accommodate the needs of less able students. This has the potential of enabling them to obtain a WACE, provided they also obtain a level 4 in English; or otherwise obtaining a record of achievement. The Acting Chief Executive Officer stated:

In addition to the 47 to 50 council-designed courses, there is an unlimited number of what we call council-endorsed subjects or units or bits of courses. It is possible for a student to graduate to gain a WACE having studied half of their course in terms of council-endorsed units. They would not meet the requirements for university...

The reason that we have thrown that open is to cater for two major groups of students. The first group is those who are less academically orientated. They are the students who have been traditional clients of educational support facilities or who traditionally would have dropped out of school and would have been lost to the school sector. To cater for those students we have council-endorsed courses. Many of those alternative courses -

¹⁶⁶ Dr Glenda Parkin, Principal, St Stephen's School and Representative, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 31 August 2005, p2.

¹⁶⁷ Submission No 118 from St Mary's Home Economics Department, 30 June 2005, p3.

¹⁶⁸ Mr Paul Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, p25.

which is what they have been called in the past - for students at risk can continue, and they will continue. However, the school can get those courses endorsed and recognised by the council. Many students in educational support would be capable of achieving quite well in one or two of the regular, mainstream 50 courses. However, they can make up the rest of their course through council-endorsed subjects. The other group is vocational students who want to do part of their course in vocational education training course or an AQTF qualified course, but not within the school setting. There are ways for those students to have those courses recognised under the council-endorsed aspect of the program.¹⁶⁹

In response to concerns about how smaller schools could accommodate the teaching of courses at different levels, Mr Axworthy stated:

One of the great benefits of this - and the major reason that we have found ourselves in this almost content-free, context-free environment - is to cater for those students in the 1A, 1B units of courses. In a sense there has been a bit of a creep through into the 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B courses. Some of the refinements we are making in terms of specifying content and context for external examinations, which are at the upper end of the courses, could still leave us with flexibility at the lower end.¹⁷⁰

That will be the challenge for the curriculum developers and the teachers. It will also mean that success in these Courses of Study will now mean more choice at the end of secondary school than is currently available.

The Committee was very interested to discuss this issue in Victoria when it visited a number of key educational stakeholders in 2005. Victoria is the only State in Australia to have two separate upper school certificates, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). The former is the traditional academically based certificate, like the WACE and the Higher School Certificate (HSC) in New South Wales. The latter is a vocationally based certificate that rewards achievement in the more practical, non-academic fields.

The Committee was told by Dr Denis Gunning, the Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Qualifications Authority, that the establishment of the VCAL followed a review of the VCE in 2000 which recommended that the VCE needed to be changed, or a new qualification needed to be developed. The Committee was told that the VCAL has proved to be a great success and now has substantial support within the Victorian community.

It does, however, still represent a dual system and, while there is effort being made to develop attitudes of parity of esteem, it has been the intention in Western Australia to have a single WACE system that is flexible enough to enable students with a range of abilities to continue in the formal education system. In this context, efforts to accommodate the interests of less academically able students outlined above appear positive. However, this issue will need to be monitored.

¹⁶⁹ Mr David Axworthy, Acting CEO, Curriculum Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2006, p17.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*, p18.

Finding 24

Initiatives developed by the Curriculum Council to accommodate the needs of less academically able students appear to be positive.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the initiatives implemented to accommodate the needs of the less academically able students in the new curriculum be monitored to ensure their effectiveness.

6.2 Conclusion

Interestingly, both sides of the debate on the changes argue that the opposing side represents a 'one size fits all' approach to education. Those supporting the changes argue that the current system simply assumes that all students are at the same level and that the set syllabus demands that they learn and achieve at the same rate, culminating at the end in a single examination. In their view, the system is about passing the subject and not actually learning, and it assumes that some students will fail or will only succeed in an inferior environment.

Opponents of the changes, on the other hand, argue that by shrinking more than 350 subjects into 47 Courses of Study, the Curriculum Council is assuming that 'one size fits all' and that all students will be capable of the same things. By removing dual pathways, the system assumes that all students want university entrance, and that all students will be capable of equal academic rigour.

The Committee understands from the Curriculum Council that most of the VET and WSA subjects will still be available as they have been incorporated into the new Courses of Study. This will cater for students with practical rather than academic inclinations.

In the Committee's view, the differences in student abilities is a feature of any education system and that to disadvantage some students by reducing their post-secondary choices is not equitable and not fair. The current TEE/VET/WSA system which places students into a rigid pathway based on decisions made when they are often not mature enough to understand the implications is significantly flawed.

It is also a failing of the system that subjects that can be studied at tertiary level, even to Doctorate level, do not count towards a TER. So, someone gifted in the field of health science cannot count secondary studies if he or she wants to study health sciences at university.

Finding 25

The amalgamation of Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) and non-TEE subjects has the potential to remove the two-tiered education system which places a higher value on certain subjects over others. By making all Courses of Study eligible for a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER), and therefore counting towards university entrance, the amalgamation will mean subjects that can be studied at university to doctoral level will be given appropriate status at the secondary school stage.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

This inquiry into the changes to Years 11 and 12 has been a difficult one because the curriculum has been evolving over the period the inquiry was held.

Despite the challenges inherent in an investigation of an evolving system, a number of issues have become clear during the inquiry. Firstly, there is an on-going debate within the educational community regarding the relative merits of OBE. This is not a debate that the Committee can resolve; it is both philosophical and historical, and it is unlikely that any arguments put forward by the Committee will change the views of either OBE proponents or its detractors.

What the Committee can say in relation to the underpinning principles of the changes is that even the fiercest opponents of OBE as an educational philosophy agree that educational outcomes should always be the basis of an education system. The Committee has been told by teachers from both sides of the debate that learning outcomes have always been at the core of good teaching.

Secondly, claims that OBE has been abandoned everywhere it has been tried, a claim common amongst submissions to the inquiry, is too broad a claim to be valid. There are elements of OBE in many, if not most, modern education systems. Certainly, in the States visited by the Committee, namely Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, all have systems where explicit learning outcomes are the focus of the system. While none of the systems are the same as any other, and they all do some things quite differently, they are all outcomes-focussed and share many points of similarity with the Western Australian model.

The majority of submissions received by the Committee expressed concerns about the changes involved in the original proposal. Some of the submissions opposed the changes simply on philosophical lines; that is, they asserted that OBE was a fad, and that it was bad educational practice. These objections did not, in some cases, offer a practical critique of the proposed changes but focussed on the perceived deficiencies of OBE itself. It is worth recognising here that the inquiry commenced right at the beginning of the implementation phase of the new curriculum, and for many of the people who made submissions to the Committee, they were commenting on Courses of Study that had not yet been developed.

Many of the submissions, however, carefully considered the information that had been provided on Courses of Study, the assessment processes and the Professional Development Program, and had some substantial concerns about the changes. These included:

- The changes were not necessary as Western Australia already had a system that, with some adjustments, would continue to serve its students well;
- The changes sought to artificially compare quite diverse subjects, trying to make all subjects equal and ignoring the obvious difference in intellectual rigour required;

- The changes, in order to equalise subjects, would ‘dumb down’ the education system making subjects that are traditionally challenging less difficult to enable all students to study them;
- The changes will create an unrealistically high level of work for teachers, making them spend more time on administrative tasks and less time on the business of teaching students; and
- The vagueness and complexity of the language of outcomes made it impossible for teachers, parents and students to understand what was to be taught, and how it would be assessed.

In the Committee’s view, the low retention rate in Years 11 and 12 in Western Australia suggests strongly the need for change. Changes in technology, in work practices and in employment opportunities mean that it is no longer an option for any industrialised society to have an upper secondary school system that provides insufficient benefits for a substantial percentage of students. Changes in other jurisdictions over the last decade suggest that the changes being undertaken here are overdue.

The Committee also does not accept the argument that there is an attempt being made to make all subjects the same, or to make non-academic subjects more academic or to dumb down academic subjects. The fact that different subjects require different skill sets, use different ways of learning and appeal to different groups of students is obvious and does not require explanation. In the Committee’s view to align levels across subject areas is not the same as claiming each is the same as the other or requires the same abilities. However, it is quite reasonable to acknowledge that each Course of Study is of equal status and that excellence in each is of equal value.

The Committee considers that the workload on teachers has been very high in responding to change. It is also the Committee’s view that this workload has been exacerbated by less than clear information provided by the Curriculum Council. Some of the documentation supporting the changes has been somewhat bureaucratic and verbose, and reading and understanding it has been both time consuming and confusing for many teachers. In addition to the documentation, the evolving nature of the system has made teachers anxious and uncertain. This has, in turn, led to further pressure on their time and energy.

For its part, the Curriculum Council has argued that there are very good reasons for the changes and that their implementation will lead to a vastly improved education system, one that will better equip students of all abilities and with a wide range of interests, to succeed in the 21st Century.

The Council has argued that the changes are necessary for a number of reasons, including:

- An increasing proliferation of subjects to over 350 of varying quality, to accommodate the growth of numbers of students in Years 11 and 12;

- Calls from schools and students to address issues about the perceived status of the three different types of subjects in Years 11 and 12, with their different structures, processes and lack of comparable standards;
- Accommodating the effects of a rapidly changing knowledge environment, in which there are growing demands to include more content in an already overcrowded curriculum;
- Growth in the vocational education and training sector and changing expectations from industry in terms of the knowledge skills and values required of school leavers;
- Current courses not engaging all students to remain at school, with Western Australia identified with the lowest retention rate (67 per cent) for Australian States. This demands that the current structure be revised to be more flexible and adaptive to change; and
- The need for a system of education that provides opportunities for more students to gain a TER. Currently only 37.3 per cent of WA students obtain a TER as opposed to 65 per cent, 69.7 per cent and 71.2 per cent in NSW, Victoria and Queensland respectively.

Some of the submissions received by the inquiry whole-heartedly supported the original proposal, while the majority have been scathing in their opposition. This is, in itself, not unusual as most inquiries into matters that have already been decided and are operating, tend to attract critics rather than supporters. However, it has been clear to the Committee from the outset that the concerns of teachers and schools were both genuinely felt and were, in many cases, valid.

Since the Committee's interim report a refined model for curriculum change has been developed and the Committee was advised that the Curriculum Council has ratified this at a meeting on 12 June 2006.¹⁷¹ A Ministerial Reference Group to oversee the ongoing implementation of the new Courses of Study has also been established consisting of the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Curriculum Council, the Director of the Catholic Education Office of WA, the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools WA, the President of the State School Teachers' Union WA and the Secretary of the Independent Education Union.¹⁷²

The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Ministerial Reference Group and is of the view that continued involvement of key stakeholders and in particular teacher representatives is essential to the successful implementation of the refined model.

Historically a minority of students - most of whom intended to study at university - completed Years 11 and 12. Increased demand for skilled labour and the raised school leaving age have

¹⁷¹ Endorsed Minutes of the Ninety Fourth Meeting of the Curriculum Council, 12 June 2006.

¹⁷² Email from Mr Paul Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training, 19 June 2006, p2.

meant that Years 11 and 12 curriculum needs to cater for a more diverse student cohort. As a consequence, separate vocational and academic curricula developed with arbitrary delineation between TEE and non-TEE subject disciplines.

The development of the original proposal was motivated by the desire for there to be a single system with the capacity to cater for diverse needs yet allow students the flexibility to move across academic and vocational pathways. Whilst acknowledging the need for change and accepting there was merit in aspects of the original proposal, the Committee believes the original proposal was significantly flawed. Indeed had the concerns about assessment, the lack of clear unit syllabi, teacher workloads and the values and ethics components of some courses not been addressed, the Committee would have called for a delay in the implementation of Phase II.

The Committee welcomes the modifications agreed by members of the Ministerial Reference Group and ratified by the Curriculum Council that address these issues. The refined model allows flexibility, so that 14 year olds are not forced to make decisions that effectively lock them out of options. Under the new curriculum Year 11 and 12 students will be able to now move between university, TAFE and employment study pathways. With the enhancement of the moderation and scaling process, the refined model will allow greater flexibility whilst ensuring the validity of the process of fine grained ranking for competitive university entrance.

Much of the public debate has concentrated on the merits or otherwise of OBE. The Committee rejects the notion that it is 'either/or' and welcomes the integration of aspects of the original proposal and the existing system. The Committee notes that the Department of Education and Training now refers to this refined model as 'Outcomes and Standards Education'.

Through an imperfect process of public debate, disagreement, negotiation, understanding and compromise, a better system of Year 11 and 12 education has emerged.

APPENDIX ONE

HEARINGS HELD

Date	Name	Position	Organisation
15/06/2005	Mrs Therese Temby Mrs Norma Jeffery Mr Rees Barrett	Chair Chief Executive Officer Director, Accreditation and Moderation	Curriculum Council
17/08/2005	Mr Gregory Williams	School Teacher	Mercedes College
17/08/2005	Rev. Andrew Syme	Headmaster	Scotch College
17/08/2005	Prof. Max Angus	Professor of Education	Edith Cowan University
24/08/2005	Mr Michael McGarry	Head of Science Department	Morley Senior High School
24/08/2005	Mr Richard Rennie	Educator/Science Communicator	
24/08/2005	Mrs Heather Downing	Retired Teacher	
31/08/2005	Dr Glenda Parkin Mrs Audrey Jackson Mrs Valerie Gould	Principal Executive Director Deputy Executive Director	Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
31/08/2005	Mrs Caroline Payne	Principal	Kolbe Catholic College

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

14/09/2005	Mr Ron Dullard Mr Michael Ciccarelli Mrs Sheena Barber Mr John Nelson	Director Assistant Director Education Consultant Post-Compulsory Education Consultant	Catholic Education Office
14/09/2005	Prof. David Andrich	Professor of Education	Murdoch University
14/09/2005	Mr Gregory Robson	Acting Chief Executive Officer	Curriculum Council of WA
21/09/2005	Ass. Prof. Marnie O'Neill	Dean, Graduate School of Education	University of Western Australia
21/09/2005	Mrs Susan Thomson Mr Gabe Szota Mr Paul D'Rozario	Secondary Teacher Head of Department, Society and Environment Secondary Teacher	Kelmscott Senior High School
12/10/2005	Mr Gregory Robson	Acting Chief Executive Officer	Curriculum Council of WA
12/10/2005	Mr Paul Albert Ms Lois Joll Mr David George	Director General Acting Director, Post-Compulsory Academic Standards and Support Executive Director, Curriculum Standards	Department of Education and Training
19/10/2005	Mr David Wood	Principal	Sevenoaks Senior College
19/10/2005	Mr Allan Blagaich	Principal	Melville Senior High School

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

19/10/2005	Ms Alison Woodman	Principal	Merredin Senior High School
16/11/2005	Ms Noemi Reynolds	President	Mathematical Association of WA
16/11/2005	Mrs Barbara Marshall	Teacher	St Stephen's School
23/11/2005	Ms Kelly Klymiuk	President	English Teachers Association of WA
23/11/2005	Mrs Julie Weber	President	Science Teachers Association of WA
23/11/2005	Mr Rodney Slater Mr Kevin Bennett Mr Nigel Bednall	Teacher, Head of Department Teacher Teacher (Aviation)	Narrogin Senior High School Department of Education and Training
23/11/2005	Mr Michael Keely	President	State School Teachers' Union of WA
12/06/2006	Mr Paul Albert Ms Christine Cook Mr Warren Grellier Ms Lois Joll	Director General Executive Director, Curriculum Standards Principal Consultant Director, Senior Schooling Academic Standards and Support	Department of Education and Training
12/06/2006	Mrs Therese Temby Mr David Axworthy	Chair Acting Chief Executive Officer	Curriculum Council of WA

APPENDIX TWO

SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

List of Submissions received for the inquiry.

Sub. No	Date	Name	Position	Organisation
1	20/05/2005	Mr Lester Zani	Society & Environment Teacher	Carine Senior High School
2	20/05/2005	Mr Bruce Matthews	Principal	Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School
3	23/05/2005	Mr David King	Teacher of Economics	Wesley College
4	26/05/2005	Mrs Bethwyn Rocchi		
5	08/06/2005	Mr Bob Loss	Head of Applied Physics Department	Curtin University of Technology
6	08/06/2005	Mr Chris Wilkins	Head of Mathematics Department	Perth College
7	17/05/2005	Mr Michael Partis		
8	23/05/2005	Mr Malcolm Mummery		
9	25/05/2005	Mr Robert Higgins	Physics/Chemistry Teacher	Guildford Grammar School
10	25/05/2005	Mr Anthony Robb		
11	27/05/2005	Ms Barbara Marshall	Mathematics Teacher, Subject Counsellor and Timetabler	St Stephen's School
12	29/05/2005	Dr Nathan Hoffman		
13	06/06/2005	Ms Fiona Middleton		
14	06/06/2005	Mr Lindsay Underwood	Mathematics Teacher	Churchlands Senior High School
15	07/06/2005	Mr Brian Ferguson		

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

16	10/06/2005	Mr Tony Stopher	Principal	St Mark's Anglican Community School
17	08/06/2005	Mr Gregory Williams	Mathematics Teacher	Mercedes College
18	09/06/2005	Ms Lynn Jacobs	Mathematics Teacher	Mercedes College
19	09/06/2005	Ms Dolores Cullen	Mathematics Department	Mercedes College
20	13/06/2005	Ms Margaret Ryan	Teacher/Librarian	Mercedes College
21	13/06/2006	Ms Cynthia Belonogoff		
22	14/06/2005	Mr Neil George		
23	14/06/2005	Mr Peter Mee	Mathematics Department	Mercedes College
24	14/06/2005	Mr John Harrison		
25	10/06/2005	Rev. A. P. Syme	Headmaster	Scotch College
26	15/06/2005	Ms Julie Martin		
27	14/06/2006	Mr Frank Mulligan		St Norbert College
28	02/06/2005	Mr John Allen-Williams	Principal	Helena College Senior School
29	16/06/2005	Mrs Valma Bowater		
30	17/06/2005		Science Department	Canning College
31	16/06/2005	Mr Tim Poga	Teacher	
32	20/06/2005	Dr Paul Newhouse		
33	17/06/2005	Mr Geoffrey Arnold	Principal	Frederick Irwin Anglican School
34	15/06/2005	Mr Ted Speering	Head of Senior Learning Centre	Mercy College
35	18/06/2005	Mr Greg Williams and Mr Marko Vojkovic		
36	23/06/2005	Ms Teresa Ika	Seton Catholic College	
37	18/06/2005	Ms Mary Smuts		
38	21/06/2005	Mr Mike McGarry	Head of Department: Science	Morley Senior High School

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

38 A1	25/06/2005	Mike McGarry	Head of Department: Science	Morley Senior High School
38 A2	04/07/2005	Mike McGarry	Head of Department: Science	Morley Senior High School
39	22/06/2005	Mr Glen Diggins		
40	22/06/2005	Rev. A. P. Syme	Headmaster	Associated Heads of Independent Schools of Australia - WA Branch
41	23/06/2005	Mr Troy Francesconi	Head of Murdoch House	Corpus Christi College
42	17/06/2005	Mr Bruce Hancy		
43	19/06/2005	Mrs Susan Thomson		
44	24/06/2005	Ms Heather Downing		
45	24/06/2005	Mr Andrew Witkowski	Mathematics Teacher	Sacred Heart College
46	03/05/2005	Mr John Hibble	Deputy Principal (Curriculum)	Iona Presentation College
47	24/05/2005	Ms Sue Cramer	Director of Senior School Mathematics	Aquinas College
48	25/06/2005	Mr Norman Snell		
49	26/06/2005	Prof. Max Angus	Head, School of Education	Edith Cowan University
50	27/06/2005	Ms Cecily Cropley		
51	27/06/2005	Mr Graham Treacey		
52	27/06/2005	Mr Trevor Coultas		
53	27/06/2005	Mr Bruce Macdonald		
54	22/06/2005	Mr Gabe Szota	Head of Society and Environment Faculty	Kelmscott Senior High School
55	27/06/2005	Mr Andrew Wilson		
56	23/06/2005	Mr Edward Kubiak	Mathematics Teacher	Willetton Senior High School
57	28/06/2005	Ms Emily Pink		
58	22/06/2005	Mr Rob Geijsman		

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

59	28/06/2005	Mr David Cullen		
60	23/06/2005	Assoc. Prof. Marnie O'Neill	Associate Professor, Faculty of Education Graduate School of Education	University of Western Australia
61	27/06/2005	Mr Eugene de Gouw		
62	28/06/2005	Mr Graham Braid		Ballajura Community College
63	28/06/2005	Mr Richard Rennie		
64	28/06/2005	Mr Patrick White		Mercedes College
65	22/06/2005	Mr Erik Teune		
66	28/06/2005		Mathematics Department	Kelmscott Senior High School
67	27/06/2005	Mr Roland Bartholomeusz	Lecturer, Biological Sciences	Canning College
68	27/06/2005	Mr Grant Armstrong	Manager	Science Faculty
69	08/06/2005	S. Jamieson		Northam Senior High School
70	27/06/2005	Mr Chris Candy		
71	28/06/2005	Mr A. Barnes		
72	28/06/2005	Mrs Lindsay Macrae		
73	27/06/2005	Mr Graeme Repper Ms Sue Wallis		Ballajura Community College
74	27/06/2005	Ms Lisl McGuire	Computing/Mentor Teacher	Guildford Grammar School
75	28/06/2005	Dr Dawn Penney	School of Education	Edith Cowan University
76	28/06/2005	Dr Paul Brown		
77	28/06/2005	Mr Jim Reddyhough		
78	28/06/2005	Mr Ralph Bradstreet		Mazenod College
79	22/06/2005	Mr Ray Lucas		Albany Senior High School

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

80	28/06/2005	Ms Caroline Payne	Principal	Kolbe Catholic College
81	29/06/2005	Mr Igor Bray	Chair of the Australian Institute of Physics, WA Branch Physics and Energy Studies	Murdoch University
82	29/06/2005	Dr Kevin Donnelly	Executive Director	Education Strategies
83	29/06/2005	Dr Dawn Penney		Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (WA Branch)
84	29/06/2005	Mr William Dwyer		
85	29/06/2005	Mrs Ilse Middleton		
86	29/06/2005	Mr Ian Middleton		
87	29/06/2005	Ms Vaille Dawson	Senior lecturer, Secondary Science Education'	Edith Cowan University
88	26/06/2005	Mr Ian Ballantyne		
89	29/06/2005	Ms Robyn Taylor	Head of Mathematics	St Mary's Anglican Girls' School
90	28/06/2005	Ms Mary Syme		All Saints College
91	27/06/2005	Mr Peter Evans		St Mary's Anglican Girls' School
92	25/06/2005	W. Richards		Albany Senior High School
93	29/06/2005	Mr Alan Sadler		
94	13/06/2005	Ms Romaine Saunders	Head of Mathematics (Senior School)	Presbyterian Ladies' College
95	28/06/2005	Ms Judith Powell		
96	23/06/2005	Ms Leisa Maslin	Curriculum Co-ordinator Yrs 10 - 12	Methodist Ladies' College
97	22/06/2005	Mr Anthony Peck	Assistant Head of Mathematics	All Saints College
98	29/06/2005	Mr Andrew Locke		

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

99	29/06/2005	M. Mitchell		
100	27/06/2005	Mr Peter de Lacey		Rehoboth Christian High School
101	30/06/2005	Mr Pies Dudman	President	Carine Senior High School P and C Association
102	30/06/2005	Ms Pauline Tremlett	Executive Officer	Affiliation of Professional Education Associations
103	28/06/2005	Ms Bernadette Dell		
104	04/07/2005	Mrs Margaret Yoon		
105	29/06/2005	Ms Lynette Virgona	Head of English Learning Area	Swan View Senior High School
106	30/06/2005	Mr Barry Alfirevich	Principal	MacKillop Catholic College
107	30/06/2005	Mr Mark Fielding	Dean Secondary School	St Stephen's School, Carramar Campus
108	30/06/2005	Ms Kerrian Bresser		Mercedes College
109	30/06/2005	Dr Paul Swan	President	The Mathematical Association of Western Australia (Inc.)
110	30/06/2005	Mr Graeme Weston		Shenton College
111	30/06/2005	Mrs Lynne Thomson	President	Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
112	30/06/2005	Mrs Pamela Hardwick	Head of English Department	Canning College
113	30/06/2005	Ms Denise O'Meara	Principal	Mercedes College
114	30/06/2005	Dr Glenda Parkin	Principal	St Stephen's School
115	30/06/2005	Mr Gregory Schofield		
116	30/06/2005	Mrs Jeanette De Landgraft	President	Isolated Children's Parent's Association of Western Australia
117	30/06/2005	Mr Ashley Doyle		

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

118	30/06/2005	Ms Averil Carpenter	Head of Home Economics	St Mary's Anglican Girls' School
119	30/06/2005	Prof. Millicent Poole	Vice-Chancellor and President	Edith Cowan University
120	30/06/2005	Ms Jennifer Riatti	President	Womensport West
121	30/06/2005	Mr Mike Giles	Director of Teaching and Learning	Hale School
122	01/09/2005	Mr Barry Kissane	Dean School of Education	Murdoch University
123	30/06/2005	Ms Sascha Lidbury	Education Manager	Sports Medicine Australia
124	30/06/2005	Mr Brad Watson		
125	30/06/2005	Mr David Wood	Principal	Sevenoaks Senior College
126	01/07/2005	Mr Ron Dullard	Director	Catholic Education Office
127	01/07/2005	Dr Sarath Chandran	Head of Learning Area, Science	Lynwood Senior High School
128	01/07/2005	Ms Theresa Howe	Secretary	Independent Education Union of Western Australia
129	01/07/2005	No author		Mazenod College
130	01/07/2005	Mr David Gee	Headmaster	Wesley College
131	01/07/2005	Ms Dianne Tomazos		
132	01/07/2005	Mr Peter Trend	Deputy Headmaster	Wesley College
133	01/07/2005	Mr Ivan Banks	Principal	Bunbury Catholic College
134	01/07/2005	Ms Sue Collins	Secretary to Executive Director	Parents and Friends' Federation of Western Australia Inc.
135	01/07/2005	Mr Jeffrey Middleton	Deputy Principal - Learning	Mater Dei College
136	01/07/2005	Mrs Julia Ward		
137	01/07/2005	Mr George Przywolnik		Penrhos College
138	04/07/2005	Prof. Lance Twomey	Professor, Vice-Chancellor and President	Curtin University of Technology

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

139	04/07/2005	Mr Ashley Doyle		
140	04/07/2005	Dr Sue Baker	Deputy Principal, Curriculum	Corpus Christi College
141	04/07/2005	Dr Pamela Garnett		
142	04/07/2005	Mrs Joy Shepard	Principal	St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls
143	04/07/2005	Mr Jeffrey Pohara	Mathematics Department	Greenwood Senior High School
144	04/07/2005	Ms Pippa Tandy	Head of English Department	Perth College
145	04/07/2005	Mr Graham Connor	Deputy Principal	Morley Senior High School
146	04/07/2005	Ms Rita McNamee		Mercedes College
147	04/07/2005	Ms Cynthia Belonogoff		
148	04/07/2005	Mr Colin Barnwall		
149	04/07/2005	Mr Richard Swindail	Head, Society and Environment Department	Mercedes College
150	04/07/2005	Mr Chris Brown		
151	04/07/2005	No sender details		
152	04/07/2005	Ms Julie Martin		Ursula Frayne Catholic College
153	04/07/2005	Ms Catherine O'Toole		Mercedes College
154	04/07/2005	Mrs Jenny Porter		
155	04/07/2005	Ms Pina Christie	Deputy Principal (Curriculum)	Perth College
156	04/07/2005	Ms Liz Criddle		
157	04/07/2005	Ms Teresa van Lieshout		
158	05/07/2005	Prof. Belinda Probert	Acting Vice-Chancellor	University of Western Australia
159	05/07/2005	Mr Murray Rosenburg		

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

160	05/07/2005	Mr Richard Berlach	Head, School of Teaching	The University of Notre Dame
161	05/07/2005	Ms Trish Waters		Busselton Senior High School
162	06/07/2005	Ms Joan Burfitt		
163	06/07/2005	Ms Joan Burfitt	Co-ordinator, Mathematics Department	John XXIII College
164	06/07/2005	Mrs Margaret Yoon	Co-ordinator, Society and Environment	John XXIII College
165	06/07/2005	Mr John Garnaut	District Director	Swan Education District
166	06/07/2005	Mr Lawrence Eastwood	Executive Director	Parents and Friends' Federation of Western Australia Inc.
167	07/07/2005	Mr Mike Keely	President	State School Teachers' Union of WA (Inc.)
168	07/07/2005	Mr Grant Richards	English Department	Woodvale Senior High School
169		<i>in camera evidence</i>		
170	06/07/2005	K. J. Harrison	Division of Science and Engineering	Murdoch University
171	11/07/2005	Mr Greg Hurn		
172	18/07/2005	Mr Greg Schofield		
173	14/07/2005	Mr Steven Howell		
174	01/08/2005	Mr David Treloar		
175	16/08/2005	Mrs Therese Temby	Chair	Curriculum Council of WA
176	09/08/2005	Mr Colin Gordon-Smith		
177	27/07/2005	Mr Paul Albert	Director General	Department of Education and Training
178	22/08/2005	Mr Robert Higgins		
179	29/08/2005	Mr Liugi Iemi		
180	10/10/2005	Mr Bruce Gillam		

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

181	08/10/2005	Mr Robin Clarke		Education Research Solutions
182	12/12/2005	Mr Walter Horeb		
183	02/02/2006	Dr Alope Phatak	President	The Statistical Society of Australia (WA Branch)
184	01/05/2006		History Teachers	Albany Region (Great Southern)

APPENDIX THREE

BRIEFINGS HELD

Below is a list of the briefings held during the inquiry, including those held in other States.

Date	Name	Position	Organisation
1/06/2005	Mrs Therese Temby	Chair	Curriculum Council of WA
1/06/2005	Mrs Norma Jeffery	Chief Executive Officer	Curriculum Council of WA
1/06/2005	Mr Rees Barrett	Director, Accreditation and Moderation	Curriculum Council of WA
29/11/2005	Mr George Mclean	General Manager, Post Compulsory Pathways	Department of Education and Training, Victoria
29/11/2005	Ms Rosalie Jones	Manager Secondary Services	Catholic Education Office of Victoria
29/11/2005	Mr Peter Devereay	Team Leader, Post-Compulsory Pathways	Catholic Education Office of Victoria
29/11/2005	Mr John Firth	Chief Executive Officer	Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority
29/11/2005	Mr Stuart Hamilton	Chairman	Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority
29/11/2005	Dr Dennis Gunning	Chief Executive Officer	Victorian Qualifications Authority
30/11/2005	Professor Tim Brown	Dean Of Science	Australian National University
30/11/2005	Professor Garth Gaudry	Director	Australian Maths Sciences Institute
30/11/2005	Ms Jan Thomas	Executive Officer	Australian Maths Sciences Institute
30/11/2005	Dr Michael Evans	Retired	Australian Maths Sciences Institute
30/11/2005	Dr Frank Barrington	Schools Project Manager	Australian Maths Sciences Institute

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

01/12/2005	Dr Geoff Newcombe	Executive Director	Association of Independent Schools, NSW
01/12/2005	Ms Estelle Lewis	Education Consultant	Association of Independent Schools, NSW
01/12/2005	Ms Robyn Yates	Director, Professional Services	Association of Independent Schools, NSW
01/12/2005	Mr Robert Randall	Director Curriculum	Department of Education and Training NSW
01/12/2005	Brother Kelvin Canavan Mr Tim McMullen Mr Paul Brooks Ms Christine Shakya Ms Colleen Catford Mr Peter Ireland		Catholic Education NSW
02/12/2005	Professor George Cooney		Macquarie University
02/12/2005	Professor Jim Tognolini	Research Director, System and School Testing	Australian Council for Educational Research
02/12/2005	Professor Gordon Stanley	President	NSW Board of Studies
08/12/2005	Mr Paul Herschell Mr Aaron Johnson		Queensland Studies Authority

APPENDIX FOUR

LEGISLATION

Legislation	State (or Country)
Curriculum Council Act 1997	Western Australia
School Education Act 1999	Western Australia

MINORITY REPORT

The undersigned members of the Standing Committee on Education and Health feel compelled to submit this Minority Report as we disagree with certain statements, findings and recommendations in the Committee Report.

General Comments

While the Committee Report, *Changes to the Post Compulsory Curriculum*, covers the details and complexity of the inquiry, it has not been an easy task to produce a Minority Report in the time available. The Committee Report was not finally adopted until the meeting of the Committee on Wednesday, 28 June. While the bulk of the Committee Report is supported by the undersigned, it is not intended that this Minority Report address all issues with which we disagree in the Committee Report.

The Minority Report deals only with the second Term of Reference: The readiness of the education system for the proposed changes.

Specific Issues

Inconsistency with the recommendations of the Interim Report of the Committee tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 22 December, 2005.

The undersigned have concluded that the major flaw in the Committee Report is its inconsistency with the recommendation of the Interim Report which reads:-

- *By the commencement of the Professional Development program in 2006, the Curriculum Council publish a timetable for the commencement of each Course of Study, including a detailed listing of what complete support material will be provided for each Course of Study and by what date the material will be provided;*
- *That the core support material be provided by the last day of first term in the year preceding the commencement of the Course of Study; and*
- *That any Course of Study due to commence in 2007 or later, for which the support materials are not provided by the end of the preceding first term, be delayed until the following year.¹*

The central theme of the Interim Report was the matter of readiness of Courses of Study. Indeed, the recommendation of the Interim Report only dealt with the issues of readiness of Courses of Study and the timely provision of support material. The conclusion of the Committee which led to the Interim Report was based on the evidence of a number of witnesses but particularly on the evidence of the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, Mr Paul Albert. The following is quoted from the Committee Report at pages 55 and 56:

¹ Western Australia, Legislative Assembly, Education and Health Standing Committee, *Interim Report On Changes To the Post-Compulsory Curriculum In Western Australia*, 23 December 2005, p13.

Paul Albert, made a very clear and unambiguous statement about readiness. He said:

...we are not prepared to support the introduction of a new course if that new course is not ready for introduction. We have made that very clear to the Curriculum Council.²

The Director General also told the Committee that:

It makes sense to delay a specific course of study that is not ready.... my strong view, is that if a course is not ready - that is, the assessment materials are not ready and there have been some delays or whatever with the schedule for the development of teachers - the readiness factor would apply. That is the issue and that is when you would delay.³

The Director General went on to say in a response to the question of when such material should be provided, that:

I would want it at least a year beforehand...⁴

Thus, the Interim Report clearly recommended that if a Course of Study, due to be introduced in 2007, was not ready by the end of First Term 2006, then it should be delayed for one year.

No new evidence presenting a contrary view to that which led to the recommendation in the Interim Report has been presented to the Committee since 22 December, 2005.

Indeed, events since the end of First Term (13 April, 2006) support the recommendation of the Interim Report.

Firstly, on May 10 the Curriculum Council published significant changes to the assessment procedures for Years 11 and 12.

Secondly, following negotiations on 12 June and 18 June (between the Premier, the Minister for Education, the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, the A/Chief Executive Officer of the Curriculum Council, the Director of Catholic Education Office of WA, the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools WA, the President of the State School Teachers' Union WA, and the Secretary of the Independent Education Union), further changes to the new Courses of Study and professional support, were agreed. These changes were published in a two-page document by the Curriculum Council on 18 June, 2006, and form the basis of Finding 9 of the Committee Report.

Teachers will have to wait until Day 4 of Professional Development on Monday 24 July for further information about these changes to assessment and course content. This is three and a half months later than the deadline set by the recommendation of

² Mr Paul Albert, Director General of Education, Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 October 2005, p11.

³ *ibid*, p13.

⁴ *ibid*, p14.

the Interim Report of the Committee. Teachers will then have the time consuming task of reworking the Courses of Study for the beginning of the 2007 school year.

Finding 9

Finding 9

There have been significant adjustments to the proposed reform of the curriculum for Years 11 and 12 to meet teachers' concerns. These include:

- *There will be a syllabus for each course.*
- *The existing TEE [Tertiary Entrance Examination] syllabus format will be used for all new courses. Course specific refinements will be made.*
- *Teachers will be able to use their existing teaching programs or lesson plans for those new courses that have been derived from existing TEE subjects.*
- *Some adjustments will be made to content to allow for the semester unit structure and to ensure that content is updated.*
- *No new content will be assessed in the examination for the first cohort of Year 11 and Year 12 students for those courses replacing TEE subjects.*
- *Course design will be modified, where necessary, to suit specific course disciplines.*
- *Language used in each course syllabus will be discipline specific.*
- *Content will be made more explicit and clear for teachers.*
- *The nature and weighting of outcomes will be clarified and adjusted on a course by course basis.*
- *Course standards will be refined to guarantee clarity of student progression.*
- *Schools will submit a mark out of 100 for a unit and provide an indicative judgement of a level and band for the unit.*
- *Teachers will not be required to submit assessment evidence plans; however they will still be required to have evidence of their students' achievements during school moderation visits as they do now.*
- *Teachers will be provided with specific exemplars of assessment items, work samples and a template program for each new course, which will set out the teaching program for the course content, together with appropriate assessment items.*
- *Teachers may choose to adapt the template program as they see fit.*

Each one of these points raises more questions than it answers. Of particular concern to the undersigned are dot points 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11 and 12, all of which create a high degree of uncertainty and imply the arrangements for the first cohort of students undertaking Phase I and Phase II Courses of Study are merely a stop-gap measure and further change is certain to occur.

The consequence for teachers, students and parents is a sustained period of uncertainty and unrelenting change. This means that schools will be dealing with the following variations over the next four years as follows:-

1. In 2006:

Year 11, 2006 - most students taking the existing TEE or VET or WSA subjects (except for those studying English, Media Production and Analysis, Aviation and Engineering).

Year 12, 2006 - almost all students taking existing TEE or VET or WSA subjects (except for a few students studying Aviation).

2. In 2007:

Year 11, 2007 - (presumably the 'first cohort' referred to in Dot Point 5 above) – students studying the four Phase I subjects, the now modified (June 18) Phase II Courses of Study (total 17) and some existing TEE and VET and WSA subjects.

Year 12 2007 - students taking the mostly existing TEE or VET or WSA subjects (except for those studying English, Media Production and Analysis, Aviation and Engineering).

3. In 2008:

Year 11 2008 - all students will be studying Phase I, Phase II and Phase III Courses of Study. Schools will also be able to offer new Curriculum Council endorsed subjects. Because of the uncertainty in the information provided by the Curriculum Council in its 18 June document, it is likely there will be significant differences in the content, course design and assessment of Courses of Study taken by Year 11, 2008 compared with the previous year.

Year 12, 2008 - (presumably the first cohort referred to in Dot Point 5 above) - students will be able to study a combination of the four Phase I subjects, the now modified (June 18) (hybrid) Phase II Courses of Study (17) and some existing TEE and VET and WSA subjects.

4. In 2009:

Year 11, 2009 - course content, course design and assessment will presumably be as for 2008.

Year 12, 2009 - this will be the first year that Year 12 will be entirely run on the new system.

The above summary indicates the phasing in of the new system for Years 11 and 12 will occur over four years. These arrangements may provide some short term relief to some teachers. However, in the end it will mean four years of changes (euphemistically referred to by the Curriculum Council as *adjustments* and *refinements*) for teachers, students and parents. Every year for four years will be fraught with change, creating extra work for teachers and apprehension and stress for students and parents at a time which is already very demanding. The changes announced on 18 June have effectively added an extra year to the phasing in of the new system.

The undersigned conclude that a delay of one year, with all Phase II and Phase III Courses of Study introduced in Year 11 2008, would simplify the implementation for teachers, students and parents. This would mean the following program of implementation:-

1. In 2006:

Year 11, 2006 - most students taking the existing TEE or VET or WSA subjects (except for those studying English, Media Production and Analysis, Aviation and Engineering).

Year 12, 2006 - almost all students taking existing TEE or VET or WSA subjects (except for a few students studying Aviation).

2. In 2007:

Year 11, 2007 - as for 2006

Year 12, 2007 - students taking the mostly existing TEE or VET or WSA subjects (except for those studying English, Media Production and Analysis, Aviation and Engineering).

3. In 2008:

Year 11, 2008 - all students will be studying Phase I, Phase II and Phase III Courses of Study. Schools will also be able to offer Curriculum Council endorsed subjects.

Year 12, 2008 - As for 2007

4. In 2009:

Year 11, 2009 - As for 2008

Year 12, 2009 - This would be the first year of the new tertiary entrance system and TAFE entry.

The above timetable indicates that a delay of one year would result in a much smoother and less complicated transition from the existing TEE/VET/WSA system to the new curriculum for Years 11 and 12.

The *significant adjustments* referred to in Finding 9 were negotiated in a highly charged political environment and, in our opinion, amount to major changes. Details of exactly what these changes will mean for teachers, students and parents remain unknown at the time of writing this report.

As a consequence of the above considerations we reject the Finding 21 and Recommendation 5 of the Committee Report.

Finding 21

Finding 21

In addition to the issues outlined in Finding 1, a delay in implementation of the new curriculum would also result in:

- *Disruption to schools which have published handbooks, counselled students and commenced timetabling on the basis of the implementation of the new curriculum;*
- *Disruption for Year 10 students who are making their subject choices for Year 11 in 2007;*
- *Year 12 students in 2008 who undertake current non-TEE (non-Tertiary Entrance Examination) subjects will remain ineligible for a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER); and*
- *The potential for an unmanageable roll out of 37 new Courses of Study in 2008 which would place too many teachers outside of the schools on professional development at any one time.*

Finding 21 argues against delay because of the supposed disruption it would cause teachers and students. On the contrary, we conclude a delay of 12 months would simply mean business as usual for schools. We believe that the 2007 Year 11 teachers, students and parents would be relieved as they would be dealing with the current system which they understand. A delay would provide the time required to prepare for all the changes on May 10 and in June this year.

The assumption in Finding 21, that delaying Phase II would mean *an unmanageable roll out of 37 new Courses of Study in 2008*, is fallacious. On the one hand, when the new system was introduced in New South Wales all new Courses of Study were introduced quickly with minimal disruption. This is the preference of the undersigned.

On the other hand, a delay in implementation does not necessarily imply that Phase II and Phase III Courses of Study would all have to be introduced in 2008. A delay in implementation could result in both Phase II and Phase III being delayed for one year allowing for a staggered introduction.

Recommendation 5

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the current timetable for the implementation of the proposed new Courses of Study for Years 11 and 12 should continue and be closely monitored, particularly in the area of assessment processes. If necessary, adjustments must be made before the implementation of Phase III in 2008.

The undersigned have concluded that Recommendation 5 is inconsistent with the Recommendation in the Interim Report. The changes announced since the end of Term 1, 2006, mean that the Phase II Courses of Study do not meet the readiness test. Core support material is now being prepared to take account of the changes announced in June and will not be available to teachers until Term 3, fully one term later than the Recommendation in the Interim Report. We therefore reject Recommendation 5.

Conclusion

The undersigned conclude that the ‘adjustments’ announced on 10 May and 18 June would create far more disruption to teachers, students and parents than a 12 month delay in implementation. We also conclude that these ‘adjustments’ are, in fact, major changes, the details of which were not available at the time of writing this report.

Teachers will not have any further information about the recently announced changes until the beginning of Term 3. They will then have the time consuming task of re-writing and reorganising their teaching programs for next year.

In keeping with the Interim Report of the Committee the writers of this Minority Report conclude that the students, teachers and parents of Year 11 and Year 12 students would be best served by delaying for one year any further introduction of the new curriculum. A 12 month delay would provide sufficient time for the orderly and proper consideration and adoption of the substantial changes which have been announced since the end of First Term 2006.

We have, therefore, concluded that the better way forward would be to delay the implementation of Phase II Courses of Study until the beginning of 2008. Only in this way will the risks and disruption to students and teachers be minimised. A 12 month delay would provide teachers and students with the opportunity to be properly prepared for a smooth introduction of the new Courses of Study and the new tertiary entrance and secondary graduation system.

Dr Elizabeth Constable, MLA
Member for Churchlands

Hon Dr Kim Hames, MLA
Member for Dawesville

Mr Terry Waldron, MLA
Member for Wagin