REPORT

of

ROYAL COMMISSION

on

KINDERGARTENS

13th August, 1952

Presented to both Houses of Parliament.

PERTH:

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1953.
Parliament House,
Perth.

To His Excellency, Sir Charles Henry Gairdner,
K.C.M.G., C.B., C.B.E., Governor in and over the
State of Western Australia and its Dependencies
in the Commonwealth of Australia.
REPORT OF
ROYAL COMMISSION ON KINDERGARTENS.

May it please Your Excellency,

Your Commissioners, having carried out Your Excellency's Commission of the 13th August, 1952, have the honour to submit the following report for consideration by Your Excellency:

Preliminary.

1. In prosecuting the enquiries necessitated by the terms of reference (shown hereunder), your Commissioners held 21 public sessions at which evidence was heard from 39 witnesses, particulars of whom are shown. There were, in addition, a number of deliberative sessions as well as periods spent in the review and assimilation of material and in the preparation of the report.

In addition, the Commissioners made 10 visits to and inspections of kindergarten establishments.

Written submissions were received from a number of citizens who were unable to attend the Commission's sittings, and material relative to the scope of the Commission's enquiries was collected from all States of the Commonwealth as well as from local sources.

Terms of Reference.

(i) To assess the value to the community of the type of training at present being provided in kindergartens in Western Australia;
(ii) to examine and report on the administration of the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia Incorporated, with particular reference to—
   (a) finance, and
   (b) policy with respect to new kindergartens;
(iii) to examine the present method of subsidising kindergartens through the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia Incorporated and, if possible, to make recommendations for an approved method of rendering financial assistance;
(iv) to examine and make recommendations with respect to the standards governing—
   (a) kindergarten buildings and facilities;
   (b) scale and type of equipment, and
   (c) staffing.

LIST OF WITNESSES.

Miss J. M. Adamson, Pre-school Officer, Department of the Interior, Canberra
Miss A. A. Addison, Principal, Kindergarten Training College, South Australia
Mrs. E. O. Y. Bailey, President, Australian Association for Pre-school Child Development, Canberra
Mrs. G. Baird, Chairman, College Council, Kindergarten Training College, Western Australia
Mrs. E. Bell, South Perth
Mrs. M. M. Blackburn, President, Kindergarten Centre, Northam
Rev. Fr. J. E. Bourke, Assistant Director of Catholic Schools, Western Australia
Miss E. Davis, Director of Pre-school Activities, Kindergarten Union of W.A. (Inc.)
Mr. H. W. Dettman, Superintendent of Primary Education, Education Department of W.A.
Mr. R. P. Donnelly, North Perth
Miss M. Evans, Student Adviser, Kindergarten Training College, Western Australia
Mrs. M. Fox, President, Mothers' Club, Lake Street Kindergarten, Perth
Miss A. M. Fraser, Director, Pre-school Activities, Kindergarten Union of Victoria
Mrs. M. E. Hazelhurst, New Education Fellow (W.A. Section)
Mrs. W. E. Hewison, Labour Women's Central Executive, A.L.P., Perth
Miss F. J. Kendall, Principal, Kindergarten Training College, W.A.
Mr. J. J. Kennedy, Chairman, Advisory Council, Kindergarten Union of W.A. (Inc.)
Mrs. M. C. McGillivray, Slow Learning, Children's Group, Perth
Mr. J. McKinlay, Honorary Secretary, Kindergarten Centre, Geraldton
Miss M. Marshall, Lecturer in Infant Methods, Teachers' College, W.A.
Mrs. M. R. Mocken, Assistant Honorary Secretary, East Ward, Kindergarten, Perth
Dr. E. A. Morey, Senior Lecturer in Child and Clinical Psychology, University of Western Australia
Mrs. E. Myles, President, Head Mistresses' Association, Western Australia
Mrs. G. Neale, Labour Women's Central Executive, A.L.P., Perth
Mr. L. J. H. Newman, Vice President, Kindergarten Union of W.A. (Inc.)
Miss M. E. Newman, Matron, Alexandra Home, Perth
Mrs. G. A. Newton, Honorary Organising Secretary, Slow Learning Group, Perth
Miss G. E. Pendred, Federal Officer to the Australian Association for Pre-school Child Development, Canberra
Dr. T. L. Robertson, Director, Education Department, W.A.
Mr. W. H. Robertson, Lecturer in Charge of Architecture, Perth Technical College
Mr. N. Traylen, Acting Principal Teachers' College, W.A.
Mr. M. J. L. Uren, Advisory Council, Kindergarten Union of W.A. (Inc.)

LIST OF WITNESSES—continued.

Mrs. G. Baird, Chairman, College Council, Kindergarten Training College, Western Australia
Mrs. E. Bell, South Perth
Mrs. M. M. Blackburn, President, Kindergarten Centre, Northam
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LIST OF WITNESSES—continued.

Prof. K. F. Walker, Department of Psychology, University of Western Australia...
Dr. G. W. Ward, Acting Senior Medical Officer of Schools, Department of Public Health, W.A. ...
Dr. R. K. Wheeler, President, Kindergarten Union of W.A. (Inc.) ...
Mrs. N. Wilkinson, Mt. Lawley ...
Mr. D. H. Wood, Honorary Treasurer, Northbourne Kindergarten Centre ...
Dr. W. Wyatt, Medical Director of the Child Guidance Clinic, Perth ...
Miss J. Wyngham, Principal, Kindergarten Training College, Sydney ...

2. The matter of pre-school education involves questions and problems of socio-logical and financial implications, as well as educational significance. Most witnesses who have been so good as to assist the Commission have naturally tended to regard the matter from the aspect of their own particular interest in pre-school education. Many witnesses have, therefore, laid stress on their view that pre-school education is important to the child and the community, but they have not had occasion to consider the financial obligations that would be involved by an extension of pre-school education to all children or even by any substantial extension of the present scope of pre-school education.

3. Your Commissioners have felt that their report must take into account the financial aspects of a material expansion of the present system of pre-school training. We appreciate that finance and the amount of public moneys available are matters of Government policy and are related to the resources of the State Treasury and have to be considered with reference to the claims on the Treasury of other educational services, of social services generally, and of all the other matters which have their claims on Government finance. Your Commissioners are of the opinion that they are not able to make any pronouncement of value on pre-school education in this State without taking into account the limits of Government finance likely to be available.

History and Development of the Kindergarten Union.

4. Prior to 1944 the Kindergarten Union in this State consisted, in the main, of the Kindergarten Training College and seven branch kindergartens which had been established in districts where they were considered of most need. Finances came chiefly from the voluntary donations of the general public. Financial support by parents of children attending the seven branch kindergartens was small in proportion to the total costs involved.

During 1944 the advantages of kindergarten training became apparent to a greater number of people and many new committees were formed to explore the possibilities of establishing kindergartens in their own districts. This growth of interest in kindergarten was such that by the beginning of 1947 there were, in addition to the seven branch kindergartens, 16 committees affiliated with the Union and conducting their own centres. There were also 14 affiliated committees working towards the establishment of their own centres as well as 12 other interested groups seeking advice and guidance.

Depending, as it did at that time, chiefly on public support, the Kindergarten Union found itself unable to provide for these 16 additional centres to the extent to which it financed its branches. These newly-established centres had, therefore, to provide their own buildings and equipment and, in addition, to meet the total cost of their teaching staffs and the running expenses of their centres. A number of these new centres were operating in districts which were no more prosperous or privileged than were those in which had been established the seven branch kindergartens. The Kindergarten Union therefore found itself unable to direct its efforts equitably among its affiliated committees since only the seven branch kindergartens were solely its responsibility.

At about this time public support for the Kindergarten Union decreased and so parents and supporters of particular centres found increasing calls for their financial aid.

As from 1st January, 1947, the Kindergarten Union made a radical change in its policy. Its constitution was altered so that all affiliated kindergarten centres, together with its seven branch kindergartens, were placed on the same basis. All became affiliated centres and their committees became responsible for raising the funds needed to provide buildings, equipment, teachers’ salaries and running expenses. At this time Government capitalisation grants were paid to the centres. This made the Kindergarten Union the central authority controlling the Kindergarten Training College, providing the teachers and, in general, co-ordinating and supervising the activities of the district committees and centres.

Two years later, on 1st January, 1949, a further radical change was made. Prior to this date the Government capitalisation grant had been paid direct to district committees but from that date the grant was retained by the Kindergarten Union which made itself responsible for all teachers’ salaries. At the same time it levied on all committees operating centres a per capita charge based on enrolments at each centre. This system still operates.

The per capita levy which has been charged is shown hereunder:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Per Capita Levy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>£4 15s. per annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>£4 15s. per annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Two terms at rate of £15. per annum = £5 8s. 4d. p.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One term at rate of £15. per annum = £5 8s. 4d. p.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>One term at rate of £6 15s. per annum = £10 15s. 4d. p.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two terms at rate of £13 per annum = £10 18s. 4d. p.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>£13 per annum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1949—£4 15s. per annum.
1950—£4 15s. per annum.
1951—Two terms at rate of £15. per annum = £5 8s. 4d. p.a.
1952—One term at rate of £6 15s. per annum = £10 15s. 4d. p.a.
1953—£13 per annum.
5. It has been seen that the impetus behind the Union originally lay in its charitable objective. Its work was confined to the provision of a kindergarten service in localities where the home conditions of the children were deemed less favourable than those of other areas. The Union gradually assumed the character of an educational institution engaged in the training of kindergarten teachers, the supervision of district kindergartens affiliated with the Union, and the source of professional advice on pre-school education. In other words, the Union evolved into a minor Department of Education acting independently of the State's educational system but increasingly dependent on State financial assistance to meet the expenses of the Union and the operating expenses of its affiliated district kindergartens. During the period between 1946-1952, the annual Government subsidy to the Kindergarten Union has steadily increased from £758 to £17,000. In the opinion of the Commission it was a legitimate function of the Union to extend help and advice to such bodies as sought to establish kindergartens for their respective districts; and we think this should remain a useful function of the Union.

6. The Union today is an incorporated association, of which any person can become a member on payment of the sum of 5s. per annum to the Union or to an affiliated committee. At the present time the membership of the Union cannot be given by the Union as no register of members is maintained by it. District centres operating under their committees may, if the centre complies with the standards laid down by the Union as to staffing, accommodation and equipment, become affiliated with the Union on payment of a fee of £2 2s. per annum. Under the constitution of the Union, affiliated kindergartens may be represented by their delegates on the management committee and committee of representatives. A special committee of the Union deals with the educational aspects of the Union's work.

The Union was established in 1912, but it did not receive any Government financial assistance until 1921. Prior to that date, it relied wholly upon revenue received from membership subscriptions, donations and money raising activities.

In 1921 the Government agreed to a grant of £25 annually for each of the Union's centres of 50 children, but smaller centres received no financial assistance. In April, 1923, the basis was varied to extend the assistance of the Government to centres with fewer than 50 children, and approval was given for an annual payment to the Union at the rate of £3 3s. per child to a maximum of £75 for any one centre. In 1928 the subsidy was increased to £2 per child with a maximum of £100 for any one centre, and this remained the basis of Government assistance for the next 19 years. In January, 1947, the subsidy was increased to £4 per child, and in November of the same year the Government agreed to a still greater scale of financial assistance, which included the following:

(a) Allowance to students in training were granted at the rate of £30 for the first year, £45 for the second year and £75 for the third year.

(b) The Government agreed to the abolition of fees hitherto charged to students and undertook to recoup the Kindergarten Union for the loss of that source of revenue.

(c) The Government offered a grant of £100 to assist the opening of any country kindergarten, with a limit of £500 in any one year for this purpose.

(d) A grant of £1,000 was made towards the cost of Kindergarten Unions administration and teachers' salaries.

In 1949 the Government grant was further liberalised, when the total provided was £8,850. In 1951 the grant was increased to a total payment of £13,375, in addition to the subsidies offered on the opening of country kindergartens. For 1952 the grant was fixed at £17,000. In addition to the above, special grants have been made at various times to assist the Union to meet overdraft obligations.

7. With the seven kindergartens originally conducted by the Union in the interests of children thought to be under-privileged placed on the same basis as that applying to other district kindergartens and the practice of meeting the difference between the Government grant and the total cost of operation by means of a per capita levy on the local committees, the Kindergarten Union was relieved of by far the greater part of its money raising responsibility, and it lost much of the appeal it had had with the general public, whose support has in recent years dwindled to a low level. The Union has of recent years been prone to rely more and more on Government help and the main money raising activities have been moved by Union policy from the Union itself to the local committees, by whom practically all moneys are raised.

The seven kindergarten centres originally conducted by the Union, or some of them, have felt the impact of their new responsibility for raising the finances necessary for their continued operation. Owing to rising costs and the increasing volume of pre-school activity on the part of the Union and its affiliated centres, the annual contribution required by the Union from affiliated centres had to be increased to £6 15s. per child in 1951, and during 1952 this contribution was further raised to £10 per child per annum.

(Note.—The levy is calculated on a child enrolment for 15 hours weekly.)

At present, the functions of the Union are as follows:

(a) It conducts the Kindergarten College at 1186 Hay-St., West Perth, for the training of kindergarten teachers; with hostel accommodation for some of the trainees.
(b) It exercises a certain supervision over affiliated centres as to staffing and standards of teaching, accommodation and equipment.

c) It acts as an adviser on pre-school education and assists district committees with advice as to the procedure necessary to form and operate a centre.

d) It employs and assumes responsibility for the salaries of all paid staff, not only of its own administrative and teaching activities but of all teaching staff of the 37 affiliated district kindergartens.

The role of the district committees is broadly as follows:

(a) They are responsible for the formation of the centre and the acquisition of buildings and equipment of the necessary standards.

(b) They are required to raise the annual contribution per child (at present £15 per annum) payable to the Union.

(c) They have to raise by contributions from parents of children attending the centre and through donations and other fund-raising activities all expenditure required for the centre, except teachers' salaries.

(d) They are associated with the Director, under the guidance of the Union, in the general conduct of the centre and its ancillary activities, such as parent advice, domestic assistance, care and maintenance of buildings, ground equipment, etc.

In the year 1952 the following expenditure was borne by the Union:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£  s. d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Training College</td>
<td>5,876 10 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten hostel for the accommodation of students</td>
<td>1,242 6 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and supervision of pre-school work and affiliated centres</td>
<td>4,156 10 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries of teachers employed by affiliated centres</td>
<td>21,955 14 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>33,232 1 2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the same year, 1952, the revenue of the Union from all sources, including the Government grant of £17,000, was £31,671 11s. 11d. This left a deficiency in the Union's accounts for the year of £1,560 9s. 3d.

For the year 1952 the Union utilised approximately £10,000 from the Government grant and other resources to bridge the gap between the salaries it paid to the teachers at the affiliated centres and the levies received by the Union from those centres. About one half of the £17,000 Government subsidy received in 1952 was utilised by the Union towards its obligations incurred by the Kindergarten College and Union administration, and one half was utilised to relieve the affiliated centres of that amount of the cost of the salaries of the teachers employed at their centres, and for the same purpose the Union contributed a further £1,560 which is represented by its deficit.

A Conspectus of Pre-School Education in W.A.

8. Kindergarten training is provided in this State through three agencies:

(a) Through district committees operating centres affiliated with the Kindergarten Union. These centres do not operate for profit and at the end of 1952 catered for approximately 1,236 children;

(b) through church schools not operating for profit. No precise information is available as to the number of children for which these schools make provision, but that number exceeds the number in attendance at affiliated district kindergartens;

(c) through privately conducted kindergartens operating for the profit of those conducting them. Here again there is no exact information as to the number of children in attendance, but we would estimate that they would total a number in excess of 1,000.

In 1943 an amendment of the Education Act provided for the compulsory registration of kindergartens and for their inspection by departmental superintendents. There were in 1952 62 kindergartens on the departmental register, of which 37 were kindergartens affiliated with the Kindergarten Union, and 25 were designated independent kindergartens. The Education Act was further amended in 1952 by the adoption of a more inclusive definition of "kindergarten," in order to give the department a wider and desirable authority to inspect and maintain standards and a power, if conditions were unsuitable, to require a kindergarten to cease operation.

In addition, it might be mentioned that children may now, in general, commence in Government schools at the beginning of the calendar year in which they attain the age of six years. This provision, in 1952, had the effect of bringing some 4,756 children of the age of five and under six into Government schools.

Kindergarten training is only one of the provisions that can be made for the care and advancement of children of pre-school age. In this State, and in other States, the health of the child up to the age of two is cared for by infant health centres, the financial responsibility for and supervision of which are largely functions of the State Department of Public Health. In some other States there are organisations which conduct creches and nursery schools, which cater for children, in the case of creches, virtually from birth, and in the case of nursery schools, from a very young age up to an age which can be mainly put at between three and four. The creche is a "baby minding"
The nursery school also functions, to some extent, for the rearing of children, but it pays some attention to pre-school education on lines comparable with, and in some cases similar to, those obtaining in kindergarten centres. In the case of creches and day nurseries, whose range includes children of under three years of age, the qualifications of the staff approximate more closely to those of nurses than to those of educational teachers.

Kindergarten centres take in children of the ages three, four and five, and while they are engaged mainly in matters of hygiene and give some supervision to the health of the children, they combine the functions of a play centre with that type of education in skills and mental stimulation, which is suitable to children of those age groups.

We are not aware of any organised day creche in this State, except that which is conducted by the Children's Protection Society of W.A., Incorporated, at 9 Stirling Street, Perth. This Society appears to regard its centres as both a creche and a nursery school and is mainly concerned with making some provision for mothers who are compelled, for financial reasons, to take employment and who require some place at which their children will be cared for during working hours of the day. The Children's Protection Society's centre takes children from the age of nine months to four years as a rule, but will take children from any age if circumstances make it necessary or desirable. It functions from 7 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. on every day, except Saturdays and Sundays, and it makes a charge of 2s. 6d. for each child for the whole or any part of the day.

Although it is not strictly relevant to the matter of kindergarten training, it is not possible to ignore the fact that some provision in the way of creches and day nurseries to meet the needs of mothers who are compelled to take employment outside the home, or to care for children during a period when the mother may be suffering from ill health or obliged to be absent from the home for other reasons, should probably be given at least an equal priority with any social need for ordinary kindergarten training.

Reference has been made to the difficulties met by the local health centres in providing proper facilities for the health of the children. Your Commissioners are of the opinion that the recent legislation introduced by the central government, in an attempt to provide adequate facilities for the health of the children, is adequate for the purpose. The Children's Protection Society of W.A., Incorporated, at 9 Stirling Street, Perth, is the only organisation of its kind in the State, except for the day nurseries already mentioned.

The Place of Pre-School Education.

9. Without enlarging this report by reference to the history and growth of the kindergarten or pre-school educational movement, it can be said that kindergarten or pre-school training, to a greater or lesser extent, is now a feature to be found in most countries of the world. In Great Britain, under the Education Act, 1944, the appropriate local authorities in England and Wales are required by law to ensure that there shall be available in their areas sufficient schools for the educational services referred to in the Act. These services include primary education, which takes in the provision of nursery schools, and the local authorities are required to see that there are sufficient of those schools "to afford for all pupils opportunities for education and training as may be desirable, in view of their ages, abilities and different aptitudes" (Education Act, 1944, Section 8). In England the compulsory age for school attendance is five years, and the nursery schools to which the Act refers are intended to make provision for children under the age of five years. Under the English Education Act, 1944, the local authority, on which is placed the responsibility for the educational services of its area, is the council of the county, or the council of the county borough. The English educational system is decentralized, as opposed to the centralized system of State education applicable in Western Australia and in other Australian States. To enable them to provide the educational services stipulated, the local authorities in England and Wales have power to rate their areas, but as the revenue so raised would be insufficient, the British Treasury subsidises local authorities according to certain formulae set out in the Act. Of the total expenditure on educational services under the Act, the British Treasury finds approximately 60 per cent., and the local authorities, through their rates, raise the remaining 40 per cent.

Notwithstanding the scheme of the English Education Act of 1944, which aimed at embracing from the nursery school age onward all school children requiring training, only limited provision is made in England and Wales through nursery schools. The Director of Education in Western Australia (Dr. T. L. Robertson) has advised us from the latest statistics available that under the official educational system in England there is a place for one pre-school child for every 47.5 places for a child in primary education. In Western Australia there is a place for one pre-school child to every 13.8 child places in primary education. Putting the matter another way, though legislative provision has been made in Britain for a much wider or even all over educational coverage, the financial situation and other factors have restricted its application, and the United Kingdom including Scotland and Northern Ireland, provides 1.8 pre-school places per 1,000 of population, whereas Western Australia provides 7.3 pre-school places per 1,000 of population. The provision for the pre-school child in this State apparently compares more than favourably with anything so far being done in the United Kingdom.
There are kindergarten training systems in the other States of Australia. New South Wales has also an organization of day nurseries. Their kindergartens, in general, are conducted by organizations similar in character to the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia, and the day nurseries in New South Wales are also conducted by their own particular organization. The various provisions for the pre-school child, to some extent, merge into each other. In some areas, the nature of the provision is that of a play centre. The States vary as to the basis of Government financial assistance and also as to the Government Departments which assume a certain degree of responsibility for the supervision of organizations for the pre-school child. The following table shows the States' subsidies for pre-school education according to the latest figures obtainable (see evidence of Mr. H. W. Dettman, lately Research Superintendent, and now Superintendent of Primary Education, West Australian Education Department—page 388).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Subsidy per thousand of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>2,322,000</td>
<td>£5 3 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>3,371,000</td>
<td>£5 9 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>1,229,000</td>
<td>£4 7 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>733,000</td>
<td>£4 3 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>597,000</td>
<td>£3 9 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>302,000</td>
<td>£1 5 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be said of the pre-school movement in Victoria and of New South Wales in particular that the field is divided among different voluntary organizations, which require and seek Government aid and work under a system that could hardly be described as a rationalised policy.

In Western Australia the position is relatively simple in that the Children's Protection Society is the only organised body conducting day creches or day nursery on non-profit lines. There are some creches or day nurseries in the State which are conducted by private persons, and by whom a charge is made for their services. These are, in substance, child minding centres, and it has been pointed out to us by Dr. Ward that they are receiving, and will receive, the supervision of the Department of Public Health in the interests of the children who comprise the attendance.

10. The centres affiliated with the Kindergarten Union make provision for children who might be described as normal for their years. Occasionally, these centres take in children who suffer under some handicap, but this would represent a small minority. There are, however, certain classes of preschool children, namely, those physically or mentally handicapped, for whom special provision should be made.

It is doubtfully within the terms of this Commission's reference to deal with children who are under special handicaps from an educational aspect, but your Commissioners feel that in endeavouring to assess the place and value in and to the community of kindergarten training for the normal child, they should bring into the picture the very pressing educational needs of handicapped children and the claims which handicapped children have on the resources of the Government and the community, when weighed against the claims of the normal child of pre-school age.

The State has in recent years made considerable progress in its provision for physically or mentally handicapped children. It is essential that training within the limitations of the defects existing should be made available as early as possible in the child's life, and this should, in the opinion of your Commissioners, have a greater urgency than any call from the normal pre-school child.

There is also the social need already referred to in the case of mothers whom financial stringency compels to enter employment, or some other means of earning a livelihood, and whose children during the mothers' working hours could suffer in the absence of some provision for their care. The problem of the working mother has social implications. If it were made easy for the mother to take up some outside employment or vocation, some mothers might be naturally actuated by a wish for a career or for an occupation that would give more interest than would be found in the routine work of the home. If the responsibility for the children could be shelved then some mothers might possibly relieve themselves of the care of their children in circumstances where this was not economically necessary and where the children would be deprived of the normal benefit of the mother's direct care. In general, it would seem to us that any organisation for the care of children of working mothers should be as nearly self-supporting as possible, and that the mothers availing themselves of such an organisation should pay a reasonable contribution towards the economic cost incurred by the care of their children from the income which they derive from their work.

Having dealt with certain aspects which bear upon pre-school care and education but which are not immediately associated with the work of the Kindergarten Union, we turn now to an examination of some of the matters that have been brought before us in connection with kindergarten services proper.

The Work of the Kindergarten Union in W.A.

11. (a) In its administration and supervision of affiliated centres, the Kindergarten Union has been actuated by a wish to ensure the best possible standards at the affiliated centres in teaching, accommodation and equipment.
(b) In general, the work of the Union and its officers, both in the administration and in the college, has been inspired by commendable ideals, and the executive and teaching officers have not spared themselves in their devotion to work. We are satisfied on the evidence and from our examination of the position that, in general, kindergarten
training in this State in the centres affiliated with the Kindergarten Union has been on a high plane.

(c) The Kindergarten Union, having for its guidance standards laid down by the Australian Association for Pre-School Child Development, has required of all centres affiliated with the Union certain minimum standards in teacher-pupil ratios and in buildings and equipment. The intention of the Union has been good, but it would seem possible that the Union has been somewhat inflexible in this respect in its relations with the committees of the affiliated centres. These committees frequently have to surmount substantial difficulties in acquiring accommodation and equipment, and there is a feeling on the part of a number of the committees that the Union's attitude on standards has not been sufficiently sympathetic and realistic, and has not taken into account the opinions and difficulties of the district committees. We think there is something in this criticism of the Union and that it could, without detriment to the children, meet the local situation as to staffing, buildings, and equipment with rather more elasticity than has hitherto been shown. One might be pardoned in thinking that the officers of the Kindergarten Union are sometimes so pre-occupied with the maintenance of standards that they have forgotten it is presumably their goal to give as many children as possible in as many centres as possible the opportunity of kindergarten training.

(d) So long as the Union remains the channel by which Government financial aid is expended on the Union's activities and on the salaries of the teachers at the affiliated centres, some district committees are apt to feel that if they were enabled to handle a direct grant from the Government to the centres, they would be in a better position.

(e) The salaries paid to officers of the Union and to the teaching staffs at the centres have in past years been below what would be appropriate ordinarily to the type of duties rendered. An improved scale of salaries has now been adopted. On the part of the teaching and administrative officers of the Union, including those of the centres, it can be justly said that they have devoted their training and energies to a teaching service from a sense of public interest and from their inherent wish to promote the cause of pre-school training.

(f) Emphasis has been laid by officers of the Union and other witnesses on the value of kindergarten training through a voluntary organisation such as the Kindergarten Union. There has been little suggestion that kindergarten training should be taken over as a fundamental part of the State education system. It has been pointed out that the independent conduct of kindergarten training through public spirited citizens and their organisations brings the best response from the parents and the people of the district who can be encouraged to do much in work and co-operation, as well as in financial aid, to promote and support kindergarten training for the children of their locality.

(g) The Kindergarten College, conducted by the Kindergarten Union at 1186 Hay Street, West Perth, had at the end of 1952, 25 students, of whom nine resided at the college premises. This is about the maximum number of residents that the premises can accommodate. Other students reside at home or at other accommodation. The enrolment for 1953 has fallen to a total of 20 students. The training of the students extends over three years, each year being divided into three terms. The instruction of the students is in the hands of the principal of the College, Miss Florence Kendall, a Student Adviser, and a number of visiting lecturers.

(h) It can be justly said that the work of the College is, and has been, of a high standard. The students have received an adequate training, and in character and qualification and a sense of responsibility, the graduates of the College are well equipped.

(i) It has been suggested to us that from the point of view of economy and without loss of efficiency, the training of kindergarten teachers could be undertaken by the State Teachers' College. We are advised by the Director of Education (Dr. T. L. Robertson) and the Acting Principal of the Teachers' College (Mr. N. Traylen) that the course for kindergarten teachers could be adequately covered by a 2-year training period, instead of the 3-year period now obtaining at the Kindergarten College. Authoritative opinion has also been given to us that a 3-year period is essential if the teacher is to be fully equipped to discharge the responsibilities of teaching pre-school children. Nevertheless, if the reduction of the course to two years would help in recruitment, we are of the opinion that it should be favourably considered. A perusal of the training syllabus suggests such a reduction, as there is much there which, however desirable it is as general education, has only an indirect bearing of the goal in view.

The Future of Kindergarten Training.

12. Looking at the position broadly, it would appear that some reasonably clear policy must be determined as to kindergarten services.

It has been generally agreed that there should be no compulsion to send a child to a kindergarten. It is considered to be essentially a matter for the determination of the parents whether a child would be better suited by kindergarten training or would be better in the environment of the home. If, as many witnesses have claimed, kindergarten training is valuable to the pre-school child, and thereby to the whole community, it would follow as a rule, that if through State financial aid that privilege is being accorded to some children, it should be accorded to all children whose parents desire to take advantage of it. At the end of 1962 it was estimated that the number of children in attendance at kindergarten schools affiliated with the Kindergarten
Union was 1,286. Without going into details, approximately half the Government grant for 1952 subsidised the centres training these 1,286 children.

The expansion of kindergarten centres has been proceeding steadily and might be expected to continue. During the last five years, the number of centres affiliated with the Union has risen from 23 to 37. The Director of Education (Dr. T. L. Robertson) has advised us that if kindergarten training were to be extended to all children of four and five years of age in this State, numbering together some 26,000, a very substantial increase in Government financial responsibility would be involved—a commitment which, in the opinion of the Commission, would at the present time be prohibitive.

It can properly be said that the whole of such costs would not be realised because attendance being voluntary, only a proportion of the children of those age groups would attend kindergarten centres, and centres are not practicable for children in the more scattered rural areas.

It can also be justly observed that so much time is required to train additional teachers and to provide additional buildings and equipment that the expansion of kindergarten centres could not proceed at any great pace and, therefore, the financial responsibilities placed on the State Treasury and on the community generally would only increase gradually. At the same time, it would appear probable, if all children are to be afforded equal opportunity in the field of pre-school education, a substantial increase in the numbers of children attending kindergartens would in due course ensue.

In considering the proper attitude of the State Government and of the public generally to an enlarged expenditure on pre-school education, there has to be taken into account the claims of other branches of education, quite apart from other branches of social services, and quite apart also from the still broader responsibilities of the Government for transport, water supplies, and other needs of a developing economy.

In 1943 the Parliament of this State amended the Education Act to provide that the compulsory period of attendance at school should be raised from 14 to 15 years. So far there have not been the teachers, classrooms or finance to enable this important reform to be implemented. There are urgent requirements in the fields of technical and agricultural education in this State. If there is a limit to the finance available from the Government and from the general public (as we understand is the case), it becomes a matter of priorities and, in the field of education, a judgment has to be made as to whether it is more important to use our financial resources for the education of the child from six years onward, or whether money that might be spent for that group of children could properly be diverted for expenditure on the education of the pre-school group.

We have arrived at the opinion that if funds are limited, then the interests of the child and the community would best be served by nourishing, in the first place, the educational system applicable to the child above pre-school age.

Government policy, could be that, for the time being, Government financial aid for kindergarten services shall not proceed beyond a certain limit and that the whole matter of aid through the Government for pre-school education can be reviewed every five or 10 years, when a new policy can be adopted if the financial resources of the Government and the community can support further expenditure.

At the present time, the Kindergarten Union and the affiliated kindergartens, are benefiting by grants from the Lotteries Commission. Further, some local authorities contribute from their funds to kindergarten committees in their districts.

According to figures supplied to us by Mr. L. J. H. Newman, Vice-President and a former Treasurer of the Kindergarten Union, in the year 1952 the total of the teachers' salaries (£21,954) and of the operating costs incurred by the kindergarten centres (£3,956) when divided by the calculated enrolments showed that the average cost per child was £13 12s. per child enrolled (exclusive of costs involved by the provision of buildings and equipment) amounted to approximately £22 6s. Of this amount the centres found approximately £18 12s. In future years, on the basis of a levy fixed at £13 per child per annum, the total contribution by district committees by way of levy and running expenses will amount to about £16 8s. per child. In order to get the complete cost per child of kindergarten training, the costs of administration and of teacher training might well be added to the foregoing and then it will be seen that the all-over cost of each child enjoying kindergarten training amounted to £31 9s. (approximately) exclusive of maintenance.

An appreciable proportion of the affiliated kindergartens committees feel and complain of the difficulty of financing their centres. The gap between the cost per child at the kindergartens and the amounts raised by the district committees per child has, of late, been partly met by appropriating for that purpose about half of the Government's financial grant to the Kindergarten Union, which grant in 1952 amounted to £17,000.

As we have mentioned, the Kindergarten Union receives the full amount of the Government grant and undertakes the liability for the salaries of the teachers of the affiliated kindergartens. In the year 1952, the total expenditure of the Union, including the cost of the teachers' salaries of the affiliated kindergartens exceeded its revenue from all sources by £1,560. Obviously, the Union cannot long continue supporting recurring deficits.

Some of the Kindergarten Committees doubt their ability to continue, owing to financial difficulties. In one district, average parental direct contribution per child appears to have been as low as 2s. per week for the 42 weeks of the educational year. In other
affiliated kindergartens, contributions by parents are on a substantially higher scale. The position varies a good deal according to the nature of the locality and the income level of the majority of the people in the locality. It also varies according to district interests shown by the parents. In some districts public spirited citizens contribute to the kindergarten's funds directly and indirectly through money-raising efforts, even though they have no child in attendance at the kindergarten. Part of the financial difficulties of some of the kindergartens is due to the reluctance of a proportion of the parents of children in attendance to accept reasonable financial obligations. It is hardly possible to expect the child to be cared for by expert teachers for five mornings a week in return for a weekly contribution of 2s. The average cost per child in the centre is approximately 10s. per week of the school year. It would not be unreasonable to expect some parents to pay more for the kindergarten care extended to their children, instead of leaving so much of the cost of the child's care to be borne by the Government and community assistance. Other parents are to be commended for their willing acceptance of their share of costs.

As the system at present operates under Kindergarten Union administration, it will be seen that in the application of the Government's subsidy, no differentiation is made between localities having higher income levels and those having lower income levels, and the contribution expected from the district committees in all cases is at the same rate per child, irrespective of differences in the ability of parents to pay. It is obvious that in districts where the income level is low and, in consequence, the weekly contributions low, there is greater difficulty in raising the additional amount to meet Union and other commitments. We have been told, and we have no reason to doubt, that parents are not denied access of their children to an affiliated kindergarten by reason of any inability on the part of the parents to contribute to the cost of the kindergarten. Through the district committee and the director of the centre, parents are informed of the contribution which the committee expects them to make, if possible. To the extent that the total of these contributions falls short of the expenditure incurred by the centre, the committees have to raise funds from donations, fetes and other money-raising activities. The amounts paid by the parents are termed donations or contributions and not fees, and some parents pay more than other parents. The financial circumstances of any parents are usually a matter between them and the director, and the director endeavours to see that the child is accommodated, irrespective of the amount of the parent's contribution, and we understand, even if the parents can make no contribution.

Suggestions as to Future Policy.
13. The Director of Education (Dr. T. L. Robertson) has told us that there were in 1952 approximately 66,000 children of 6 to 14 years of age being educated at Government schools. In the same year Government schools took in children who would attain the age of six during the year, and this meant approximately 4,758 further children were attending before reaching their sixth birthday. There were 8,000 children over 14 years who, at the end of 1951, were attending Government schools providing secondary and technical education. Part-time classes are provided by the department, and other ancillary services, including the Teachers' College (with more than 800 students in 1953) and an expenditure of £250,000 a year on university education. Between 1938 and 1952, the number of children in Government schools increased from 56,600 to 77,000, and it is estimated that by 1960 this figure will have grown to 113,000. This increase in numbers, largely caused by increased birthrate figures and the Commonwealth policy of immigration, has imposed very great difficulties on the department in various directions, including the supply of trained teachers and the provision of accommodation for the children. The expenditure of the Education Department in 1938-39 was £757,050, and in 1951-52 this had risen to £3,630,893. These amounts exclude building expenditures.

A Consideration of the First Term of Reference.
14. As to the first term of reference, the training of children in the kindergartens affiliated with the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia, is of a good standard, and the teachers as a whole are professionally competent, of high character and with an adequate sense of responsibility.

Kindergartens conducted by church bodies not engaged in operating for private profit are, we believe, generally adequate, although we have not considered it to be our function to make an examination of this branch of kindergarten work. Teachers at some of these kindergartens are not possessed of the professional training given by a kindergarten college, but their qualifications are, we believe, in general commensurate with their duties.

As to private or independent kindergartens operating for the profit of those who control them, these have been outside our province and have not been the subject of inspection by us. It is probable that some of these private kindergartens are deficient in a number of respects, and their fitness to meet the health and other interests of the children has been the subject of examination by the Department of Public Health. The general standards of such private kindergartens will also continue to receive attention from the Department of Education, especially in view of the amending legislation recently passed by Parliament, giving that Department further necessary powers of supervision over such centres. The fact remains, with regard
to these private kindergartens that they have the support of the parents, by whose patronage and fees they are able to subsist, and we have no reason to doubt that, in many cases, they are rendering an acceptable service.

15. As to the value to the community of the training being provided by kindergartens in Western Australia, much evidence—some coming from highly responsible and informed witnesses—has been given as to the benefit of kindergarten training to the child, the parents and the community. Among the benefits claimed are the social adjustment of the child, the easing of the transition from pre-school years to the formal education of the primary school, the development of manual skills, and desirable habits, the promotion of intellectual interests, the stimulation and attraction of play equipment superior to that provided by the average home, the psychological adjustment of more difficult children that can be achieved by the trained teacher, and some relief to mothers who can devote part of their day to other duties or interests and are relieved during those periods from the physical and mental demands made by the care of very young children.

Many homes, particularly in Western Australia with its open air climate and free spaces, provide scope for the interests and activities of the pre-school child. Parents themselves in general accept responsibility for the child's behaviour and guidance and provide outlets for his energy and developing interests. More than 99 per cent. of the people in the State today will have grown up without kindergarten training. Facilities for kindergarten training can be of advantage to a substantial section of the pre-school children of the community, but such facilities as need not be provided in Western Australia than under the more industrialised and congested conditions of some other countries, particularly where climatic conditions are exacting.

Your Commissioners recognise that a growing interest in pre-school education has been a feature of educational history during the last 25 years. A substantial proportion of parents and educational authorities has come to feel that pre-school education and development can play a useful part in the life of the child. Your Commissioners believe that the demand for facilities for pre-school education and development will expand as conditions permit. Opportunities for kindergarten training will not be possible in the case of a considerable number of children in rural or remote areas, or for other reasons. Some parents will be satisfied that the home environment will provide sufficiently for their children during pre-school years. On the other hand, many children will benefit by the opportunity of kindergarten training within the limits of the physical and financial ability of the community, and the State would be advantaged by a policy that will encourage community efforts for the expansion of pre-school education.

While the provision of pre-school education on an expanding basis can, within the limits of the community's capacity, benefit the normal child, there is, in our opinion, a special case for the provision of kindergarten or pre-school training for handicapped children from their earliest years. We feel we should stress the claims of such children for assistance in pre-school years—assistance which may have profound effect upon the happiness and usefulness of their later years.

A Consideration of the Second and Third Terms of Reference.

16. It will be convenient to take the second and third terms of reference together.

The matter of finance is an important and, perhaps, the controlling factor to be considered in relation to kindergarten training, as indeed it is in the case of most services to the community. There are other factors which bear which bear on the its present conduct of the Union now supplying an educational service to a small number of children (in 1952, approximately 1,286). At the present time, these children in the Union's affiliated kindergartens are benefited from State monies to the extent of approximately £7 15s. per child per annum towards the cost of their centres. Under our proposals for a per capita grant from the Government, the opportunities for district committees to open new kindergartens and participate in Government financial aid will be protected.

It would be difficult for the State Government to terminate the financial aid now being received by the 37 district kindergartens
affiliated with the Union. These affiliated kindergartens do not operate for profit, and they have been provided and operated by the parents and citizens of their districts, very often as the result of much effort and public spirited service, as well as financial outlay, and this has been done on the faith of the policy hitherto obtaining, by which district kindergarten centres would be partly supported from the public moneys provided by the Government. It would seem, therefore, that with regard to all district kindergartens affiliated with the Union, there is a moral obligation on the Government, at least for the time being, not to withdraw the support from public accommodation for the children. If public moneys, the supply of teachers, and the volume of accommodation to be available are limited—as would appear to be the case—it would be doubtful policy to legislate for any great expansion of pre-school education if this should be at the expense of the State's education system for the school age child. By law, a child must be sent to school from the age of six years, and in accordance with law the State has provided an educational system which has a duty to accept all children for whom school attendance is compulsory and to ensure, as far as possible, that those children have efficient teaching and suitable accommodation. While many pre-school children would doubtless be advantaged by pre-school education, they are at present not receiving it, except in limited numbers and, in the case of the average child, they have in the home and in the home environment, and through the care of the parents and families in existence already, a measure of provision for their care and development.

The Director of Education, Dr. T. L. Robertson, placed before your Commission the position with reference to educational facilities for children of school age. Due to an increased birth rate and to the Commonwealth immigration policy, we have now been shown that the enrolment in Government schools has risen from 56,600 in 1938 to 77,600 in 1952, and the estimated enrolment eight years hence—in 1960—is 113,000 children. In 1946, 2,000 primary and secondary teachers were employed in Government schools. By 1960, if the present pupil-teacher ratio is to remain unaltered, 4,000 teachers will be needed; 2,600 teachers are employed at present, so that an extra 1,400 will be needed in the next eight years, or 175 per year, in addition to which 140 per year are needed to replace the annual loss of teachers through resignation and retirement. More teachers (320) are also needed to solve the problem of overloaded classes, and the teaching establishment would further require approximately 120 additional teachers if the school leaving age is raised to 15 years, as was authorised by Parliament in 1943.

Owing to the large increase in the school population, some children are at present occupying improvised accommodation. There are 90 temporary classrooms in h transferred as permanent buildings, or in shelter sheds at present in use. Further, many children have to be accommodated in non-departmental buildings, often at a considerable distance from the main school. At present 98 hired halls are in use as temporary classrooms.

In some schools it has not been possible, through lack of accommodation, to admit all children applying for entrance, though on the sixth birthday places must be found for them. In a number of schools two classes and teachers share one room.

To meet the expanding school population, the expenditure of the State Education Department has increased from £757,000 in 1938-39 to £5,100,000 in 1951-52—these figures excluding school building construction and maintenance. Building expenditure by the Government on schools, including new schools and maintenance, rose from £4,100,000 in 1946-47 to £8,000,000 in 1951-52. Very substantial increases in expenditure appear to be inevitable if the present limitations in teachers' numbers and school accommodation are to be overcome.

We are not entering into any detail as to requirements in the field of education, other than pre-school, which may be overdue, or now due, and which will be dependent upon the expenditure of public moneys through the Government. One example might be the institution of a school of medicine in the University of Western Australia, the urgency of which has been emphasised by authoritative opinion in the interest of the health of the people generally and of the children in particular.

It appears to your Commissioners that it would not be good policy for the Government to draw unduly on public funds to provide kindergarten training for pre-school children, while difficulty is found in making adequate provision for children of school age. Considerations of national policy have led to a rapid increase in the population in this State, and it is inevitable that the provision of educational and other services for these increases should involve considerable strain to the economy of the State, however energetic Government may be to meet these added needs.

Your Commissioners have come to the conclusion that, for the time being—at all events, for the period of the next five years—no increase in the scale of expenditure of Government moneys for pre-school education is justifiable other than such as is the outcome of normal growth of community kindergarten
movements or in accordance with the recommendations made by this Commission. At the end of that period, we consider that the Government should further review the matter of pre-school education, including kindergarten training, in the light of the position that will then obtain as to the availability of Government aid for pre-school education and the comparative claims then existing of school age education and pre-school education.

Broadly speaking, pre-school education, including kindergarten training, and school age education, represent at present two different fields, not only legally but administratively. In the case of school age education, the Government is required to provide an efficient educational system for all children other than those whose parents voluntarily send their children to private schools. The first duty of the Government would appear to be to operate an efficient system for the education of children of school age. A material diversion of resources of the Government to the expansion of the field of pre-school education could result in the school age system and the pre-school system both failing to render educational services of the standard that should be sought.

Although, for the time being, the urgent needs of the school age education field should, in our opinion, have priority as regards Government finance and the provision of school accommodation, this does not preclude the expansion of pre-school education, including kindergarten training in any district in which the people are prepared to promote and conduct kindergarten training and accept an appropriate part of the responsibility for the cost. For the present, it seems to us that the practical approach to the field of kindergarten training lies in a combination of community self-help and Government aid. We will later recommend that in any district the parents and other residents of which are prepared to establish and operate a kindergarten centre with or without the aid of the local authority, the Government should grant financial aid at the rate of so much per child of the age of four or five years in attendance at the centre. This system of Government subsidy would be applicable not only to the kindergartens already affiliated with the Kindergarten Union but to all further district kindergarten centres that may be established on a non-profit basis under the control of district committees or a local authority, or both, and which through affiliation with the Kindergarten Union have given evidence of willingness to observe reasonable standards and conform to a general policy, as determined by district kindergartens through their organ, the Kindergarten Union.

Local authorities have power, within certain limits, to, subsidise kindergartens, creches and day nurseries, and some local authorities by money grants or by the provision of sites or materials, or by the care of grounds and premises, give much appreciated assistance in the establishment and operation of kindergarten centres in their areas.

Emphasis has been rightly laid by the witnesses who have testified to your Commission on the community benefit that is derived from the association of parents and citizens of a locality in the provision of kindergarten centres. An opportunity for the local authority to play an increased part in such community efforts would assist in stimulating that local interests in the pre-school child to which we have referred. We think that local authorities could appropriately and advantageously take an enlarged part in the provision for pre-school children in their districts. This would be, to some extent, in accordance with national policy of England and Wales, where the role of the local authority is carried much further and extends not only to provision for the pre-school child but to all educational services for children of any age, apart from certain specialised services, such as those of universities.

We suggest, therefore, that if the opinions of the ratepayers and other residents in a district support a local authority in assisting in the care of the pre-school child, then, with the aid of a Government subsidy towards operating expenses, district councils can continue to initiate and finance expanded kindergarten and other pre-school facilities. It may be mentioned that by the Library Act of 1851 of this State, power was given to local authorities to raise a special rate for the provision of library services for the people of their districts.

As it operates at present, the Kindergarten Union has difficulty in meeting the responsibilities assumed by it. We consider that the suggestion made by the Director of Education (Dr. T. L. Robertson) that the supervision of kindergartens should be taken over by the State Education Department is worthy of adoption.

17. Under the second and third terms of reference, our opinions are as follows:—

(i) We consider it should be left to the Kindergarten Union to decide whether the Kindergarten College should be retained or its functions transferred to the State Teachers' College.

We have given considerable thought to the matter of the training of kindergarten teachers. We appreciate that there are advantages in a separate college for this work conducted independently of the State, but there are undoubtedly advantages in the absorption of the present Kindergarten College within the framework of the State Teachers' College. The present Kindergarten College is a small institution of some 20 students with two full-time teachers responsible for the training of the students. They are assisted by visiting lecturers. The transfer to the State Teachers' College of kindergarten
students would give them the advantage of association with the large body of students who attend the State Teachers' College and of the impacts of all the varied courses of training which that college provides. This should aid in the experience and maturity of the students' training for kindergarten work. Further, although a student may train for and intend to follow kindergarten teaching, she could, by her study at the Teachers' College, qualify also to be a teacher in the State educational system and thereby gain an improved professional status and a wider opportunity for professional work.

On the other hand, independent teaching institutions can provide variety in the approach to educational theory and practice and make a contribution of value as a supplement to the larger and more systematised basis of State-directed education. The Kindergarten College has done good work and its atmosphere and distinctiveness have their own appeal to the recruitment of young women who have a vocation for the teaching of children of pre-school age.

We have therefore thought it best to leave it to the district committees themselves, through their organ the Kindergarten Union, to make the decision whether they wish to continue the present practice of training teachers through their own college or to seek a transfer of such teaching to the State Teachers' College. If the Union, after consultation with the Education Department, should feel that the balance of advantage lies in the transfer of teacher training to the State Teachers' College, we recommend that the Government should approve of such a transfer which, we are advised by Dr. Robertson, could be arranged.

During the present year—1953—with only 20 students undergoing training, the retention of the College could hardly be justified from any economic considerations. It is realised, however, that there has been some uncertainty as to the future of kindergarten work and this may have affected the present enrolment. Unless next year there is evidence that the College can attract students on a basis that will be likely to provide an intake of at least ten students annually, we think the case for an independent College will become untenable.

While we have suggested that the Union and the College should decide their own policy as to a two or a three-year period of training for students at the College, our own opinion is that a responsible use of the moneys provided by the Government would favour a two-year period. The Government would be enabled thereby to secure a fair basis of contribution by parents for the benefits they and their children obtain. We will later suggest a scale which we consider suitable.

Any trainees for kindergarten teaching who receive living allowances on the scale recommended by this Report should be required to enter into the usual undertaking to serve, on graduation, as teachers at an affiliated centre for a period equal to their period as trainees and one year more.

Students proceeding to graduate as kindergarten teachers at the Kindergarten College should be given living allowances substantially higher than at present obtain. We will later suggest a scale which we consider suitable.

(ii) The supervision of kindergartens throughout the State, including those affiliated with the Union, should be left with the State Department of Education, thereby relieving the Kindergarten Union of the expense and responsibility of this work. This supervision will relate to the qualifications and character of teachers, standards of teaching and necessary requirements in accommodation and equipment, and will be undertaken in association with the oversight of matters of health and sanitation, conducted by the State Department of Health and the local health authority. As the State Department of Education is already required to exercise, and does exercise under the Education Act, supervision over all kindergartens and its powers and duties in this respect have been enlarged by the 1952 amendment of Parliament by that Act, it would appear to be a duplication of this service if it is discharged, as required by law, by the Department of Education, and as also carried out by the professional officers of the Kindergarten Union.

(iii) Governmental finance should be made available at an annual rate of £8 per child of the age of four years or five years enrolled for 15 hours attendance weekly at any centre affiliated with the Kindergarten Union. The benefit of such a subsidy from the Government should be made available, not only to existing affiliated kindergartens but to such kindergartens as may affiliate in the future. To qualify for the subsidy, affiliated kindergartens should be controlled by district committees of parents and citizens with or without the co-operation of the local authority. The subsidy would be available to any affiliated kindergarten conducted as a community project on a non-profit-earning basis.

We have specified the amount of £8 per annum as a sum by which the Government can subsidise kindergartens sufficiently to enable them to carry on. It represents slightly more per child than was involved by the subsidy given by the Government to the Kindergarten Union for 1952. It should enable District Committees to undertake their service, provided they are able to enlist the reasonable support of their communities and secure a fair basis of contribution by parents for the benefits they and their
children enjoy. The parents and interested people of the district will still have a substantial financial responsibility and the same praiseworthy exertions that have been a feature of district community spirit will still be called for.

The Union, in 1952, received from donations and fund-raising activities £1,439. It is to be hoped that the Union, in 1953, from this revenue will benefit by something between £1,000 and £2,000 to assist in meeting the salaries of teachers at affiliated centres.

If the local authority should accept some of the responsibility for kindergarten training in its district, the financial position of district committees will be eased and could be made comparatively comfortable. The Government subsidy which we have suggested should, however, enable the continued operation of district kindergartens, even if the local authority were disinterested, especially as we have recommended an additional grant in aid of district committees which work under special difficulties.

(iv) Any subsidy provided by the State should be related to the attendance at kindergartens of children who have attained their fourth birthday. At a time when the best use should be made of resources in money, accommodation and teaching personnel, we consider kindergartens would be best advised to confine their work, as far as possible, to the children in the four-year and five-year age groups. It is at these ages that children can be most in need of, and receive most benefit from, attendance at a kindergarten. If the numbers of children for whom provision can be made at kindergartens is restricted, it is more advantageous to give the preference to the four-year and five-year groups, rather than exclude children of those ages by accepting children of three years, whose need for kindergartens is much less and who can be much more readily cared for in the home environment. We are of opinion that the greatest value accrues to the child who enjoys a full session (15 hours per week) continuously.

(v) The practice of the Kindergarten Union has been, in most cases, to permit a maximum enrolment of 30 children per kindergarten group or unit and to allocate such group the services of two teachers. As the actual attendance averages, we are told, about four-fifths of the children enrolled, this involves a teacher-child ratio of one teacher to twelve children. In order that the best use may be made of existing premises and of the teaching staff, we are of opinion that the permissible enrolment per group should be 36 children, instead of 30. We believe that, having regard to responsibilities carried out by comparable teachers of the State education system, this increase in enrolment at kindergarten centres should not impose any undue burden on teachers, particularly as in most cases kindergarten centres receive children during the mornings only.

(vi) As to any affiliated kindergartens, now or hereafter, located in districts in which there are particular needs for kindergarten training, owing to less favourable conditions for the children and in which, owing to the general income level of the district, the conduct of the kindergartens would impose particular financial hardships, a special annual sum of £1,000 should be provided by the Government in aid of such centres. The selection of the district committees needing such assistance and the apportionment of this sum between them should be a matter for the determination of the Kindergarten Union, as the organ of the district committees.

(vii) Any organisations which exist or are formed for pre-school education for handicapped children should also be assisted, as the need for such children must be regarded as much greater than the claims of the normal child. We are aware that financial aid is already, in some cases, made available by the Government in this field, and the State Education Department itself is doing important work in aid of such children. Our recommendation here is directed mainly to the encouragement of any other organisation undertaking the responsibility for work in this field, when its teaching facilities and standards are approved by the Department of Education.

(viii) As to the basic subsidy of £8 per annum per four and five-year-old child which we have recommended should be provided by the Government, in the case of district committees now or in future, affiliated with the Kindergarten Union, it should be a matter for the decision of the Union whether such subsidy be received by each district committee which would then be responsible for the whole of its expenditure, including the salaries of teachers or, as is the present practice, be received by the Kindergarten Union, which would continue to employ and pay the teachers engaged at the affiliated centres, receiving from such centres such an amount as would be levied on the district committees.

(ix) The sum of £2,500 per annum should be made available by the Government to the Kindergarten Union for the administrative responsibilities of the Union, the role of the Union to be—

(a) The organ of the affiliated district committees;

(b) The conduct of the Kindergarten College and Hostel while the training of teachers remains a function of the Union;
(c) the source of professional advice on pre-school education and development to be available to the district committees as they may desire it;
(d) a source of advice to parents and people of districts who wish to establish and operate a kindergarten centre;
(e) generally, as the means for consultation and joint action in relation to their affairs on the part of the present affiliated district committees, and any additional district committees which may subsequently affiliate with the Union;
(f) the channel of communication with the Government and the Department of Education.
(x) Your Commissioners are of the opinion that the constitution of the Union could, with advantage, be reviewed. The Union could best function as the instrumentality of the district kindergarten committees affiliated with it. No doubt the Union could be assisted by office-bearers who have particular qualifications in the field of pre-school education; but, as a general principle, the affiliated district committees should form the Union and should control it. It is possible that, in the opinion of some educationists, the district committees might be content with standards somewhat lower than those which the Kindergarten Union has hitherto sought to uphold, but we are of opinion that, on the whole, the wisdom and strong sense of responsibility shown by district committees will be a sufficient safeguard against any undue diminution of standards, particularly as all kindergarten centres will be subject to the over-all supervision of the Department of Education.
(x) The Government grant to the Kindergarten Union for the year 1952 was £17,000. From this sum and its other resources the Union applied approximately £10,000 towards the salaries of the teachers engaged at the district centres.

Under the recommendations of your Commissioners, it is estimated that the approximate annual cost to the Government by way of subsidy to the Kindergarten Union and its affiliated district kindergartens for the year 1953 would be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Administrative cost of the Kindergarten Union</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Costs of the conduct of the Kindergarten College while a function of the Kindergarten Union</td>
<td>£4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Living allowances for students training at the Kindergarten College to be kindergarten teachers on the basis of present numbers, namely 20</td>
<td>£4,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Subsidy per child for four and five-year-old children in attendance at affiliated district kindergartens at the rate of £8 per annum</td>
<td>£10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Special subsidy in aid of such affiliated district committees as operate in areas where conditions are less favourable for children and which, on account of a lower district income level, have more than usual difficulty in meeting expenditure</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increases in Government expenditure involved by our recommendations relate mainly to basic wage increases in salaries, the increased living allowance given to encourage the recruitment of teacher trainees, and the special grant to assist centres in lower income level districts. If community kindergarten centres are to survive, the additional aid under these headings appears necessary.

The amounts we are recommending as grants by the Government for the conduct of the College and the administrative costs of the Union should, with the exercise of reasonable prudence, be fully sufficient for their purposes. Our recommendations are for the current year 1953, and while conditions may occur which may justify either an increase or a decrease in these subsidies in future years, we see no reason why these sums should not be adequate for some years to come if a careful watch is kept on expenditure.

In endeavouring to predict the responsibilities of the Union and of the affiliated centres we have taken the Union’s estimate of £16,409 as the sum likely to be paid in 1953 by the centres as levies to the Union. If the centres can build up the numbers of children who attend the full five days, as we consider to be practicable, the receipts from levies might be substantially increased. In our recommendations for State financial aid for 1953 we have not taken into account the possibility of any material increase in the amount of the levies over the Union’s estimate, but if the levies can be increased in the way indicated it may be justifiable to expect the Union to rely somewhat less on Government aid after 1953.

If the functions of the Kindergarten College should be transferred to the State Teachers’ College, the grant to the Kindergarten Union will be reduced accordingly.

As to living allowance for students at the Kindergarten College in training to be kindergarten teachers, we recommend that the allowances be as follows:

- Students living at home—£200 per annum.
- Students living away from home, whether at the Kindergarten College or at other accommodation—£250 per annum.
Hitherto the allowance to students has been at the following rates:—

First year £30, second year £45 and third year £75.

We feel that a substantial increase of students' allowances is justified in the interest of recruitment and for other reasons, and without such an increase it will become increasingly difficult to obtain trainees.

In the grant from the Government suggested by us for the year 1953 the amount has been computed on the present enrolment of students. In each future year the grants will be assessed according to the enrolment for that year.

No provision is made for the hostel conducted at the College, as we feel that this should, and can, be self-supporting.

The subsidy per child in attendance at affiliated kindergartens will be a subsidy to the centres. It will be in aid of the expense of operation of the centres, but primarily it should be regarded as a contribution in aid of the expenditure on the salaries of the teaching staffs of the centres.

The Government's obligations in respect of the subsidy per child in attendance at affiliated district kindergartens will necessarily increase as the number of district kindergartens expands. For various reasons many children will not be candidates for admission to kindergartens.

Owing to factors which may be expected to impose limits on the growth of the kindergarten movement it is not anticipated that the obligations of the Government in respect of the subsidy per child recommended by us will, at any period, be more than a small percentage of the State's Education vote. This we consider a justifiable contribution by the State to a movement which is being built up and maintained by community effort.

Affiliation with the Kindergarten Union of any district committee should not be a qualification for receipt of the Government per capita grant or the continuance thereof unless such affiliation shall have the approval of the Director of Education.

We have not endeavoured to assess the cost to the Government of any financial aid to organisations caring for the education of handicapped children. We have not sufficient information before us to enable us to make such an assessment and, in any case, it is a matter ancillary only to our terms of reference.

We have refrained from making any specific recommendation as to Government financial aid to district committees for the erection or acquisition of buildings and equipment for new kindergarten centres. Through the local authority and the Lotteries Commission grants in some cases are now being made for this purpose. If, after meeting the claims of school age education, the Government is in a position to assist district committees to provide buildings and equipment for new centres, our recommendation is that for this purpose the Government should give pound for pound with the amount the local authority in the district is prepared to make available, with a maximum of £500 payable by the Government in respect of any one centre. Having regard to limiting factors in respect of the supply of teachers and other conditions, we do not think that the Government would be likely to be called upon for such grants by more than four or five district committees each year.

Although local authorities are empowered to provide out of revenue, assistance for the establishment, as well as the conduct of kindergartens in their districts, they have no legal authority to raise a loan for the establishment of a kindergarten. It may be difficult for some local authorities, out of revenue, to make available a worthwhile sum to assist a district committee to provide buildings and equipment for a new kindergarten centre. If local authorities are needed, it is better to have them, even though necessary, rather than have no kindergarten at all. There are certain basic requirements as to sanitation, ventilation and space per child, which must be observed in the interests of the child in any type of building; but, apart from these con-
considerations, we think that under conditions now obtaining, a district committee is justified in setting up its kindergarten centre in improvised buildings, such as former Army hutments or in any other accommodation which reasonably meets requirements. The standards of the Union should be sought at all times, but there should be a reasonable elasticity as to these standards, particularly when it is borne in mind that district committees, with the support of the parents and citizens, not infrequently make considerable sacrifices of their time, money and energy, in order to commence a kindergarten in a building which may be sufficient but could not comply with all the standard requirements provided in the Union’s basic plans.

In general, similar considerations apply in the case of equipment at the kindergarten centres. The Union has sought meritoriously for a high standard of playing and other equipment. When purchased in these days, the cost of such equipment can be a serious burden on the finances of a district committee. Such committees, frequently, with the aid of parents and other interested people, improvise equipment at comparatively small cost in a way that is extremely creditable. District committees can generally be relied upon to do their utmost to ensure that suitable equipment is available at their centre, but this again is a matter for elasticity, and it is not desirable that too exacting an attitude should be adopted towards the equipment standards of an affiliated centre. Equipment on a very elaborate scale may limit the exercise of the child’s imaginative faculties.

As to staffing standards, we feel that the number of children for which each kindergarten teacher is responsible, could be increased without impairing the efficiency of the centres.

It must be borne in mind that at present the Union calculates on enrolments which automatically reduces the teacher-load based on attendances. If it is agreed that 30 children comprise a full group, we are of the opinion that that number should be actual attendance and, on the present attendances attained, would imply an enrolment of 36 at least.

This basis of staffing, even with the increased number of children per teacher, would still represent a more favourable position as to the pupil-teacher ratio than the Education Department is able to provide in most of its schools.

19. In broad outline, we may summarise our conclusions and recommendations as follows:

(i) In terms of policy, the Government should continue to make available financial assistance for kindergarten training provided by community effort and for a reasonable progressive expansion of that type of kindergarten training.

(ii) There is a parallel and even more justified case for creches and nursery schools, when needed in the interests of children whose mothers are obliged to seek a gainful occupation outside the home or, through sickness or other causes, are unable to provide suitable home conditions for their children.

(iii) Any substantial expansion in preschool child education would involve demands on Government finance, the supply of teachers and the provision of buildings and equipment.

(iv) There are at present, and will be for some years to come, heavy demands on Government finance, the supply of teachers and the provision of buildings and equipment for the adequate education of children of school age, to which the Government, by law and of necessity, is already committed. In addition, the Government, in the educational field, must have regard to the extension of the compulsory school period to 15 years, already authorised by Parliament, and the urgent requirements of technical and university education, including a school for medical training.

(v) Adequate provision for the education of school age children must take priority over the expansion of pre-school child education.

(vi) Grants by the Lotteries Commission in aid of kindergarten training and district kindergartens are to be commended, particularly in the case of any districts which experience particular difficulty in providing kindergarten facilities. In this field the Commission has done valuable work, but we consider the Commission should not be asked or expected to underwrite kindergarten finance but should assist kindergarten training and kindergarten committees in such amounts and directions as the Commission’s discretion may decide.

(vii) The extension of the State educational system to include the kindergarten training of pre-school children is not a practicable step at present.

(viii) The policy of the Government for many years past has been to support financially the movement for kindergarten training through community effort. We feel that such policy was justified and we believe that to be consistent with this policy the Government should be prepared to accept such increased financial responsibility for the assistance of district kindergarten committees as will be involved by the normal growth of the kindergarten movement.

(ix) Government financial aid to the Kindergarten Union and its affiliated district kindergartens should, as far as practicable, be given a systematic form, so that district committees may be able to budget for their income and expenditure with some assurance of the assistance by way of subsidy by which they are likely to benefit.
(x) For the time being, the policy which should regulate kindergarten training may be stated concisely, as follows:

(a) Present and future Government financial aid for kindergarten training should be based on a system of community effort and responsibility through district committees of parents and citizens in affiliation with the Kindergarten Union, and in which the cooperation of the local authority would be of advantage.

(b) Any district kindergarten committee affiliated with the Kindergarten Union and observing reasonable standards should normally be entitled to participate in the Government subsidy.

(c) The Government subsidy should, for the present be at the rate of £8 per annum for each four-year old or five-year old child enrolled at an affiliated kindergarten centre for an attendance of 15 hours weekly.

(d) In the case of handicapped children, Government financial assistance is justified.

(e) To meet the cases of affiliated kindergartens whose committees face particular financial difficulties due to a lower income level obtaining in their districts, an additional subsidy should be provided by the Government.

(f) The Government should continue to make an annual grant to the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia to enable it to function as the organ of all affiliated district kindergartens not operating for profit.

(g) The Union should be allowed, if it wishes, to transfer the training of teachers for kindergarten work to the State Teachers' College.

(h) The supervision of affiliated district kindergartens and their standards of teaching, accommodation and equipment is the function of the State Education Department; and the Kindergarten Union can be relieved of this expense and responsibility.

(i) Qualification as a kindergarten teacher should be encouraged by the provision by the Government of students' living allowances on the scale we have recommended.

(j) Local authorities can, with advantage, play a part in assisting in the establishment and maintenance of kindergarten and other facilities for pre-school child care and education.

(k) In five years' time, the Government should further review the matter of pre-school child care and education and how far then it may be practicable and desirable to expand facilities or financial assistance for the education of children of pre-school age.

(xi) The standards of buildings, accommodation and equipment recommended by the Kindergarten Union represent a desirable objective, but provided certain basic requirements as to space, ventilation, sanitation and functional facilities are observed a reasonable elasticity should be exercised according to the resources available.

(xii) We have suggested in our Report the administrative procedure and details of expenditure involved by our recommendations.

20. Your Commissioners wish to record their appreciation of the courtesies and assistance they have had from those citizens who submitted evidence or who made available material for their information. We also thank the staff of the Legislative Council for many considerations shown us. To Mr. Hastings Carew-Reid, O.B.E., and the Hansard staff who reported the proceedings we offer our appreciation of and our thanks for their very efficient work.

Last but not least we wish to express our deepest appreciation of the services rendered to the Commission by its Secretary, Mr. H. K. Kahan, not only for his performance of his duties as Secretary, but also for much help in the conduct of the Commission and in the compilation of our Report. This Report would not be complete if we did not express our appreciation in the highest terms.

We have the honour to be, Sir, Your Excellency's obedient servants,

(Signed) ROSS MCDONALD,
Royal Commissioner, Chairman.

M. G. LITTLE,
Royal Commissioner.

Dated at Perth this 29th day of March, 1953.