

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO RURAL AND REMOTE EDUCATION

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Thanks a lot for coming along. The process we use for these things is quite informal. We give you a chance to make whatever comments you want to make and then have a bit of a discussion with you about them. If you want to add anything or help us understand things. We've got the day here in Port Lincoln. We'll be both seeing things and talking to a number of people. So we're very pleased that you're starting off by giving us the broader context of what's happening in the area. So Rod do you want to go first?

Mr COCKS: I'm District Superintendent in the Department of Education and Children's Services. It's a bit of a combined effort with Cathy Cameron.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: As you like.

[Curriculum; specialist teachers]

Mr COCKS: Basically I want to start by saying that there's a changing curriculum that's occurring across the whole 0-TAFE to University sectors, and what that is doing is expectations from our communities are changing; more specifically in the Year 0-8 category for an integrated approach there with Children's Services, and our junior years. We have the adolescents sector which we're calling the middle schooling, and the young adults which is the senior secondary and post school options. There's those categories. But what impact that's having is that we need more specialist teachers than we have ever before across that whole range.

We need to develop alternative pathways, have different access entry and re-entry points for our students across that whole range as well. That is causing us problems because of our isolation. Many of our sites of schools are not viable under the current formulas that are in place and we are under threat of reduction. The communities are facing less choice, reduced options, and we are developing solutions to that – and that is what we're looking at.

The schools on Eyre Peninsula are very isolated. One of the solutions we see to the issue of specialist teachers could be differentiated salaries. That is a basic formula weighted to meet our needs and they do vary across the whole Eyre Peninsula. It's a very unique geographical position as South Australia is unique. Eyre Peninsula is unique again and we have specific needs.

COMMISSIONER JONES: They used to talk about going to South Australia from Eyre Peninsula!

Mr COCKS: Pretty much. Our smaller number of enrolments equate to small numbers of staff in many locations. Again that's that cycle of less curriculum choice that also therefore causes in many cases students to leave the area and go to other locations, particularly Adelaide. That has additional burdens on the community and families here, for example, if they do make that choice because of lack of choice. The additional costs to the families to actually get their children there. One study done by the local council here has estimated that around 200 local students a year leave Eyre Peninsula, which is a bit of a drain for us.

[Aboriginal students]

For Aboriginal students we need to develop different options and pathways and mostly for retention reasons. Aboriginal students do not stay on at schools generally – there have been some successes, but not many, and in some communities there haven't been any that have finished Year 12 and gone on to tertiary education.

Some of the solutions we're looking at at the moment and negotiating with Aboriginal communities is to have pathways developed with business, financial pathways; there's mining ventures happening and about to happen; and there's marketing and tourism pathways. Those are being looked at presently, but we need further assistance and resources to make these come about.

[Staff incentives; professional development]

We also think that we need differentiated salaries or additional staffing. Differential salaries would be an incentive for staff to come here in the first place and we need incentive packages, which we'll talk about in a moment, to keep them here.

The cost of freight, accommodation, travel, all those things, limit access. It's a cost factor, we've got training developed for the staff who of course don't have the training development which impinges on the quality of education. We often miss out on that training development through professional development due to the distance costs. It's a double whammy, because we'd have to pay the cost to get there, when most of our schools and sites have to replace their staff while they're away. And it's not simply a 4-6:00 thing like it is in Adelaide. We have to travel to get there it's usually the day, go to 4-6 two hours, and then travelling back the next day. So you've got a couple of days for a two hour session.

[Travelling]

From the student viewpoint also, we've got work experience, which is a necessary part of the curriculum, and the costs involved in travelling away from sites is enormous as well. We haven't got the depth of offerings in work experience also which necessitates looking elsewhere and therefore the costs associated with that.

[Success stories]

We have a lot of successful students on Eyre Peninsula. I could talk about one from the high school is the Aboriginal Group called the Minya Mob, who have been very successful recently in the Young Achievers Australia, and they've done very well in the World competition. I believe they've won that as well. What happens, and what I'm talking about there is often successful students like this group the Minya Mob, which is a band, they've been asked to go to Adelaide other various sites across South Australia and Australia.

Again when you come from here, the excessive costs ... Often we get invitations for the students to go elsewhere and often those who are inviting us with all the good intentions, are often indignant when we have to say no – and that hurts both ways.

[Staff recruitment]

Attracting staff, I talk about graduates. There's a financial burden on graduates to go out to the country. Many of them haven't been earning, of course. They've been studying and to relocate, particularly to Eyre Peninsula, it's a real long way; it's right out in the country. There's relocation costs. They may have a car for example, but the car might

only get them from their little flat near Flinders University to Flinders University and back again and particularly on the way down, when you can put it in neutral and it drives down the hill. But it won't get them to out here and it won't sustain them. They haven't got any furniture. They might live at home with mum and dad, all those sort of things.

So we've got a real problem of attracting people in the first place. Then when we get people interested, they've got a problem with getting here because of the cost factors.

So they need parental support and if their parents have got some money they may be able to get out here. Many I know personally have decided not to come because of the expense, even though they wish to.

[Staff incentives]

It's also a bit scary for them too – to drive all this way and come out this way because they've never done it in many cases. Country incentives for teachers and other staff as I said earlier, differentiated salaries would help the situation. And also differentiated salary or salary by vacancy. What I mean by that is additional salary component because of the isolation, to attract them and keep them there, over and above the base rate that's offered across the whole situation from there.

Also I think that the Department could negotiate different packages to suit individual teachers' family needs, so that they could be attracted to the country and stay here. Those things could include cars, petrol cards, tax incentives, HECS fees, mortgages, part repayments on interest, all sorts of things. But the point there is that a negotiated package would be the way to go.

[Staff disincentives]

We have access to T&D [Training and Development], but as I've already pointed out there's problems with that. Quality T&D is mainly offered in metro areas, usually at times that is not convenient – ie 4-6pm, again that travel situation that I spoke about earlier.

Access to state committees, which of course helps with your career. Getting on those and getting relief in the schools and sites is a problem in the country areas.

Isolation of staff, all staff in small communities has its issues as well. Lack of professional and contact with like people, which is good for the soul and good for the professional contact.

Also there is issues – you're always in the community eye. There's that constant pressure of living in a small community – particularly when you are doing as the Department requires us to do – initiate change and be a change agent. Often there's resistance in small communities to some of the initiatives that come up. There can be misunderstandings, there can be grudges, all sorts of things can happen, and you live with it day to day and that causes its own pressures and stress on the staff.

There could be simple things like just disciplining a student at school, and you have to then go and play football with them or netball or shop with them in the shop because there's only one shop and all that sort of thing. Those stresses.

[Aboriginal students; Aboriginal teachers]

Many of them opt out of the University courses we've had. For example, last year two students from Port Lincoln that went on to University had already dropped out this year. Aboriginal students can do courses in Port Lincoln, but when they graduate they don't move into the mainstream.

For example we have 25 Aboriginal trained teachers in Port Lincoln, but none of them in the mainstream in teacher positions in schools. But we know them. 'Why is it?' We're asking that question but we don't know the answers. We believe that more action research and critical evidence needs to be gathered. But maybe it's that our standards are different. Maybe it's that the environment here in Port Lincoln is too supportive, but there's a lot of other reasons that we hope to look at as well.

The solution to that that could be put in place is maybe some sort of apprenticeship approach to teaching. We could have the situation where a graduated Aboriginal teacher would come into a site in a half-time teacher capacity and spend time with a mentor teacher who's an experienced teacher. Half the time of their full-time salary would be counted against the formula, that's a differentiated situation.

Some of the reasons and objectives behind that would be to support the Aboriginal teacher to move into the mainstream, to improve their skills and to become more resilient to the workplace.

[Travelling for competition]

We have many students engaged in sporting events which requires them to go from their sites on Eyre Peninsula mostly to other venues in the country, and then if they're successful, to Adelaide. Again the burden of distance, cost, transport, relief teaching, is a problem.

There's another element to that, too. An example that I can give is a junior primary teacher being a coach and administrator coming out of their class. For one particular event they were out of their class for a total period of two weeks. For a reception class it is not a good practice to have their routine continually interrupted, but that's the only way to get some social justice for the other students in the school. It's to take that teacher with the skills, put them in that position, and the event actually occurs but at cost.

If somebody is selected for the state team, which does happen quite often, again the distance and the compounded costs. We've got one student at the moment from Port Lincoln primary school, who's just been chosen in the state team but the venue he has to go to is Canberra. The cost of the trip is \$600, the school can sponsor that to the degree of \$50 because of their funding.

Appropriate clothing and all that needs to be purchased on top of that as well. And, of course, if the students come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, there's a major problem there for them and the community. The community is very supportive of those students, again fundraising and getting together – which is a good element of country life - but also is something that not necessarily has to happen elsewhere.

[Support specialists]

We find it difficult to attract occupational therapists in the country. For whatever reasons, we just don't attract them. Child psychologists as well, it's another example of just not being able to attract people. At the current time we have a social worker vacancy in Port Lincoln, and it's not filled.

[Staff retention]

It's difficult to retain staff. Particularly young graduates after three years or so. They leave and go back to the city, or other than this, interstate even. We haven't got the facilities infrastructure to actually keep them here, so that is a problem for us as well.

A problem that more so faces Wudinna and up the whole Eyre Peninsula, is when staff leave - and the example of Wudinna was four staff left, but they had their partners who ran shops like the hairdressing shop and other businesses, so they lost eight people from their community, and they lost two or three businesses as well. Those sort of things do happen, so the infrastructure suffers again. And that was caused by the fact that the choice of options were limited, people in the local community made a choice to go elsewhere, and of course losing the teachers ...

[Staff incentives]

I've mentioned of course country incentives. We need a more consistent approach in the application of those incentives. Some of our schools attract little to nothing; others attract for example a year off after so many years. Some of them actually do nothing. Relocation expenses for SSO's, those sort of things, and locality allowances and [other examples of] inequities. Could the solutions access to [indistinct] for teachers and staff. For training and development for their own personal use, as I've said. We have a school that Alby Jones used to know about, and that's Penong and Kirribee, and at the moment that's a model that we put together to save Kirribee from being closed, because it's got only about 10 students there. The principal at Penong manages the two sites, and they're 87kms apart. She uses her own car and there's no car provided, and a lot of goodwill goes into that, and we should support that goodwill in the appropriate manner.

[Information technology]

We have a lack of support personnel to facilitate the maintenance of IT once we've got it. There is a Department strategy at the moment that's unfolding, and once that's completed it will improve the situation enormously in Eyre Peninsula. Currently though we have video conferencing facilities in Port Lincoln. We can connect to Ceduna and Wudinna in our district.

The smaller schools, where we really need it, we haven't got it at the present time. This therefore means we have to travel to those places and use it on a one-to-one basis, which is then again time consuming and costly.

[Access to buses]

I'd like to talk about children's services quickly. We have some issues with children's services too, in that pre-school children are unable to always access school buses. They can only access them at the present time under the Act if there is room on a bus that is not used for primary or secondary students.

[Early childhood]

Many of our small rural communities do not have sufficient numbers to access trained staff like directors and teachers, so they have small groups, and they have untrained staff looking after the students/children. To get a kindy up and running the minimum start-up number of children is 15. Once the numbers slip under 10, they've got a problem. We are looking at that, but at the moment it's a real issue.

There is need for child care in small communities, but we have no model that actually accommodates them. The Rural Care Model that's been put around, unfortunately does not meet the requirements of the Children's Services Act as it stands at the present time. The issue there is that rural care is home based, and the Act talks about centre based provision. When we've got small communities spread over a large distance that model is not appropriate.

We have difficulties in getting family day care established in small communities as well. The national scheme - the sites up to national standards - is a somewhat of an issue, but the fee structure is the main concern.

Aboriginal services – currently the Department does not allow for staff to transport Aboriginal pre-school children in government cars. This makes a difference to our school because most of them haven't got buses that pick them up before school and take them home after school. Most of the communities have troop carriers, G-cars and 4WD's that could be utilised, so there's an issue there with regulation.

[Students with disabilities; special school]

We have also difficulty in attracting part-time staff across the whole of Eyre Peninsula and all of those coasts for all of our services and sectors. Respite care – there is a need for more support services to facilitate respite care. We have the carers available, but we haven't got the back-up support workers because the funding from the federal government is inadequate for us to employ those people.

We have one special school on Eyre Peninsula. One of the issues there is that of training and development. Even though we have a hub system where principals and leaders of sites get together, the special needs of the special school principal do not get met, because they're one of a kind on the Eyre Peninsula. Their closest colleague is almost 300kms away at Whyalla. This has its problem in other ways – they're not able to really share resources in these sorts of situations, and access other colleagues. We only have at this school 16 students. It is located at the bottom of the Peninsula geographically and a number of parents are disadvantaged on the Eyre Peninsula by not being able to access the school.

We only have one full time and two part time teachers at the school, and because of that the staff have to know everything there is to know about the students. This makes it really difficult for them, but they do it.

There is an inadequate speech pathology service. Their visit is only once per term. There is no occupational therapy service at all for the school. They also have a lot of difficulty in getting experienced teachers to the special school, and there is a very limited input from other agencies, like down syndrome, autism associations due to the distance and the expense.

The most training and development for special school teachers again is held in Adelaide, and again is in those timeslots of 4-6pm, which is not very convenient. There are also no accommodation or overnight respite facilities in Port Lincoln. The nearest respite facilities are in Whyalla. Therefore families with children with special needs leave the town as their children near post compulsory age, or the child must be removed from the family and sent to live in Whyalla. Of courses the stresses across from that are enormous as well.

Disability services across Eyre Peninsula. The service that is located in Port Lincoln offers a regular face-to-face service to teachers and students with disabilities with a minimum 2-3 visits per term, and a term is approximately 10 weeks.

Support to schools and teachers and parents with negotiating a curriculum plan processes is what most of the main model is used. They support teachers with curriculum and planning modification and assessment. Outsourcing of this necessarily does occur, but it has its problems again with distance and cost.

The issues with the Students with Disability Unit, the Special Education Unit, are very similar to those of the Special School. In large schools the Special Education Unit focuses on developing a student support team in those schools. This is very successful because it helps with the referral and guidance of speech. But in the small schools, often the provision of training has to be one-to-one and most often the problem is that because of teaching staff turnover, the person that's the long term incumbent is usually an SSO, and they're usually one without responsibility.

When we have joint services delivery, we usually have a team go to the school, so we have 2 or 3 people working with one teacher or one support person in that school. So we try the best we can. The difficulty of course is the flexibility of the service delivery, and the quantity of that for the quality of education for these students.

[Post-school options]

There's a lack of post school options and pathways, including accommodation and supervised, and supported work options across Eyre Peninsula. There is an issue – in the last 17 years, we have only been able to attract three experienced staff in that area, otherwise they've always been graduates with no experience. Of course, I've explained what problems graduates have when I first started to speak. I think I'll leave it there, Chris.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Thanks Rod, that's a very comprehensive introduction, so thanks for that. Cathy, did you want to ...?

[Aboriginal Education Workers]

Ms CAMERON: I'm the Principal of Port Lincoln High School. Just a couple of things. One of the issues I think for Aboriginal Education Workers in our schools is that because the access that they have to be of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, is that they are employed, and many of them are employed without suitable qualifications or in fact background. Just to give you an example, and I mean this is no aspersion on the person personally, it's just that if they went to grade three and now working with students in literacy and numeracy in the senior school, one would assume that it's a fairly daunting task. And so, by virtue of the fact that they're in the town, and

because they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander they get employed, but in fact are not necessarily able to undertake the role, and so of course it has its problems of absenteeism and generally lack of consideration for the job.

The other thing of course that the AEW and SSO pay scales are significantly different. So we have people working in schools in virtually the same roles, but in fact one group being paid a higher amount than the other. That has some issues in the school as well, some resentment.

[Staff shortage]

The teacher shortage is I think fundamental to many of the problems out here. There have been a number of initiatives that have been started but have never got anywhere, and I think until they really become as Rod said, provide some really decent incentives for people to come here, the shortage will hit us the hardest it's ever hit. I don't think we realise how bad it can get. This year I've not been able to replace three of my teachers with qualified teachers. We've had to convert to SSO time. I have an hourly paid instructor who is a science graduate with no teaching experience presently teaching Year 8s and 9s mathematics in my school, with another teacher in the room the whole time. Those sorts of things are just unacceptable, and it just happened to be that we were lucky to get this hourly paid instructor, because they happened to be a family member.

So I think that Australia-wide, there has not been enough ... The MCEETYA conference has attempted, but never ever really tackled the problem. They've talked a lot about it. Marilyn Sleath was set up to look at an Australia-wide teacher shortage that fell in a hole when she left the Department. So I think there is some big issues that need to be addressed there – not only for children in the country, but everywhere I think. Because it's not going to improve. Why would you come?

[Country Call consultations]

The other thing that I guess is an issue for us is that we've had recently in South Australia a Country Call with John Halsey heading up Country Education. We haven't seen any results of that. It's really difficult when you have parents come along and say they want information about the country, you give this information, and then there's no outcome. And it is August. I think there has been time. One parent was really disillusioned and said after this meeting look is anything going to come of this or were we just all wasting out time. His thoughts have perhaps been vindicated at the minute.

COMMISSIONER JONES: They haven't been doing it for long, though, have they?

Ms CAMERON: Well, no, but I think they were very clear about there would be some really quick action, and when you promise people that and then nothing happens. So I think the country people generally, the parents are supportive, but get very disillusioned.

[Staff recruitment]

Ms CURTIS: I'm Heather Curtis, and I'm the Principal of Curtin Point Primary School. Probably our biggest thing about access, and that was probably demonstrated by Rod, and that's access to quality staffing – access to staffing fullstop. Access to leadership. I'll give an example there. We've got a school counsellor position at Curtin Point Primary School. We advertised statewide two times, and did not receive any bites, so I went to a conference in Adelaide and stood up at the conference and said, 'Has

anyone got anybody who is aspiring to be a school counsellor who would love to Port Lincoln, and would have some of the skills to give it a go?'. And that's how we got a counsellor at Curtin Point Primary School. Now I don't know if you call that merit selection or not.

Another example of not being able to access leadership positions is we wanted a literacy co-ordinator in our school. Once again we advertised state-wide twice and have converted the actual salary to SSO time.

[Relief staff]

They're just two examples of the problems in getting leadership staffing in primary schools. As far as teachers go, it's getting more and more difficult to access teachers, particularly teachers who fill positions that come up during the year. As both Cathy and Rod demonstrated, it's not desirable for any teacher to leave any sort of position, or even to leave Adelaide to come over here for a short time and do a teaching job. So that is making it extremely difficult, because what happens is you go into your TRT, your temporary relieving teacher people, so at the moment in this town, we're probably relying on our three permanent relievers to do most of our relieving. There's probably one or two people on our list besides those. Now what happens when a teacher's sick if you can't get the permanent reliever or one of those people on your TRT list? Who takes the class? You either split the children, which means that everybody instead of having 30 kids in their class has 35, or you release like myself I stop what I'm doing and go into the class for the day, or the Deputy stops his program. He actually runs a support maths program in school part time. So that program is interrupted while he goes into class. So it makes it extremely difficult for the continuity of programs in the children's education. And that is happening more and more. And as the school year goes on it gets harder and harder. Stress levels rise at the end of the year and it's very hard to access TRTs because there's none around.

As far as SSOs go, teachers do get a locality allowance, and I think it's a grand amount of about \$7.60 per fortnight for teaching here. But SSOs have no rights to access that locality allowance, and I think that's a real equity issue.

[Extra-curricula opportunities]

Another thing that makes it really difficult I suppose, is the fact that access for our children and our staff of activities or events, of educational experiences that are available to city schools becomes really really difficult. And people in Adelaide have this vision 'Oh, Port Lincoln – lovely place'. But they don't understand that sometimes we cannot do what they take for granted. So you can't hop on a bus with your kids and go and visit the museum for a couple of hours then hop on the bus and come back home again.

[Career development opportunities]

That's the same with training, that's the same with involvement with committees. I'm on a couple of committees in Adelaide, and I had to push really hard to get them to have their meetings on days that are more convenient for me to go to Adelaide. What I've tried to do is combine both committees so that I try and go over once instead of twice. People think it's unjustly unfair, I'm the only country rep on these committees and all of a sudden I'm sort of saying, 'That doesn't suit me, I really really need you to have them on these days'. It's seen as being grossly unfair to them that I should be demanding

when these meetings should be happening. So the understanding, I suppose, of our counterparts in the city to our needs, is probably at times lacking. And that's no fault of their own.

[Travel for professional development]

Taking up on the country incentive stuff, I feel really strongly about this one. The city people have access to a whole fleet of government cars. I think that's fantastic. But out here, for us to access training and development we have a leadership conference once per term generally, and we try to have one in Port Lincoln, one in Ceduna, one in Streaky Bay and maybe one in Wudinna, so that people further up the coast aren't always the ones that are travelling the longest. Now [one person has] so far to go between schools she uses her car every time she goes out of that school to access training and development. And you can imagine the wear and tear driving the 6 hours from Penong to Lincoln, or whatever it is, to go from Penong to Adelaide to attend this training and development. So I probably would say that we are extremely disadvantaged as far as travel goes, because not only do we have to use our own cars, we don't have the access to the events and to the transport that our city counterparts do. And I think that probably needs to be addressed more strongly.

[Literacy and numeracy; student mobility]

As far as any of the other issues go, and this could be a city issue too, but one of the things at the moment is literacy and numeracy levels – of all of our students, but particularly of our Aboriginal students, and I know it gets addressed again and again. One of the big things I think is transient and mobile students. The students go from school to school, changing schools very often, so continuity in learning programs for those students is not very high. And I don't know how that can be addressed. It's just an issue I thought I'd raise in this forum because I believe that it's not that the children have not got the skills, have not got the ability to be literate and numerate. I don't believe that the teachers are not doing the right thing. I believe that the whole aspect of literacy and numeracy skills is compounded by transiency and mobility.

[Staff recruitment]

Mr COCKS: Just one little point Chris is the leadership positions on our sites. We find it so that the maximum number of people that have actually applied for any leadership position in Eyre district has been three. That is amazing for leadership positions, and this year six panels – and I've got four to go for principal positions only, and I'm having to run two of those again because there's been no appointment. Firstly one who we were going to appoint pulled out because they thought it was going to be all too hard. So we have that problem attracting teachers, but we also have that problem attracting leaders.

Ms CURTIS: Can I just say that that in itself complicates the whole deal, in that once again Rod has to put more time into running those panels again. So it's not only that we don't get the staff, it's taking away the time of the staff who are currently here, because we're running panels time and time again to try and get staff, and it's not working.

Ms CAMERON: It's also an issue of many of the inexperienced people coming here that you then have to support as well in learning.

[Drain of trained staff]

Mr COCKS: We've become a training ground for leaders, it's been traditional. That's got its good aspects as well, because they bring with them enthusiasm. But from a workload viewpoint as District Superintendent, that issue about induction and support is a major one, because they're usually beginning their principalships or their directorships in this particular district, and they go off to Adelaide and they've experienced and they gain higher levels of leadership, and they add to the professional quality that's over there. And our bank is either the same or reducing.

[Compensation for training first year out teachers]

Ms CURTIS: I believe we do that to some degree with teachers too. We train, the teachers who come out here as graduates and then after three years or five years they go back to the city and we start again. And we're given no support for that, except now I think they might give us a 0.1 salary or something like that. Is that right?

Ms CAMERON: Only if it's a permanent appointment. Not if it's a contract.

Ms CURTIS: Right. And a lot of our positions are contract.

Ms CAMERON: Just to clarify that point. 0.1 for a graduate in your school is obviously designed for a graduate to support them in learning the ropes as a teacher. If I have a person made permanent in my school I get 0.1. If I have a contract person who is in my school I get nothing. Does that mean out of the 5 I presently have I get 0.2 for the two people who are permanent and 0.3 I don't get for the three others. It thins it out fairly quickly – I mean obviously we do provide a lot of support for them, but it is at our own cost. I mean in the big schools in Adelaide of a comparable size to mine there wouldn't be a graduate student. You wouldn't even see one over the fence. Because they're just not attracted to those schools because the permanent pool is so large in the city. But in the country you can have up to five or six. I think Streaky Bay had five last year. Now that brings with it the extra workload without any support..

Ms CURTIS: I've got two at the moment and I'll have three by the end of the year and I get nothing.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Alby?

[Aboriginal Education Workers]

COMMISSIONER JONES: I was a bit worried about your problem with the Aboriginal teacher aides you were talking about. In a school in remote New South Wales, where Chris Sidoti has recently visited, the statement in the report was that a brilliant piece of work happened because one school took on seven Aboriginal teachers.

Now I'm not sure what the quality of the teachers was, but the results of taking them on were outstanding. New South Wales doing better – they didn't do better in the past than we did - something wrong there. Another thing that came out in this report on remote New South Wales was that the retention in one school of Aborigines was the same as the retention of non-Aborigines. Now I don't know what that tells, but it says something about the retention of Aborigines, doesn't it?

[Professional development]

The other thing I wanted to mention, your professional development, couldn't you get the experts, the specialists from Adelaide to come over here, rather than you go over there?

Ms CURTIS: We try. We try. And that does happen of course sometimes, but it's still the issue of, for example, for Karamurrie from Penong, that if they come to Port Lincoln, and we can set up something from 4 until 8 at night, she's still got a six hour drive to get here, and then a six hour drive to go home. Lincoln is not so bad – it's not easy, but it's not as bad as the more remote areas where - they won't go to Ceduna to service two people or five people. That's the problem.

Ms CAMERON: A lot of the people won't come here because you haven't got the numbers that they like to present to or whatever.

COMMISSIONER JONES: I'm very proud that the very first residential conference was held where? In Wudinna 50 years ago. We just closed the schools in the top end and brought them in and brought a few specialists over ... First class.

[Aboriginal staff]

Ms CAMERON: Alby can I just come back to your point. I wasn't suggesting that we shouldn't have Aboriginal SSL, AEW's or teachers. In fact it would give me a huge pleasure to have 2 or 3 Aboriginal teachers in my school. The problem is where they are appointed because they are Aboriginal, not because of their ability, and I guess that's a concern. It tends to exacerbate the problem. One situation we've been dealing with is where the AEW actually sides with the kids and says 'Oh it's alright, don't go to class'. Those sorts of things make it really difficult, and sort of stirring up the community to some extent as well. Now we've overcome that, but it's not helpful. We have others who are fantastic, don't get me wrong, and I was able to get three teachers into Ceduna a couple of years ago, Aboriginal teachers, and they have been really successful. So I mean it would give me huge pleasure to have them, but there just aren't the people around – particularly in secondary. They tend to go for the junior primary, primary teaching qualification and not in the secondary area.

[Aboriginal student retention]

COMMISSIONER JONES: What about that retention of the Aboriginal students?

Ms CAMERON: Getting them there. We're actually going to look at having a bus bring them to school at the minute, because if we can get them there we have the resources. We have the teachers and so on who are prepared to work with them. It's actually getting them there. And so instead of having a bus, at present the community operates a bus that picks them up after school and takes them to a particular location. I've suggested to them that that's fine, but let's actually get them there in the first place. So why don't we have the bus in the morning. And it goes around and picks them up, and that's something we're going to look at in the near future. We've got to get them there. We've got all the stuff there, we've got everything we need, well we believe we have, it's just that then they don't come.

So they come Monday, they don't come until Thursday again, they've missed those three days, two days of work, the continuity isn't there for them. Very difficult for them to keep up with the sorts of SACE patterns that are expected.

[Aboriginal student attendance]

Ms CURTIS: And that attendance issue is an issue even at the pre-school level and it continues right through school. It's a bit like the transiency and mobility issue in that non-attendance or irregular attendance interrupts learning programs, and really does affect literacy and numeracy levels.

[Travel for professional support]

Mr COCKS: Can I add, Chris, the support to principals and directors from the Superintendent's viewpoint in the first 12 months. And I'm only into the 18th month of my job and I've only initially had a 2 year contract which is another issue, but anyway my city colleagues have four. In the first year I did over 500 hours in the car just to get to sites from one spot to another, and I also have a pilot's licence and I fly more regularly in the plane. But still it is that issue – compared to a Superintendent and many of them in Adelaide who can drive for half an hour and go from one side of the district to another, and they can call a meeting at short notice of all their leaders and they'll get it by that afternoon.

We have an issue this week that we've been asked to be – very strongly asked to be – at a meeting on Friday morning for a reason by our Chief Executive, and I have two staff, two leaders, their sites are 992km from Port Lincoln, and I'm trying to get air transport for them to get there to that meeting, and that is a problem.

As you know, I think it's a Melbourne to Sydney trip this time. That's the sort of issues that people don't grasp, and when I get called monthly to operations meetings the comparisons – workload and things like that I feel a bit embarrassed sometimes that they talk about what they've been able to achieve, and you sort of line up yourself against them. It's a bit difficult.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Do you get, or does the region get supplementary funding for those sorts of things?

Mr COCKS: No. We've got the same structure and support that Adelaide has, and that is a Superintendent and two district Co-ordinators. It's exactly what all of them have got.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: But what about things such as petrol costs and if you take the plane ...

Mr COCKS: Yes I have a budget that they don't have.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Right for that.

Mr COCKS: For petrol and travel, yes I do.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: And how adequate or inadequate is it?

Mr COCKS: Oh it's adequate. I can deal with that. The inadequate bit is the actual individual time that is needed to do it. One of the things I've been doing lately is because of that I haven't been flying by myself, because as you know it can actually put

you to sleep quite easily when you're tired. So I've actually had someone else fly with me who has got pilot qualifications. So it's a danger aspect. I've had two road accidents in the last 12 months as well from kangaroos in the early hours of the morning because you want to get somewhere, give the support and provide the service, so you get up early and do it, and of course that's the worst time. That sort of stuff.

Ms CAMERON: There's also an issue about the travel for people like the speech pathologists and the occupational therapists and so on – they're just not prepared to drive the distances, and usually by themselves. I used to drive from here to Ceduna and back and do all the schools in between in my previous job. And I'd go home to Adelaide in those days, after three days, and I was just exhausted. It's just such a long way by yourself. And I couldn't afford to take my staff out of Adelaide to come with me just for company. So it's a big issue.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: So you've got a budget to cover the petrol, but you don't have extra staff to cover the time.

[Budget formulae]

Mr COCKS: It's the same stuff. The other advantage they've got in Adelaide is from the district arrangements. They've got four Superintendents in an office together. So you've got four Superintendents by two of their support staff each, and ancillary staff on top of that. So they have the ability to network together immediately, strategically plan together, divide up the tasks. And they've got eight support people to carry on and I've got two. That sort of situation. What I find is a good comparison, I think we are a mini country directorate, and I think Alby might be able to support that. Compared to the - we're still called a district - like Adelaide is a district, and we're not resourced as a directorate, we're resourced as a district.

COMMISSIONER JONES: These formulas you have for staffing, I'd had them. My idea was flexibility. This has come in since my day – old hat. These economic rationalists probably only thought 'it's money, we'll just put a little box aside to deal with flexibility'. Now is there any chance of that happening with you? Can you put up a case for things?

Mr COCKS: We have, but we haven't been successful.

Ms CURTIS: I think an example of that actually ... I used to be a principal down at Lincoln South which is sort of down near the special school outside of Port Lincoln and partly at Curtin Point. Now they're both classified as disadvantaged schools, so they both receive Commonwealth Literacy Program money. I was principal down there over a period of 11 years. During that time, we had over 50% Aboriginal students down there, and we had at one stage 90% school card students. And our staffing formula was the same as a school like Linden Park or Burnside Primary School [in affluent inner city suburbs of Adelaide], and for any extra staffing to support us in what we were trying to do down there, I had to go and beg and scrape and put up cases, write cases, and a lot of the time I was not successful.

And so we had to wangle stuff left right and centre. For years I did that. And it was never ever addressed. Now the same sort of schools probably you could classify some of the [indistinct] schools in Adelaide as having some of the same disadvantage as

perhaps Lincoln South had in those days, and I know that they used to combine. Because there was more than one school, they'd combine. They'd combine their resources and therefore be able to provide a little bit of extra staffing here - they'd cluster. We didn't have that opportunity down at Lincoln South at all, because the other schools in the town were so different from us.

That's compounded too by community attitudes. New people move into this town, and what do they hear straight away? 'Choose any other school, but don't go to Lincoln South', or Lincoln Gardens as it's called now. So people have this vision of Lincoln Gardens as a terrible school to go to, but if they actually went there and had a look, they'd see that some really good things are happening there. But it's just that. They are being judged by the rest of the community because they're mainly disadvantaged families who attend that school.

So there's sort of a grading I suppose, across the town of the schools. At one end of the continuum there's Lincoln Gardens, Curtin Point's there, then there's the town primary/junior primary, and St Joseph's probably up there. So that's how the attitudes go, and it's great if you're on this end of the continuum, but you try being on the other end of the continuum, that's a hard slog.

[Staffing formulae; example of Lincoln Gardens]

Ms CAMERON: Just going back to the staffing, and obviously there are issues about sizes of schools that many of the principals conferences that we have got together this year – I have a deputy and I have two assistant principals, so I can leave the school and leave them in charge. Many of the schools, particularly the primary schools don't have a deputy, so if they're out, it's a classroom teacher who's sort of holding the flag. And if you're teaching full time in a classroom, it's a very difficult thing. And also the fact that you're expecting people to have skills in areas that perhaps they don't and neither should they need to, but because you're away for two or three days, it falls back onto the staff. And Lincoln Gardens was a classic example of when the numbers were reduced – there had been a principal and a deputy. Suddenly the deputy position disappeared and so it was left to the principal and the student counsellor to manage all of the behaviour, all of the issues of the school. Purely by a number thing. I think there needs to be some sort of social register in a sense, that says this school should have additional support for these reasons.

Mr COCKS: Currently this week – as of the last couple of days - they've done another look at it and they've lost the student counsellor position as well.

Ms CAMERON: That's outrageous.

Ms CURTIS: They will have the principal at that school to manage that school, and it's so complex.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: How many kids?

Ms CURTIS: Well the numbers are less now.

Mr COCKS: 101 I think.

Ms CURTIS: When I was there it was 220 when I started there, and when I left it was around 150.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: So why have the numbers dropped?

Mr COCKS: There's been a redevelopment out there – the Housing Trust have ... I think about 40% of it's being redeveloped on an ongoing rotational system. So that families have ...

Ms CAMERON: Moved out.

Mr COCKS: They've just finished them and now some of them are able to move back, and some are able to be purchased. So they're not the same clientele, it's different. And now they're moving to the next area, and then to the next, so those numbers will fluctuate.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: So it will go back up to around the 200 mark, 150.

Ms CURTIS: I'd question that Rod – I'd question that. Community attitudes. For years out there we ran a lot of programs to attract kids to the school, and it only takes one little thing and you've got a fleet of kids going from that school to the others.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: So they don't have to go to their local school here, there's no zoning?

Ms CURTIS: There is zoning for the primary and junior primary be'cause they're too full. They can't have kids outside their zone because they just haven't got the space. Whereas Curtin Point can access kids from right across the town, so can Penindie and Lake Wangria. And what you find is that people take their kids to Penindie and Lake Wangria rather than access that school.

Mr COCKS: They're driving them through, and delivering them to the sites. We're finding that Penindie, which is 15-17km out of the town has gone from 58 kids two years ago to 107 now, and it's still going up.

COMMISSIONER JONES: It's largely from Aborigines?

Mr COCKS: No, that's just the situation of the people. Instead of accessing Lincoln Gardens for example, or because they can't get say Sue's school in the middle of the town, they're driving straight past, and going out to Penindie. They're doing that driving because they can't access the bus rides because of the rules.

[Aboriginal students]

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: A number of things I want to take up with you, if I can try to do it quickly. What proportion of Aboriginal kids would there be say between ... Some schools I imagine have got very small and some very big, but do you go from almost zero to almost 100% across the district?

Ms CAMERON: I've got approximately 12% at Port Lincoln High.

Ms CURTIS: Mine fluctuates from about 15-20% at Curtin Point – at Lincoln Gardens at one stage was about 70%.

Ms Sue Eden [Principal, Port Lincoln Junior Primary School]: The Junior Primary has about 12%.

Mr COCKS: Then you go right up to Ceduna and places like that and they've got 126 kids out of about 480. So that's about 25%. So it does vary.

Ms CAMERON: Streaky Bay's got very few, haven't they?

Mr COCKS: In that centre band there's not many. There's history to that, but up north and down south we have.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: So what's the history? Have people been moved out of that area?

Mr COCKS: There was an extermination campaign early in the history of those areas, and there's still a lot of sadness about that, and people not really ... They just drive straight through.

[Aboriginal staff]

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Right. And the Aboriginal Education Workers presumably are in those schools with Aboriginal kids in more greater numbers. I wasn't sure when you were talking about Aboriginal teachers you were referring to Education Workers, or do you have fully qualified Aboriginal teachers as well.

Mr COCKS: They're fully qualified teachers and they're not in the mainstream. Some of those are working with Aboriginal Education Workers, quite civilly, with the tensions put on them but none ... none?

Ms CAMERON: I have none, there are three fully qualified, fully fledged working secondary teachers at Ceduna as of this year working as teachers.

Ms CURTIS: I have no Aboriginal teachers. Sue, you don't have any have you?

Ms EDEN: No.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: And when you say, Rod, they're not working in the mainstream, what sorts of jobs are they doing?

Mr COCKS: Some of them aren't doing anything. Some are Aboriginal Education Workers.

Ms CAMERON: Health.

Ms CURTIS: Childcare.

Ms CAMERON: Early childcare.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Why would they become AEWs rather than teachers if they're qualified as teachers.

Mr COCKS: That's what I was mentioning. We don't know the answer to that. We've spoken to people and we often get some answers, but they're very vague. I think there is a racism element to this. There is a resilience element. Maybe our support services aren't fitting the needs of Aboriginal people. It's possible we haven't engaged fully with them to understand or they haven't spoken to us because the relationship hasn't gotten to the level of complete trust, and we haven't got the answers from them that would actually be the answers to the situation. I find that with my negotiations up with the traditional owners I've had to spend nearly 14 months getting to know people, and now we're starting to talk.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: And by racism do you mean racism from the white kids? Or are they scared of the white kids?

Ms CAMERON: Heather and I had a situation about three or four years ago with an Aboriginal teacher – a qualified Aboriginal teacher, who was qualified under a scheme that wasn't as rigorous I guess as the normal teaching program. We had a situation where this person couldn't continue as a teacher, because she was not able to teach the students in Reception what they needed to know. And yet she had a qualification that said she was a teacher.

Ms CURTIS: She couldn't handle the job.

COMMISSIONER JONES: She was Aboriginal?

Ms CAMERON: She is Aboriginal, yes. So she's now working in the town in Aboriginal Health in a clerical type position.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Do you get any non-Aboriginal teachers who've done the Aboriginal studies course come in here to schools with Aboriginals?

Ms CAMERON: I have two people. I have an Aboriginal Co-ordinator and a teacher, an AET. Neither are Aboriginal. One of them has a very strong commitment and relationship with the Aboriginal community, which is fantastic. Both in fact. You'll say something and they'll go 'Oh I'll go and see Bob and Mary' or whatever, and they'll come back and there's no conversation, they'll just say 'It's fixed'. So they have that relationship that's been built up over many years of trust and respect and understanding, and that is just a wonderful asset to our school. Because it's a bit like putting your foot in it. For me coming into the town I was really conscious of not wanting to upset people, but not necessarily knowing all the right things to do. But they've been really helpful with me too, in the sense of saying, 'You're doing it wrong', even though I try.

COMMISSIONER JONES: I shouldn't reminisce, but I will. I went down to the Western Teachers College as it was then, when the Aboriginal Studies course started, and praised the ATSI students – there were a dozen of them – and told them how wonderful they were, taking their studies, and going to help Aboriginals in the community. Not one of them took up an Aboriginal school appointment.

Ms CAMERON: And Alby that's been the same, when last year I was looking for Aboriginal graduates to come into this area, when I was working in Adelaide and we couldn't fit any of them in, or their choices were not to come to schools in the Eyre District or any other country district in fact. They wanted to teach at Adelaide High or Brighton High. So one could argue that perhaps that's what they want to do, but they're not coming back in with their people.

Karen: I do have an Aboriginal teacher at school, who's been there six months at least, and is probably the most qualified teacher on the staff. She's undertaking her masters.

Mr COCKS: From my experience Chris, the solution to the issue is the trust relationships. The more my relationships develop, the more I'm finding out that we don't spend the time appropriately. We're not resourced to have the time to do it. And consequently I don't believe in the current model, or models, that we're going to achieve anything. Because the Aboriginal culture, and those people, do require us to develop those relationships. And like most people, they can see straight away whether you're sincere or not. And you've got to demonstrate your sincerity over time, because they've had some terrible experiences, and you've got to build that trust. And therefore you've got to have continuity – which we don't have, and you've got to have the resources, and you've got to have people that want to do it as well. Want to learn. Because if you don't know, you don't know until you know it. And they let you know things gradually when they trust, for example.

[Staff recruitment]

COMMISSIONER JONES: The Catholic Education Office have sent somebody to South Africa to recruit teachers, and they've got three very good teachers for Whyalla. Why don't you put it to the CEO to send you to South Africa or somewhere else to recruit teachers who'll come ...

Ms CAMERON: We have to get much cleverer about recruiting in the sense of we've got to pay the money to get the outcome.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Well one thing I was very pleased to hear, I don't know if others noted it yesterday, when the isolated teacher group, the parent group there were speaking – one thing they did say was 'Our teachers are excellent!'. Which we've always said in South Australia – they have been said to be the best in the world, South Australian teachers. Now I'm going backward.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: You're probably biased.

COMMISSIONER JONES: I think they still are.

Mr COCKS: Well Bill Clarke from England, who's Tony Blair's adviser, was here recently, and I met him in Adelaide at Flinders University where he was a guest of the Lifelong Learning Centre. Part of why he was here was to talk to political leaders as well, but one of his other duties was to try and recruit leaders from our system because he believes that they believe they're the best, and he was offering *extremely* large contracts for that to happen.

Ms CAMERON: It did include the south of London though, didn't it?

Mr COCKS: East End of London. But there was an issue that they're right. The teachers that we do get are excellent. We just want more of them.

[Staff incentives]

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: The question of incentives is a difficult one, and I constantly hear different things about what sort of incentives people want. Is it just a matter of salary, or is it more than that?

Mr COCKS: It is that. Some people say it's not, but in most cases it is salary to a degree because you want to maintain a certain standard of living and extra cost structures. But there are also other issues because you haven't got the infrastructure or services to support if they want other compensations. They might need a trip back to Adelaide paid for. They might want to put their children up at St Anne's College when they've finished Year 12 here or something like that, and want subsidies to do that because otherwise they all go. Because it's a cost thing – to all go to Adelaide because it's cheaper for that service to be provided to their kids.

And other things like cars, transport, other quality of life issues. But each teacher I talk to has got a slightly different view depending on their circumstances. So that's why I mentioned ...

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: So you need to have negotiation, and you haven't got the capacity or the authority to do that at the moment? To say here's a bundle of money, and find the most attractive way of dealing with that money?

Ms CURTIS: Another example of that is the Wudinna example, where the principal was applying for the job, and he took his family over to Wudinna to have a look at the place and they said 'Well this is the house you'd be living in'. The wife took one look and said 'Well that's the end of that job, we're not coming here.'

It has improved though. When I first came to Port Lincoln, I wasn't allowed access to teacher housing because I was female and my husband wasn't a teacher. So I lived in a caravan down the caravan park for two years. Whereas that has changed a little bit. That was back in the '70s. Well you could afford a caravan - in the caravan park.

[School fees]

COMMISSIONER JONES: Perhaps I shouldn't ask you, but what's your attitude to the school fees being written into the Act, the Education Act?

Mr COCKS: Well the answer is the schools need to have resources, financial resources and if they're adequately resourced from the Government purse well that's good. If not, then they need to get it from somewhere else and it has to be from those that are using the service at the present time. My opinion would be that it would be better coming elsewhere, but if it's not it still has to come from somewhere. And you either get another tax put in place and everyone pays for it, or you get the user to pay for it to some degree.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Yes well I noticed Thailand is sticking to the United Nations Charter – they're introducing nine years of free and compulsory education. And we are in a sense going back from it.

Ms CAMERON: It certainly is better embedded in legislation than the mish mash we've had in the last few years. That's been terrible.

Ms CURTIS: Because parents who pay see parents who don't, and see that there's no consequences, and get very disgruntled that they are actually paying double. They see that they are paying through their taxes once and then paying again. Because they pay their school fees and other people don't. So you've got a very disgruntled parent community at times.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Is there any friction in the schools caused by that?

Ms CAMERON: Sometimes when you're actually asking parents for the fees. And we'll wear that – not the other parents, we wear that. Probably minimal.

COMMISSIONER JONES: What about between the children. Do they bully one another?

Ms CAMERON: No.

Karen: One of the issues for us as principals is that if we're going to show some kind of social justice and equity in education then the school card level should be the same as the primary school levels for school fees or the secondary levels for school fees, because it's not costing us any differently to educate one child as compared to another child. So it would be a lot less friction if the government would recognise that factor and factor it into their budgeting, but apparently they don't do that and they're saying to schools 'Yes you can pursue those fee-paying parents through the debt collector, but you can't pursue parents who are eligible for school card'. So that does cause friction amongst parents.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Has any representation been made about that?

Ms CAMERON: Letters and phone calls.

COMMISSIONER JONES: That would seem very fair to me – that you're not allowed to charge any fee above the school card fee.

Ms CAMERON: Yes, but what happens is we can't run our schools on that. See at the moment the Government is saying we can charge in a primary school \$154 per student for school fees. My school council has made the decision that they will charge \$150 and that includes things like performances and excursions so that we don't have money being asked for all year. What happens is I get \$110 I think it is from the Government for school card paying students, so we're asking for \$40 from those school card families per student to cover the gap. Now a lot of our school card families just won't even look at paying that because they know we cannot take them any further. We cannot get that \$40. So once again, the people who are paying school fees are subsidising those who don't – even though they're school card students.

Karen: And the Department recognise that because in the new partnerships agreement they're saying they will pay the difference between the school card figure and the school fee figure. Now if they can do that for one group of schools, why can't it have been implemented ages ago to make it fair and equitable?

[Flexible timetable]

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: We've got the next person waiting. Just one last question about the professional training times 4-6pm and the rest of it. The issue that's come up in my mind constantly is trying to deal with the problems that country people face by having much greater flexibility in teaching times and things. It seems from most parts of the country that country districts have absolutely no flexibility, that you start school within this range, and you finish within this range. In some parts of Australia - within Aboriginal communities for example - it'd make much more sense to have an entirely different school year to reflect ceremonial times. And they're saying in these schools that students disappear for country business during the normal school year so we can't teach them enough. Is it possible to actually look here even, to say that you'll teach an hour extra every day and have four weeks for professional development with the time that you have made up by the hour extra teaching a day or something. Do you have that degree of flexibility?

Ms CURTIS: No. Because the training and development issue came up. To shorten the school year we would have a week at the end of the year where staff would be involved in training and development. Well they do; they are able to have that week off. Now our parents very strongly told the Department that 'This is not a good time for us to have a week off with our children, because we are harvesting', but that was never taken into account.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: But you couldn't have the week off at a different time in the year.

Ms CAMERON: No. They wouldn't let us. Why didn't we have three weeks in the middle of the year. No - you're right.

Mr COCKS: Those models, Chris, have been talked about and are currently being talked about, but the flexibility isn't there at the moment. And many of our far west schools, particularly the Aboriginal schools, would change the way they've structured their days and teaching year, but they can't do that at the present time.

Ms CURTIS: I taught in the United States for a year, in Colorado, and in their summer break we had three months holiday during summer break, but we taught an hour longer every school day. So what that did was it meant that children didn't have to come to school when the heat was at its worst. And I know that sometimes when the heat - in Lincoln we're not as bad as say up in Wudinna and Ceduna of course -but sometimes we're just starting school when the heatwaves hit. It would make more sense on Eyre Peninsula for us to alter our school years so that there wasn't schooling during the heat of summer - especially the schools where we don't have air-conditioning.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Well Geoff Spring I heard, well a few weeks ago now, and he's going to book tourist centres for you in the Christmas holidays, you can take your families with you, and you'll have professional development during that time.

Ms CAMERON: I think our school is in a very good position to start at eight and finish at eight, from the point of view of the resources we have we can look at community involvement as well, but actually providing opportunities for kids to extend the use of the day. But we're restricted with school buses.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Yeah, well I mean that becomes something that has to be negotiated down as well.

Ms CAMERON: Yeah. We'd have to be declared as an adult re-entry school, in order to attract the staffing to be able to provide the eight 'till eight.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Yeah. But that kind of flexibility seems to me to be increasingly important to actually enable you to do what you want to do.

Ms CAMERON: Some of my staff would love to start at 11am.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Thank you very much, and thanks for your time and your ideas.

Ms CAMERON: I'll see you a bit later, I'm coming back with some of my students.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Great OK. Thanks Cathy. Good. Thanks Rod. Catherine do you want to come over and you can get the mike that way?

Sister Catherine MEAD: No worries. Thank you, how are you?

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Welcome. Good thanks, how are you going? Alby Jones, and I'm Chris Sidoti.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Are you from the Catholic school?

Sister MEAD: St Joseph's, yes. We might have to move down the other end of town I think. Could be an interesting exercise, couldn't it.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Well Catherine do you want to just launch off as we did before, and then we'll have some discussion after you've made your comments.

Sister MEAD: I was thinking when I was listening, I was chatting with some students yesterday in preparation because I'm coming down this afternoon. One young lad who has a parent up at Roxby and spends a bit of time there, when I was talking about some of the issues that might come up he said 'Port Lincoln – the country? Port Lincoln's not country'.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: This is the big smoke.

[St Joseph's student body and staff complement]

Sister MEAD: It's an interesting place to live. But St Joseph's, with enrolment currently of about 714 students ... We have a co-ed boarding school that accommodates 46 students, and currently we have 40 in residence. Just to give you a bit of an idea of clientele, we would have about 146 students on school card, registered with school card. We would have 15 students who receive Commonwealth funding for special needs support.

COMMISSIONER JONES: That's mainly Aboriginal is it?

Sister MEAD: No. We've probably got 78 students in all who receive additional support that we provide, but 15 of these are funded. We would have 16 students requiring language assistance. Currently we've got 4 Aboriginal students enrolled, who have registered themselves as Aboriginal. We have another 3 who don't name themselves as Aboriginal.

Staffwise – 50 teaching staff. We employ 70 people in total. 50 teaching staff, and we have quite a group of student support workers in the classrooms with teachers. We have an AEW worker who is funded part-time by the Catholic Education Office, but we tend to call her a student support worker, so she works in classes like the other student support workers, because we don't have the number of Aboriginal students to warrant her working on individually. And that was probably a proactive measure that we took on a few years ago to try and attract some more Aboriginal students to our school. I guess the fee paying element of the school tends to – it hasn't been a traditional thing I guess for Aboriginal students to come to our school. So that was one way of having a visible presence in the school. We probably haven't seen a huge increase although we have had that range from Aboriginal students from probably about 6-12. I think the fact that she's in the classroom with our own students is something for our own white students as well; it's something we're trying to do as a proactive measure. So that's a little bit about the school, to give you the context.

[Student retention; senior curriculum; VET]

I thought I'd just speak a little bit about the retention rates. We currently have 50 students enrolled in Year 12. We would have seen, be seeing, an increase in students staying at school, and I guess the change ...

COMMISSIONER JONES: Could you tell me how many were in the first year at the secondary?

Sister MEAD: Who started at Year 8? This is a guess, but I think there would have been about 60 students, so we've got 50 left. We've currently got 80 – one of our biggest groups is about 80 Year 10s, and I'd expect we'd end up with a group of about 60. In having students a lot older - they're mostly 18 in Year 12, which is quite a challenge for the school - we have had to diversify our curriculum. I think that in the past we've had very good processes for providing students with tertiary entrance scores. We've probably diversified a lot more to provide vocational education modules, finishing pathways. We've also conducted a community studies course that is a hybrid course between school and TAFE that several of our students from the last two years have – small groups of students, but it's a much more flexible timetable where they will do some modules here at TAFE and then they'll come back and do some units at school. That has meant we've had to as a school system structure... It has very much

challenged us in providing a much more flexible timetable with students coming and going which probably has been something in the last few years that we're starting to ...

COMMISSIONER JONES: Do you have to pay for the courses here or not?

[Fees]

Sister MEAD: The students' parents pay so much - the fees to us and then so much to participate in the courses here. So an additional cost to the parents. So that would be broadening our curriculum. So for 50 students in the upper senior years, we provide quite a diversity.

[Students with special needs; speech pathology]

I guess one of the main issues, and it was picked up before, was the support to teachers and to parents pertaining to the provision of education to students with special needs. As I said earlier we have 15 students who are identified as receiving government funding for so many hours of support. In addition, we have identified probably 78 students in total that we are providing support for.

The school board puts money aside for that, and that's something that we have quite a priority for. In terms of outside assistance – Port Lincoln Health Service has been valuable in the assistance that it provides and has probably been stretched beyond its capacity, resulting in reduced services to children in schools and I'll particularly mention there speech pathology. The speech pathologist in town has done a great job in coming into the school to assess students with possible language disorders, to conduct ongoing reviews of students with language difficulties, providing advice for teachers and support staff to be able to use in the classroom. During the last year, there have been five speech pathologists filling one or two positions in the Port Lincoln Health Service, so we've seen them spasmodically. When they do come along, the service has been excellent. Obviously in that time the service to the student is disrupted, which is both frustrating for the teacher, for the child, and for the parents.

I guess one little situation scenario – we have one little child, he's six years old, he's completed six terms of Reception, came to school diagnosed with a speech and language disorder and speech difficulty, he had very much delayed speech, hasn't started talking until he got to kindy. We were seeing a therapist coming to the school regularly for a while and then for some time, as I said in the last 12 months when things have been fairly spasmodic, he wasn't receiving so much support. The difficulty for the teacher in the classroom is that he's now with a group of 28 students – we've just had a new intake of Reception students. Every time the class increases he tends to withdraw back into himself and lose his confidence and self esteem and then we're having to start again. That would be an individual situation where the family have no access really to private means of speech pathology. If they don't get it through the Health Service, they don't get it.

In Lincoln every three months or so the Kingsley Fairbridge Child Development Unit meets. We found that to be a most helpful way of being able to review a student with special needs, their concerns. Sometimes when you get to that meeting you realise that perhaps the break in services is impacting on the child.

[Psychological support]

Another area of support that I know is very much lacking in the community is the psychological or psychiatric assistance. There's little or no choice for parents. The waiting list for CAMHS (Community Adolescent Mental Health Service) - who do an excellent job again - but the waiting list is very long. Following up, we often have a psychologist if we need to assess a student come over from Adelaide. The CEO will support us with that, but the follow-up from that is very difficult. So we'll see them once, but there's no ongoing support. I currently have a student who would be very much at risk as a 15 year old young man. He's very bright in particular areas. We suspect - although we don't want to suspect because we don't like to categorise students - he seems to have a lot of characteristics that would suggest autism. We've been talking to the family about trying to get him to Adelaide to be assessed, and the family are probably at a situation there where they're starting to say we need support and starting to look at the situation. It means a trip to Adelaide. It's much more difficult to assess a teenage child. They usually come out to the school, do the visitation at the school, do the assessment without the young gentleman knowing that they're actually assessing him. They won't come to the country, so now it's up to the parents, which means that the 15 year old who's probably in a difficult situation relationally, to have to talk to him about trying to get to the city. But the waiting list again is up to about November before they see him. In the meantime he's missing substantial amounts of school - away for a week when he withdraws. He's seen a psychiatrist two weeks ago [and] he won't see the psychiatrist for another month. In the meantime the family don't have any support to and neither do we at this stage and we're at loggerheads as to what to do with him to try and get him to come to school.

I guess another situation would be - and this is when the frustration perhaps for teaching staff when they put in a lot of hours into a child who's at risk - a young girl who arrived at St Joseph's in Year 8. She actually had a psychological assessment much earlier but we had another assessment that indicated she had a mild intellectual disability. In terms of trying to get counselling for her, we don't have a counsellor at school but tend to do that ourselves as a leadership team. But when it gets to needing professional assistance there really isn't much in Port Lincoln - the West Coast Youth Services we access. This young lady was in touch with three counsellors over a period of 12-18 months. And just starting to develop the relationship with the first one and who was going to work with teachers to work on her social skills program. She left, the next counsellor came in, resigned after a short period of time and by the time we got to the third one the young lady had lost interest in trying to develop a relationship and has since left school. We felt like we didn't progress very far with her. She's now in the care of her parents. Just after leaving St Joseph's she ended up in the psychiatric wing of the Women and Children's Hospital. I guess they're the sad stories of not being able to intervene.

So the challenges for us as a school community, we are putting a lot of emphasis on trying to make a lot of our support very much mainstream. So we have teachers going into most classes - particularly where there's students with special needs or those that have learning difficulties and trying with teenagers not to take them out of the classroom but to support them within the inclusive classroom curriculum. As I said that's a priority that the school board has made for our school.

[Tertiary education]

The next area would be access to tertiary education at St Joseph's. On average there would be 60-70% of school leavers applying for further study in a tertiary institution. I

think last year we had something like 98% of our students who applied were accepted. So it's a high rate, I would say, for a country area. What we would love to do, I think we were saying yesterday, would be to do some research on where they actually end up, and how many of them actually pursue their course. Because while they leave us having gained entry, the stories after that vary.

If I can just relate a story I heard about last year, and I guess this is unique and you might have heard about it in the media. One of our students achieved 20/20 for 5/5 subjects that she studied in Year 12. She had applied for medicine at Adelaide University, was unsuccessful in passing the UMAT test, which the process now is the UMAT test, the interview, and then the results. She didn't get past the UMAT test and there's been some debate about whether that's the best way – she didn't get an interview and yet she got 5 20/20.

COMMISSIONER JONES: She passed the academic test, did she?

Sister MEAD: Oh yes, they do a UMAT test which is I understand an ethics kind of aptitude test. She didn't get past that to get an interview. The ethics questions probably were the ones that threw her. She's 16 so she hadn't quite turned 17 at the time she did the test, so she's a very young Year 12, very mature and very capable and able. She probably went down the line with some of the ethics questions of fairly straight down the line rather than expanding her thinking, but for a 16 year old living in the country to – as her father said 'We don't chat about ethics around the table at teatime.' – they have fairly good conversations but that's not one of the things they talk about. So I think it was simply experience. She then got 5 20/20s. She had applied to Melbourne University once she missed out on the UMAT test. She's now travelling in the semester breaks from Lincoln to Melbourne – so she catches a bus from Port Lincoln, arrives in Adelaide, catches the Overland (train) and gets back to Melbourne to continue her studies. For the family I guess it's been difficult in terms of they've been supporting another son in Adelaide through tertiary studies. They were hoping to put them both in a house and it would have been cheaper for them.

COMMISSIONER JONES: And she's doing medicine in Melbourne?

Sister MEAD: She's doing Medicine in Melbourne. It just seems that we're crying out for doctors in the country, and she's bright and she was doing a lot of voluntary work before she left. I guess that's a fairly unique situation, but it just says something about what has now become – she's doing very well in Melbourne - for the family a very costly exercise. They'll have their third child in tertiary education in another 18 months or so, so they're hoping I think that they might end up somewhere else.

The first situation in that sense would be exceptional, but if we're looking at a student from the country moving to Adelaide to live in a tertiary institution they're looking at around about \$10,000 easily for the year. We have found, without doing any research but just from being able to track students, that most who stay in a tertiary institution are more likely to survive tertiary studies than those who go into flats straight away. There would be, probably out of last year's group, four students who have returned home – either because they couldn't hack the city life, couldn't adjust to the impersonal nature of tertiary life, I guess. Others have found that they didn't like the course that they have chosen to do, and that's been a bit of an issue for us at school in trying to get them to

have the experience of careers or courses that they might like to do. We actually conduct a transition trip for students at the close of Year 11 so that they can go to the city, visit institutions. They are unable to access the open days, because they're normally held around about August, and the cost of that's not possible for a day. We're certainly developing our vocational counselling so that they've got a bit of an idea, but I think that there's some of that insular thinking that happens that doesn't allow them to explore greater possibilities.

There's also the emotional, social difficulties of living away from family support. It's not the sort of place you can come home on the weekend very easily with transport costs. For some families that's quite a huge financial cost amongst others. To send their children to the city they're looking at not getting any assistance if they've got a combined income of over \$35,000. For those who've got \$36-40,000 it ends up being a costly experience for them.

[Boarding]

Our boarding school – I guess that's something that has certainly been a tradition for the Sisters of St Joseph in the country areas. We traditionally had girls in our boarding house, but 7 years ago we invited the boys to come and live. We had a lot of families who had sisters in the boarding house and brothers in private board, and families were asking for boarding because having them all together was much better than seeking private board.

Our fees are reasonable as much as they can be, but it does cost a family \$5,000-\$6,000 to board for the year. Our tuition fees are about \$1,000 and \$1,200 for a Year 12 student.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Do you take non-Catholics into it?

Sister MEAD: Yes, we would have a proportion of maybe 50% Catholic and 50% other denominations. In the school we probably have a 60% Catholic and 40% other denominations. So, for a family with three students it's quite costly. I think when I was looking today there are probably about 10 out of the current 40 whose families are receiving some sort of government assistance for them to be living away from home – Youth Allowance or Assistance for Isolated Children.

I guess for parents it's ... Our numbers in the boarding house vary, but at the moment for next year on paper it looks to be full. Which is good for us, and it makes it easy to run the house. When it's under – six under makes a big difference, and traditionally the Sisters had run it, so costs were kept a little low. We're not living in the house now, so we're having to pay full wages. So costs have gone up for families. Depending on the seasons, sometimes people will keep them back until the last two years of schooling, Year 11 and 12.

We don't give people reduction on boarding fees. We do on tuition fees. So if they're in a situation they have a means of applying for tuition fee reduction for but for boarding schools we haven't done that. I guess it's not possible for us to run it any cheaper than what we're doing at the moment.

For us I guess there's the challenge to make sure that our boarding school parents have access to decision-making in the school community. So we have a boarding house school parent on our school board as representing country interest, and we try to have a meeting once a year up in a country area just to open it up to country parents.

[Professional development]

The other area would be professional development for staff. I guess we're not that much different from the Department in that sense that travel costs, TRT costs while they're away. I think on top of that would also be the issue of keeping staff very much interested in their job and up to date with their job. I think vocational education and training has demanded a lot more out of teachers, and information technology has certainly caused us to look at means and ways of making sure that our staff are ...

COMMISSIONER JONES: And are staff going to the conference, the Australian College of Education conference on it?

Sister MEAD: No. So we would have the same situation – the Catholic Ed. office runs lots of Professional Development sessions from 4-6 at night, and we wouldn't access those so much. But there's others that we would send for day conferences, and we try to make sure that each staff member has two days out a year at something – either, if there is something offered here on the Peninsula, or in Adelaide.

[Video-conferencing for professional development]

Perhaps one of the most exciting things that has happened for us in the last two weeks has been that we have purchased through CAPS funding – Country Area Program Funding, which we've only just been receiving in the last two years. We've put that money, in addition to some school board money, to purchase some video-conferencing material and the Catholic Ed. Office who has purchased that as well, and many of the country schools [have also]. So already, last week we had an information technology managers meeting that normally our people wouldn't go to because it was only three hours in the afternoon – we linked in by video link conference. We had three staff members attending on our site, and they found that a most valuable experience, and I think that we've got a lot of hope for how we can use that. One of the young teachers who participated in that conference said that it was just fantastic being able to speak with other teachers, share with other teachers working in Catholic schools in similar situations. While they were on-line they broke the meeting and they had their chat with the staff of Whyalla. So there's great possibilities there for a lot more of our staff being able to continue their professional development that way – being able to get the CEO on-line. So I think that's revolutionary in that we'll break down some of the isolation that comes with being so far away. Hopefully that will reduce some of our P&D budget too, because we do try to fly people backwards and forwards, and that's very costly.

We do have quite a few of our staff continuing further study – either externally, about 4-5 staff members study externally, which I think is a very good thing, at cost to themselves. They do receive some funding from the Catholic Education Office.

COMMISSIONER JONES: When I first knew you, you were all religious teachers. And what's the position now?

Sister MEAD: Only two of us. Out of a staff of 70.

COMMISSIONER JONES: It's changed hasn't it.

[Extra curricula opportunities]

Sister MEAD: It certainly has. So that's where we are with staff studying. I guess the other areas mentioned was the cultural exchanges and that's ongoing, trying to get students to Adelaide to experience life beyond Port Lincoln, to come to an understanding of the culture. Just recently a Year 12 class were looking to try and get to Adelaide to see 'Cloudstreet' which was an Australian play showing at the Festival Theatre. More English teachers are looking at it at the moment, but apart from flying and people paying - each student paying \$200 - that's probably out of their league.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: It's a brilliant play.

Sister MEAD: That's right. So those things happen all the time. Our students would travel for sporting events once a year to Adelaide to join Catholic schools in athletics. We have a group of students who participate in Port Lincoln Council Moroto exchange to Japan, and we currently have a delegation visiting the school today, so there is that opportunity which has been a fantastic cultural exchange. We have some AFS Thai students who reside in school for two weeks each year for language classes. So I guess that's bringing some other culture into the school, which is important.

[Staff recruitment]

Teacher shortage. It probably hasn't hit us yet, but certainly in the area of languages a few years ago, and the amount of money we spent on advertising nationally to find a French teacher. We're probably in a situation of feast or famine - we're in a very good situation at the moment where a couple of people arrived in town and have been able to take French, and we also have several teachers who have done Japanese courses in their continuing studies. So we're hoping that our language curriculum has been set for a couple of years. But I think that's the area, languages, technology, would be perhaps the areas where the shortage [will come].

COMMISSIONER JONES,: Your problems with disabled children is I'm sure nationwide, and I'm sure Commissioner Sidoti will see that it's brought to the appropriate authorities to see what they can do about it. And your other problems of transport and isolation seem to be common as well. I've got a great feeling for your school, because when I lived for a short time in Port Lincoln my elder daughter did music at your school, and that was before the Schools Commission put money into it, and I also visited later on, after the Commission put money into it, and there was a wide difference.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Catherine you say you've got no recruitment problems except for language and technology. Do you mainly recruit locally or are you actually bringing teachers in?

Sister MEAD: We bring teachers in. We probably bring in five teachers a year on average, but also we're fairly established - I think people have decided this is going to be where they're going to ... I guess if I looked at the staff there is a group of people that have been there perhaps for 20-25 years who are quite settled, so it's established in

that sense. When I compare it with my colleagues in Whyalla and Port Augusta, it's established. We don't have anything like the high turnover of teachers.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Well if you've got 70 staff, or 50 teachers and you're bringing in 5 a year, that's only a 10% turnover rate. That's pretty good.

Sister MEAD: As I say, specialist areas will probably be the areas we look at first. It can vary. Sometimes you can get a rate of an exodus and get 10, 12 teachers leaving in one hit. But we haven't had that in a while, so I imagine it's going to be fairly stable perhaps until people reach retirement age, then they might start all over again.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: You mention the small number of Aboriginal students that you've got, and also the large number of non-Catholic students that you've got. Why do you think that there's such a large number of non-Catholic students?

Sister MEAD: It's very difficult. We're very full at the moment, particularly in our primary school. We've just finished receptions for next year and there would have been a lot of applications that were on the waiting list and we've had families coming to us that wanted to ... Our criteria is to cater for Catholic families, Catholic students of the Parish to begin with, and, in terms of the boys' school, of the Peninsula. Our next criteria goes to siblings of those who are in the school if they are not Catholic and in other denominations. So I guess we're the only other alternative to the Department. It's a hard one really, in demanding why people are saying they want to come. The stories vary – some are looking for a faith education, most are looking for a faith education. People will name it in different ways. They'll perhaps say things like discipline, values I guess. I've got great respect for my colleagues in the Department who are now more and more being able to name those values. I always say to parents we've been fortunate enough to have been able to say 'this is what it is – do you want to be a part of this?'. I keep suggesting when parents come and I haven't got any more room that perhaps they might like to go and start an alternative school. But I guess because people are looking – that would be why I imagine a nation-wide movement perhaps. There would be perhaps times where we lose students the other way too. We would lose some students to Adelaide, to boarding school perhaps after Year 8 and 9. They go off and do their Year 11 and 12. Not a lot, but again perhaps it might be 5 students a year if that. Some students will go to the high school at Year 11 and 12 for subject offerings that we're offering are not enough, so we've had that on occasions. We don't have a music program, which is a great sorrow to us, in the secondary school and some of our students will go over and connect with the high schools though – they'll become part of the band, or they'll do Year 11 and 12 music. We have had some reverse arrangements to do with languages in the past. So I would put it down to people saying it's a faith education when they come for interviews.

COMMISSIONER JONES: How many ancillary staff have you got?

Sister MEAD: About 15-20.

COMMISSIONER JONES: I visited before Schools Commission money, I visited a school just out of Sydney. Same size as your school, it was all boys and the principal was a Brother, and I said to him 'What ancillary staff have you got to help you with running this school?'. He said 'I'm it'. So you can see how things have changed.

Sister MEAD: That's right. And St Joseph's would have gone through a huge transition, probably in the last ... Fifteen years ago there would have been 8 Sisters in residence. So that's had quite an impact on the school community.

COMMISSIONER JONES: I hope Commissioner Sidoti can arrange something similar for Schools Commission.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Thanks very much.

Sister MEAD: Thank you.

Mr MILLER: My name's Harry Miller. I work with the Port Lincoln Aboriginal Community Council. I've for the last 5 years been working in the area of community development, managing the Community Development Employment Program looking at finding real job opportunities for Aboriginal people in town. I'm Council Member for the Wangkawilurrara Regional Council, based through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, and I also support the community as a member of the SATAC (South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre) Committee for South Australia on their Aboriginal Education and Training Committee.

Mr COOTE: I'm Howard Coote, I'm employed by the Community Council as the Chief Executive Officer. My previous history was in retail business in the town here, and prior to that banking and finance. I just came along with Harry this morning.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Thank you. Off you go Harry.

[Aboriginal community-school relationship]

Mr MILLER: From an Aboriginal perspective in terms of Port Lincoln we're quite a lucky community, because I think through the employment and education, the CDEP [Community Development Employment Program], we've developed a relationship with most of our schools. With all education service providers, we've provided human resources available for 15 hours a week, and I think that's helped us to bridge some of the gaps between education institutes or sites as they're known now, to full community awareness about what's going on with each of those schools.

[Aboriginal early childhood]

I'll try to stem from early childhood right through. We've had an early childhood program based in Port Lincoln for over 20 years. That's more aimed at the pre-school positioning of our children. There's pre-school and allowing our children to enter into other kindergartens in the town from age 4, so using that as a stepping stone we've had virtual control of our children's needs over that early stage years. We're having some difficulties at this stage due mainly to most of the changes that are occurring. Some of the things – the funding arrangements for the early childhood have sort of been going up and down and are different depending on who's responsible. For the last three years, I think we've received some funds from DEETYA through the Indigenous Children's Education program. And that program indicates that there must be a dollar for dollar figure from the state body to continue on with that service. At this stage the Centre doesn't have that relationship with the state body, although we're trying to work in with state bodies in the next year or so, in order to have that rectified. But it certainly does

need some of the assistance that it can provide, in that the state can take some responsibilities, particularly in the area of teacher recruitment - because as I understand, with the ICE funds it limits the opportunity to have quality teachers, as teachers will receive more money staying at schools than they would receive working in our children's centre.

There is an issue between the childhood services and the early childhood and the teaching requirements, because it's sort of like a joint arrangement, and there are some political issues now about the closure of that centre. Our Committee certainly doesn't want the centre closed for any purposes, but if we are to lose any element of it we would certainly give up the early childhood rather than process, rather than [tape transition].

[Aboriginal student retention]

We have quite a successful retention rate, but those statistics can become useable for Departmental values rather than Community values, in regards to our kids are retained, but our educational levels are not increasing. And the educational outcomes of our kids are not increasing as Sister Catherine would be aware in terms of the retentions she indicated earlier to you about the Aboriginal people. Sarah Davies was last year I believe ...

Sister MEAD: Yes, she's studying nursing?

Mr MILLER: Sarah Davies went through, because of the approach that the area schools and the town schools have been taking in regards to educational outcomes, that some of our families have elected to go to through the Catholic method in terms of education, and we've had success there with one of our ladies receiving her Year 12 certificate and entering into higher education in regards to nursing.

[Financial support for students]

At the start of the year we had 12 people identified as retaining for Year 12 opportunities, but we lost those. We're into the second term and we've only got 3 Year 12 students remaining. The community put in a strategy to support those young people in regards to working through our CDEP program, and receiving some sort of monetary assistance to retain them so that as an outcome for our community we could increase the number of SACE certificates, and increase the number of employment opportunities that our young people would have. But because of differences between the eligibility criteria of Abstudy related to supporting young 16 year olds in the education system the reality factor is that once the elimination of that financial assistance was provided, each of those children came to us, and requested to come onto our program to work 15 hours a week to gain the assistance that we were willing to give them as a community. That assistance was still in the negotiated process where we'd use the funds to support school fees and the additional for school fees, particularly to help young people at that age to understand what it is to commit themselves to work ethic responsibilities, society responsibilities, community development processes, so that they could have some financial independence from their parents, who will only receive the basic CDEP allowance now - which is \$163.38 per week. So it's not like there's a huge amount of money within the family structure to support those children, and particularly families that have five people attending high school or any one school at one time. Those fees are needed there.

[Cross-cultural training]

We have some concerns with the cross-cultural training. There was an element there for a couple of years that became quite huge that cross-cultural would be a necessity for all government bodies and people decided to take it on. But there wasn't a continuity of cross-cultural training and I think that also needs to be addressed from the recruitment process of teachers coming out of universities.

[Employment opportunities]

Some of the concerns in a general sense: as I said my responsibility is to the ATSIC regional council, and my portfolio role is education and training. It seems that in our region at least there seems to be a real negative reputation towards the support of children's futures. That's the scenario that was given to me the other day from Ceduna, and here in Port Lincoln as well. We don't have any of our young people working in banks, and as a matter of career pathways they're not working in banks, they're not working in retail, and we can realise why they're not retail, because retail here is most probably family business, family orientated, so the family would most probably get personal. But having our young people go through ... there is an expectation of ... well that's all right, we'll try to get our kids to go through the education system so they can work themselves. From our perspective, we're trying to get them through a process where they can own the shop, rather than to work in the shop. So the [difference in] expectations between our families and the schools and school teachers is something that we have to work on.

[Teaching staff in Aboriginal communities]

In some of our communities – Yalata and Koonibba and the more remote areas - the tendency is always to have first year students in those educational sites, rather than have quality teachers that can provide a quality service to the kids. It's quite a daunting task for anybody to – even for me when I travel to Hope Valley - to understand the differences between my community and the community of Yalata and Hope Valley and what they have to adhere to.

[Aboriginal student support]

We're very much interested in supporting our children in whatever way we can to go through high achievements. There are some strategies put in place for accommodation in Adelaide, so that we can have some accommodation where our children that are not only sports achievers, but to help them with their career pathways and their academic achievements. To have a place where they can be supported and looked after, so that those three criteria can be nurtured, to help those individuals – not necessarily through families or communities. The issue of country versus city versus country again it's like – recently you might have read in some of the media about our music band here that's made success with ...

[Impacts of isolation and distance]

Mr COOTE: The Young Achievers Awards – the band called the Minya Mob, whose efforts have got as far as Los Angeles with the Ultimate Award, I don't know what the rest of it is, but they won that through the work that they've done through the high school with their music. They've gone quite some way. But as Harry was saying, some of the problems they have is trying to get some exposure to some of these people that are achieving these types of things. You know, we'll get a request from someone from the Norwood Town Hall, the Norwood Council will want our group to come down –

which is very fine if you live around the corner, you can sort of go and show your wares. He was talking at least \$200 per child to transport them from here to go and actually show off what they can do. And I think Sister Catherine touched on the same thing. All schools face exactly the same problem. We're not just a 50 minute flight from the major capital city. We're \$200 from the capital, and that becomes an issue in itself.

[Aboriginal tertiary students]

I think Sister Catherine also mentioned the number of students that actually reached the stage to go on to tertiary education, that return. We had two students this year that returned and we had two students this year that started tertiary studies and both have returned basically because the income in those families is not enough to support those students whilst they're away. We know there are things like Abstudy. Now we introduce this system where we can support them by the CDEP program just to sort of make it part of their training. Unfortunately it was taken away from us, and both of those students now have deferred I think, or dropped out of their tertiary studies, which is a great shame. So we're faced with a huge challenge with that particular part – the distance we are from the universities.

[Career counselling for Aboriginal students]

The other thing that Harry touched on was the need for youth or an education / vocational type worker that we're desperately trying to establish ourselves, to be like the 'linkman' between students when they get to Year 9 and start to identify a career path that we can sort of help steer them so that they're on the right type of education. And after we're looking at setting up a sanctuary here, we want some of our students who are interested in that type of thing - in tourism - to select the right sort of subjects so they can enter into those sort of careers.

We're desperately trying to get our students to not go through the school system and spend a year or two on the street on the dole then get on to the CDEP program and stay on it forever. We're looking to do more than that, and it's a dollar thing to get that particular person and we just can't afford to employ that person in that area. And that becomes a problem for us.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Is that what anybody who visits the outback, well Koonibba and so on, nobody from the ...

Mr COOTE: No, because our groups mainly revolve around just Port Lincoln here, but within the education system and the Department there are people that particularly address Aboriginal education needs and our Senior Aboriginal Education Worker as well as a Senior Education and Resource Teacher basically they're regional development officer takes care of some of those things.

[DEETYA funding]

Mr MILLER: The funds that go through the DEETYA bracket are particularly, I believe, some of the hardest ones to access to support community educational processes. And I think the Tutorial, the VEGAS program, the ASSPA programs - and when we talk in isolation and when schools are developing and singling out their Aboriginal initiatives they also forget some of their state funds that are available in terms of CAP, behavioural management, literacy and numeracy – so there is some co-ordination within our functions that we could utilise funds from a community base to address what we

consider educational needs and educational support structures for our schools. I think some of the time it might be wonderful that we provide human resources through our CDEP program, but we also realise that, when we did some educational assessments in our schools, we had three people that couldn't read or write sitting in the school structures trying to provide reading and writing support to our kids. So it's like this isn't going to work. So we had to find some methods or some support so that we can do something about it. But the issues of DEETYA really concern us, because since ATSIC has eliminated most of its programs, and in hindsight continues to lose most of its programs and its support structures, and if we're heading down mainstream assistance then there has to be really some considered views and I suppose the eligibility criteria for these funds really have to be looking at the management of those funds, because continuously [tape malfunction]

[Aboriginal business development]

... accredited training to our people, both on the job through assessment process on the job and off the job. And we also want to use that accreditation and that process to support our middle and our elderly students so that we can either come and work through the community programs or in particular a lot more emphasis of going into private sectors and working within private sectors to understand what businesses can ... Our new walkway through the government here is to become more business orientated. But businesses here in terms of Aboriginal families is a new concept. There are not many Aboriginal families that would wake up in the morning and over a bowl of Kelloggs talk about what the cashflow of their business is going to be for this month, you know, in terms of Aboriginal families. So we have to find some other educational process where they become aware of what business is and what it takes to run a business. We can't really have support of three businesses through our process in an incubator and an action orientated fashion rather than theoretical process to develop three business opportunities here. We'd have to utilise individuals, but the classification and the eligibility issue under receiving funds from ATSIC indicate that it's community. So we have a real dilemma in trying to understand what is community. If community is supporting one individual, isn't that also community receiving that because that individual therefore supports additional people inside the community in terms of employment opportunities; supports the members of the initial families through business and economic growth – is then that not community that we are also supporting? So there's a real dilemma with the word community and provision of services to the community through some of those bases.

[TAFE]

COMMISSIONER JONES: Does TAFE provide some courses for your people?

Mr COOTE: Yes we have an Aboriginal Education program here, and most of its history here is based around pre-vocational education and the practical issues. Alby was mentioning before the issue of tourism. We own - how many hectares?

Mr MILLER: 600 hectares of forest. We're working with the local government here and the state government in a project called 'Arcon Air'. For us, outcomes that we're looking for is the utilisation of land would be beneficial – to not only just the Aboriginal people here, but to all people. It would be restored back to its natural environment. It does provide employment opportunities, and it does provide training and educational opportunities. So that again we can continue to work through our parents to educate

them to work with our kids to keep our kids at school. So there is that cycle of in-house education, of the need for education to grow. We've got a computer site which allows us to make a program on information technology. Trying to get other people to support the development of that process really stings us.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Howard, are there other things you want to say?

Mr COOTE: I was saying it a couple of times, and Harry was saying it about what we want to do with the development we want to do with the assets that we've got in the area are all geared towards assisting the whole community of Port Lincoln. To assist it you need to get the economy rich of the area and in turn provide employment opportunities and educational opportunities for our students and our people.

COMMISSIONER JONES: But the problem you've got must be much greater than any other communities such as Koonibba and so on.

Mr COOTE: We face a different sort of problem. We're urban if you like, we're not one thing or the other. And a lot of the time that causes problems in itself. Whereas the people in the real remote areas look to attract assistance from different types of programs, we're trying to get - and I guess they are too but the employment opportunities are not there - but we're trying to get our people into mainstream employment. That's the big push. Rectifying a lot of our problems is in education and employment and that's really the area we're going into. And as part of that process we want to develop what we've got here, and assist the education process and then in turn assist the employment program. It will rectify a hell of a lot of problems if we can rectify those.

Mr MILLER: I was sent an application about Koonibba having a school, and they wished to go from Reception to Year 7 and Year 7 to include Years 8 and 9 as a classroom of theirs. We should at least acknowledge to you that it's one of the initiatives that we're looking at.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Absolutely.

[Aboriginal community decision-making in schools]

Mr MILLER: The other two programs that are currently going on – the 'Partnerships 21' process - in regards to what the State Government's introducing into schools and school structures. There is a concern about Aboriginal participation and management in regards to what they call the SNAP schools – schools with significant numbers of Aboriginal population. We have two in the region – Ceduna and Port Lincoln High School here, so we do have some concerns. I think the Partnership 21 issues aren't being addressed out in Aboriginal communities. I know that it's already been brought to the attention of the new Director, John Halsey, but it's still a relevant issue.

What is 'Partnerships 21'? What does it mean to our community? How does our community get involved? It's also as bigger a problem in the remote areas as well as in the urban areas here. And the input of I suppose through Partnerships 21 their issues of improvement and curriculum – the issue of curriculum development. It's been a long road where Aboriginal input in towards the curriculum is taught within schools, have not had input, and if there is a time when we certainly need to have input into

curriculum and the methodologies of teaching. It's certainly the time now, and it's going to fit under the Aboriginal Educational Policy anyway. We certainly would like to endorse that policy and be involved in that process.

[Aboriginal student retention]

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: When you were saying before Harry, how you are happy that the kids' retention rates are going up, would most kids now be getting through to the Year 10 level?

Mr MILLER: Not in Port Lincoln. Not anywhere on the west coast.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: But how far would the majority be going?

Mr MILLER: I think some of them are really at a Year 8 level. Year 8 and 9. And this is the problem. This is what the community inherits. If we're not getting educational knowledge put at that base, then we have to recruit our own people and put our own people through an educational process such as our CDEP program where we have to start to identify, as I said, identify four people and that was a 17 year old, two 38 year olds, and a 45 year old. The 38 year olds and the 45 year old were women. And you know, for us as an outcome factor to provide real job opportunities for those people, the 17 year old and three Aboriginal women of that age, we had Buckley's hope of providing that. And when we go through our assessment process of recruitment onto our program we do an educational assessment and it would always show that there is a need for literacy or numeracy development, whatever the categories are.

The minority of our people would be deemed unemployable. Well then we've got to go through the other issues, how do we get them through. From the school base this is what we're recruiting. We're recruiting illiterate people into the community so that when we go into the development of private sector businesses or community development programs, our core base of resources don't have the ability.

[Local Aboriginal employment]

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: What proportion of the local community would be employed outside CDEP or Aboriginal organisations?

Mr MILLER: We have two. Two people.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: And what are they doing?

Mr MILLER: Filling meat at Canworths ... If they're not employed by CDEP they're employed in the Aboriginal service organisations, so we do have a higher rate of employment in the Aboriginal service provisions. But outside in the private sector or in mainstream we have two.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Another organisation I know of has been involved in a range that one stage we saw Commonwealth work going on – this is out of the state actually – and Aboriginals standing around watching. And we decided that if they could watch, and if they knew how to use the machinery and so on, why couldn't they be employed? And we put a submission in to the Commonwealth Government and they arranged that: there had to be so many employed in contracts that were let in that way.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Doesn't happen anymore.

Mr MILLER: With the capital developments process there has to be an element within capital developments that has to be from the state government, that proportionate people must be Aboriginal people to be employed. But when it comes to giving out capital works there doesn't seem to be negotiation between the Aboriginal community and the developer for the employment of Aboriginal people in those programs. And we do have resources currently available where they can support those things where they are seen as a detriment it could be seen as a positive.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Did you have questions Alby?

COMMISSIONER JONES: No.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Well thanks a lot to both of you for coming in. It's not always good to hear though.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: G'day. We knew we had Dick Cuttle and Dennis Crisp, but we've got many more than that.

Mr CRISP: I'm Dennis Crisp, from Tumby Bay Area School, which is 50kms North of here.

Ms BURTON: I'm Jan Burton of Cowell Area School, which is on the coast between Whyalla and Port Lincoln.

Mr DESLANDES: I'm Chris Deslandes, Principal of Cummins Area School, that's 70kms North. I'm also Co-ordinating Principal of Yalata and Oak Valley Schools which is a bit further away. Actually, it's probably worth noting that Oak Valley is about 500kms west of Coober Pedy.

Mr BAILEY: Ian Bailey, Principal of Cleve Area School, which is about 40kms inland from Cowell, on the Eyre Peninsula.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Right, OK. Thankyou.

[Area schools in South Australia]

Mr CUTTLE: We co-ordinate for the Executive of the Area School Principals Association. Area schools are generally Reception-Year 12 schools or Kindergarten-Year 12. Many have kindergartens or pre-schools attached. Some of us have agreements with community organisations to manage gyms and/or swimming pools, libraries, playing fields and a range of things like that. We're almost all rural – out of our fifty odd, there's only one within 50kms of Adelaide, and we range as in Oak Valley to Mintabie, which is almost at the border of the Northern Territory and so on and so the whole range of issues. In terms of our student populations, we run from a school like Keith for example where we are basically totally English backgrounds - one only non English speaking background student, no Aboriginals - to schools like Ceduna that have a large Aboriginal population. And everything in between. Country towns to a ding in the road in some cases. Those sort of things.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: So indicative of 30 area schools is it within the state?

Mr CUTTLE: Just over 50.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Oh sorry 50, 52. How many students in the lot of them?

Mr CUTTLE: Excellent question. Would probably be almost 10,000 I suppose? The smallest one would be 100 ...

Mr CRISP: No – 30.

Mr CUTTLE: It would be close to 10,000 overall. The largest is about 500. And small ones, yeah. But that's a bit of a quick stab in the dark. We could get that figure for you if you'd like it?

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: No that's alright – just an idea was all that I was after.

[Secondary staffing formula]

Mr CUTTLE: Basically I guess we want to talk to you about some of the curriculum issues in particular, and access of those things and we'll talk I think as the last two did on various issues as we go. So I want to talk briefly I guess at the start about our staffing formula in South Australia in secondary schools or the secondary component of our schools. In particular it's based on a year level component and the remainders that occur there make up class sizes. So you can't have 0.2 of a class teacher or 0.3 of a class teacher. You get a full class teacher to make that up. Now with small secondary cohorts as we have at different year levels, that's an important factor in us being able to maintain even in some cases a minimal face to face teaching component and access for students of those schools. We are concerned at the moment that current discussions with the government - or in government - that there may be some changes to that. We really want that maintained because that gives us some curriculum choice. In addition to that every area school receives what's called an Open Access salary, which was part of curriculum guarantee process industrial agreement 1988 or 1989.

In my case it's 1.25 in my school, but that varies depending on the number of Year 11 and 12 students. It's a curriculum support salary that helps us to supervise the students who are doing distance education. It helps to pay for that, because we've got to pay some days back to the Open Access College and of course, because there's another person on the staff it means we've got another one or two curriculum specialty options that we can offer in most of our schools. Again that's part of the formula that we want maintained whatever might happen. It's in a sense seen as an extra, but in terms of the offerings that we can make in our schools it's a critical part for our senior students.

COMMISSIONER JONES: It's not related to the offerings you can give?

Mr CUTTLE: No, no. It's a formula driven on the number of Year 11 and 12 students, and that's detailed in the staffing agreement currently.

Mr BAILIE: Basically it's in a sense almost inverse to the number of senior students you've got. The more senior students you've got, the less of this you've got – the less

you've got, the more of this to do the sorts of things that DETE sets up. We're amongst smaller schools at Keith - ours is 1.45, or something like that.

Ms BURTON: And that varies too on the number of students you've got in Year 12, because we're smaller again, but we only get 0.75, because we don't have 26 students at Year 11 and 12.

Mr CUTTLE: So those things are critical and the discussions about P21 that we mentioned earlier – the Partnerships 21 and changes to the staffing formula we believe need to recognise the way that those salaries are being used, and the way that that's improved access dramatically for students for curriculum options. We'd like more of course, but let's start with at least maintaining.

[Distance education]

It's important for all of us in the country to maintain real access to quality distance education curriculum, and teachers that really, really know what they're doing in terms of distance education, are skilled in the use of technology, are skilled in working with classes of four or five in different classes in different locations at once and all those sort of things. We're really keen for that to be pursued and in addition to that we'll do some local delivery options where ... Jan and Ian can talk more about that, they're involved pretty heavily.

Ms BURTON: Well at our school, for example, at Cowell, we're setting up or have set up an aquaculture course, and that has developed very well, and we're currently delivering to a student down the South East, at Dick Cuttle's school. This is our second year. We've delivered to a student on Kangaroo Island, and we've delivered to a student up at Karoonda as well as having students at our school. In fact Marree have approached us – they would like some of their students to do some VET courses in aquaculture next year.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: [Not] a lot of water at Marree.

Ms BURTON: Not a lot. So we might be able to do something there but the problem with that is, we don't have any staff people to teach us to do that local delivery over the phone or through the other technology. The technology doesn't work; our sharevision doesn't work anyway because the lines aren't good enough. So it's usually over the phone or faxing papers through to those schools, and of course that takes quite a bit of time to prepare as well as deliver. And we don't have that built into our staffing at all, so our teachers do that at the moment, or have done for the last three years out of love in the time when they're supposed to be preparing for other lessons. And it really is, it's a great cause – the teachers love doing what they're doing, the kids at the other end are benefiting, but there's really just nothing left to keep them going.

Mr BAILIE: Basically under the current arrangements, you've got to take something away from the local kids to enable it to happen. Or you rely on the goodwill of parents, students and teachers to be able to provide local delivery, and there's all sorts of issues associated when you're asking for those sorts of things to happen. One of them is the continuity. The teachers might be willing to do it this year, but next year they say 'Look, it's all too much', and the program falls down. And as Jan's pointed out, there can be a lot of interest in a program that's very valuable, but there's nothing there to

support it. It's a real big issue, particularly in rural areas, where we're trying to get this sort of delivery up and running. And that means kids can stay in their local communities, they don't have to go off elsewhere, and that's one of the key issues.

Mr CUTTLE: Local delivery is probably a misnomer in some senses: Jan's school teachers are 600kms away and there's obviously a travel component for them to come over here.

Ms BURTON: [Last year] it came up to an impractical block in school holidays, so again teachers gave up their time to have them there. We were glad to have them, but it's just an extra ask as well.

Mr CUTTLE: And parents of course in terms of travel and the cost, and all of those sort of issues there, just to maintain curriculum. And those sort of things are critically important. If we can't offer the one-offs or the whatever it might be, the student from Marree or we've already got interest from Keith next year, for students to access that course – we can't do it. Those students will be forced to Adelaide or some other central location out of their rural community. And that's not really the way that we believe it should be done.

[Assistance for Isolated Children; [specialist schools]

Mr BAILIE: We're a specialist school in agriculture. We've got our own farm – Sid's Farm - and we attract students from all over the state. Up to about five years ago, the Isolated Children's allowance, which is federal money, enabled students to come to our school and be paid to come here. The federal rules were changed I think it was about 5 years ago was it? 4 or 5 years ago? Which said you can't bypass your local school, even though you may want to come to a specialist school to do a specialist course. They won't do that anymore. So we used to attract anywhere between 15 and 20 students a year from across the state. When the federal government changed the rules about students bypassing their local school, we're down between 6 and 10 a year that we now attract. And parents are required to pay for the boarding, and any other associated travel costs that go with it now, and it's a course that's recognised across the state but parents now have to pay for it.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Of course we heard the reverse from other people yesterday. The bypassing business – they didn't favour it of course, because it was normally well-heeled people who could afford to bypass and the others couldn't. So there are two aspects of that argument.

Mr DESLANDES: I think there are two issues with that though. That sort of thing can certainly take students away from a school and make it non-viable. Because as people were saying, you only need to lose one if you're on that borderline of a class cohort, and you actually lose the equivalent of three subjects. However, for specialist schools that's a whole new issue, because not all schools offer all things.

COMMISSIONER JONES: I agree with that.

Mr DESLANDES: So I think that both those aspects need to be looked at.

Mr CUTTLE: I think the issue of specialist schools – if we look at the specialist schools that are in the city, be it a music, or one of the sports schools or whatever, students do have access to that school very easily. They've got to pay their bus fares or whatever it might be, and they go through a process to win that position. But certainly in terms of access to that it's considerably easier than trying to bypass your local school and get access to the Cleve course for example, or any one of the other three or four specialist schools in the country as well.

COMMISSIONER JONES: That's the problem where these decisions are made in Canberra, where they should have the feed in that we hope Commissioner Sidoti will give them.

Mr BAILIE: I mean one of the other issues when you're talking about specialist schools. In South Australia all the specialist schools are all concentrated in the metropolitan area. There's not one identified supported school outside the metropolitan area, even though there are a number of schools spread throughout the state which run courses that are recognised and are acknowledged as excellent courses. But there's not official recognition apart from what happens in Adelaide. So the rural sector again loses out.

Ms BURTON: Just to take it up it was interesting that the [Education] Department has made provision for four boarding houses in the country at Burra, Lucindale, Cleve and Cowell. And yet there is no Isolated Children's allowance for anybody to go there. Enough on that.

Mr CUTTLE: And due to that lack of support, the one which has been at Kingston actually closed last year. And that was offering aquaculture plus some other stuff as well, so again the access for children in that area has been reduced.

[School bus provision]

Can we move to buses and access for kids in particular? Buses are expensive, I accept all of that, but it's a critical part of the access that students need to reach their schools in areas like this.

The current bus fleet, the government bus fleet itself, only three are air-conditioned and that's on a trial. The majority are not, and if you look at Eyre Peninsula in particular, some temperatures can be 50 degrees or so when the kids are on those buses. And it really is not a fair deal.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Sorry, is that three on the Eyre Peninsula or three statewide?

Mr CUTTLE: Three statewide as a trial. And that started last year after a lot of pressure from buses and association and lots and lots of school councils and so on. Now a lot of buses are in fact *worse* than the government fleet as well. They're privately contracted buses. They vary from in some cases very good air-conditioned buses that are new, down to buses that don't keep out the dust, the rain or anything else. They're 25 plus years old. They're beaten up old rattlers that probably – well Victoria's taken theirs off the road and that sort of stuff.

Our kids are travelling in some cases ... In my case coming into Keith there are kids travelling 68kms on the bus, having been brought 20 kms plus to the bus stop by their parents. So that means 68kms in one of those buses is a minimum of an hour, maybe a bit longer depending on the road conditions and so on, and then back at night. That sort of stuff is not fair in any way. If the kids have got to travel, and we accept the fact that if we live out there we've got to travel, but at least the conditions should be reasonable. The government doesn't expect their own employees, and we as normal people living in the country all have air conditioned cars and those sort of things, but the kids and the drivers – it's just not right. Health issues in terms of dust and asthma and all of those sort of things are just made worse. In addition to the heat, the cold or whatever it might be.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Are there such things as teacher-drivers now or not?

Mr CUTTLE: Very, very rarely, fortunately.

Mr BAILIE: There's also the issue of pre-school and kindy kids. They are expected to be, and are encouraged by the Government to be, there and yet there is no provision made in terms of the bus. If there is room they can fit on, if there is not room then they don't. You know those sort of issues I think are really ones that are ...

Ms BURTON: They don't count in the numbers to hold the bus run.

Mr CUTTLE: So kindy kids - when we talk about kids getting an education pre-school - are excluded from accessing that education if there's not room on the bus for those kids to come in. So the thing we're saying well you know, 0-8 [years of age] which is the Government push at the moment, only exists in rural areas if you can get your kids there. Otherwise they don't have access to that.

Mr DESLANDES: For parents who travel more than 5kms to the bus stop, or whatever it might be, there's an allowance paid to them and I think it works out on average something like 14c per km. Now 14c in this day and age for people ... In my case, we've got people driving 20kms into the stop to drop the kids off, 20 kms back and doing that at night. They're travelling 80kms a day, which is a huge commitment for those kids, and really the allowance the Government makes for that doesn't even pay the running costs and in many cases the fuel costs, let alone the running costs of those vehicles. It's just not fair and those kids are missing out in terms of they get to school tired and they get home tired. And then the parents have really got to pay to get them to a substandard education and with the best will in the world, and we all try as hard as we can, we can't make that up. And if you add to that, for example we've got our northern-most parent and our southern-most parent are about 170 kms apart. One of them is the Chair of the School Council, and one of them is on the School Council. To come to School Council meetings they're driving between them something like 300 plus kms to get to that meeting. And that's not all the people that fit in between. No recognition, but under P21 – the changes the Government's promoting at the moment the expectation is growing that parents will take on more of those things, take on more responsibility and yet there's no recognition that these parents are spending huge amounts of time at the end of a School Council meeting at 11pm at night when it's been raining on dirt roads, they can be getting back in their car to drive an hour home. In areas where mobile phones don't work, they may not even have UHF access to local farms. Stuff like that

through kangaroo infested roads or whatever it might be, there's a real issue of access in terms of what the parents can make in lots and lots of our country schools.

Mr CUTTLE: I mean they're willing to make it, because they need to. But the recompense is just not there.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Sorry, just to take that example, these new school service fees that are levied, the compulsory fees. Can a School Council decide that it will use some of that money for reimbursement of parents?

Mr DESLANDES: Well that's an excellent question, that's never been ...

WITNESS ?: It could, Chris, but I don't think the school community would hack it. They would say 'Look we're paying these for the education of the kids, not for parent benefit'. So while technically it could be done, I don't think any School Council would risk even suggesting that.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Right. Which means as you say that the further out the parents live, the more discouraged they are about being involved in school activities.

Mr BAILIE: Very much so. I mean we have insurance policies that we've taken out – private insurance policies - to cover parents when they travel in for meetings. And if the school didn't do that, then the Department would just let them go.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: The Department may well find itself liable.

Mr BAILIE: So the school can do initiatives of their own to support parents and we try to. We're taking parents to a conference coming up soon. The school is paying for it, but it's coming out of our government grant money to pay for it. That wouldn't go anywhere near to supporting the amount of money you expect parent leaders in the school, and the time that they put in wouldn't even come close.

[School fees]

COMMISSIONER JONES: Your Council supports this goods and services fee though in the Education Act?

Mr CRISP: I don't know – we haven't discussed this as an Association – in my case, we don't have any people that don't pay. So for us it's not an issue whether it's compulsory or not, but I know there are other schools who are in a different situation.

WITNESS ?: Are you talking about this compulsory fee or the GST that's about to come in?

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: The compulsory fee for Materials and Resources.

Mr BAILIE: It's not an issue for us either. I mean last year's the first year for as long as people can remember that someone hasn't paid at our place, but there's a limit to what you can do. Partly that is because we keep it relatively low. But you look at other schools who are able to charge \$20, \$30, \$40, \$50 dollars more – they have a big pool

of students anyway, so it's a significant amount of money that they can put in to deliver extra services that are denied us.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Free and compulsory that our forebears fought for, and now we're going to put it into legislation no it's not free and compulsory.

Mr DESLANDES: Our school council moved earlier this year that even if it comes in as compulsory, it would not pursue debt collection.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Thank God.

Ms BURTON: And our School Council has done the same. It's just not viable in the local community.

Mr BAILIE: When you've only got small numbers of students or smaller compared to major regional centres or Adelaide, you can increase your school fees by \$10-\$20, the actual income you get is very minimal, but the actual impost you're putting on families is quite significant because of the rural decline etc. So we can put ours up by \$20, and we would in actual fact only get another \$6,000. And when you look at the overall budget, \$6,000 doesn't actually do a lot, whereas in a larger school an extra \$10-\$15-\$20 can be anything up to \$25,000 - \$30,000 which is a significant amount.

[Extra curricula travel; CAP formula]

Mr CUTTLE: There are a couple of other issues in terms of access as well, comparing our schools with city schools. If the city school is going to run their drama production or whatever it might be, they have Sunday afternoon rehearsals which all of us do at some stage or another. The kids get on the local bus and they go there a half an hour for 20c, 40cents. Our parents might drive in 100 plus kms round trip to get the kids in and out. Stuff like that - extremely - there's time, there's all the stuff that goes with that, and compare that with the city. Without support, without an increase level of support, our kids are coming second in a sense. Second class citizens. The Country Areas Program funding, which the formula a couple of years ago changed to include some more schools, which it should have done but there was no extra money. It was taken from the schools that were furthest out. And Ceduna for example received a \$10,000 cut in funding. And that funding was used, and is still used, to support students going to Adelaide for work experience and general educational excursions whatever it might be, but the cuts to the most remote schools are significant for those schools. We don't argue that other ones that are closer in, that are in a sense less disadvantaged through distance, shouldn't get the component - that's a fair deal. But we believe that through an increase in resources not in redistributing the Commonwealth money that came in that area.

Mr DESLANDES: This money is essential for particularly senior secondary students. There are some components of the senior secondary subjects that it is virtually mandatory that the kids go to Adelaide for various performances in English, visiting Art Galleries for art, etc. Now unless the kids can actually do that fairly cheaply, then they miss out on a whole set of understandings, and it's exactly the same for career education. In Cummins, for example, there is only a limited range of occupations and the kids know those well. And to actually see a whole range and come back - you know we have kids come back from a Year 11 careers trip saying 'That was fantastic. I understand a range of things that I've got now'. Parents often go with them and say that

was just so good. And yet, when the funding for that sort of support, that broadening of their education is cut and diminished, it really puts everybody under pressure. And yet we've lost \$10,000 too there.

[Work experience]

Mr CUTTLE: It's a real issue. In our school alone we had 62 students last year who accessed vocational education courses of some sort. Part of the school policy, and part of the TAFE requirement for many of those – in fact we made it for every student – was that they had to do part of that course, the practical part, somewhere else. And yet we had as part of our funding cuts from our school. So again it comes back to the parents in that regard.

COMMISSIONER JONES: It's sort of a hands on rather than TAFE?

Mr CUTTLE: Oh yes. Either in a TAFE college or in workshops in Murray Bridge, Adelaide or Mount Gambier or whatever it might be. So that's a difficult situation.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Chris with your school, how many kids have you got, and when you lost \$10,000, the CAP money went from what to what?

Mr DESLANDES: From \$30,000 to \$20,000. We've got 450 kids.

COMMISSIONER JONES: Starting to learn at the grass roots how these cuts affect.

Mr BAILIE: The clear message from all these cuts and that, it keeps filtering down as the user pays. Unfortunately in country areas or in rural areas where people are already paying the penalty – extra time, costs etc. for their isolation – so when we're talking about providing students with the curriculum that they need, not the one that we want to run, again it's calling on the parents to pay for it basically, because of the reductions in funding that's available.

Ms BURTON: At Cowell last year we had a perfect example of this for a senior secondary student in that she wanted to study music in Year 12. Well she was the only student studying the clarinet over the telephone from Adelaide one lesson a week, but she had nothing to look at because the Sharevision didn't work and of course as part of it she was required to play as part of an orchestra. Very difficult to do by yourself. So her parents had to drive her - because she didn't have her license yet - to drive her to Whyalla so there was over 100kms there and over 100kms back and even though she was Year 12 she missed all of her other subjects that day whenever she had to go to Whyalla so she had to spend extra time weekends. If it weren't for the teachers who used to teach her those extra things on weekends she would not – and she did, she passed Year 12 at a huge expense to her parents because we couldn't afford to pay them CAP all the time because our CAP had been reduced as well and she was one student looking for one subject, but she had a right to it the same as everybody else.

COMMISSIONER JONES: It's the expectations, isn't it.

Ms BURTON: Yes. And as a school, I believe that we need to be able to provide that for students and parents as well.

Mr DESLANDES: It's sacrifice. I mean what if we had the same kid whose parents didn't have the time to do it or didn't have the resources to do it, that student then doesn't do it. And what a crime that would be.

Mr CRISP: And that certainly happens on the Career Ed camps. Our school didn't receive CAP funding, and even though we've not got some, the fact of the matter is our Career Ed camps cost the students around about \$200 and there are a number of students who don't go simply because they can't afford it.

Ms BURTON: Which if they were in a city school they could do that every Friday or whenever.

Mr CRISP: And that's a double whammy. They come from that group of people who don't have the range of experience themselves to pass on, and then the opportunity to go and get it is denied to them as well because they don't have the money.

Mr DESLANDES: Can I just say perhaps to finish off, the remote areas – I can't actually give you an example but I know that colleagues have talked to me about whole programs that they have been running annually for some time like these trips that we've been talking about – the equivalent for primary students have had to cease, because of the redistribution of CAP grants.

Could we move on? The support services is an issue. Veering of course as everything does, Dennis has got information about that.

[Support services; disability]

Mr CRISP: I guess basically what we're saying is that we believe that access to support services over the whole range of things from behaviour to counselling, instrumental music as we've already mentioned and so on needs to be increased. There is some recognition at the moment in some areas from the Department for that to happen, but in other areas there aren't. At our school we have an autistic student who lives a further 20 odd kilometres out of the town. And one of the things that happens for lots of students in special education and especially for autistic kids is to give them a weekly swimming lesson. That for some reason or other seems to work. So that means coming to Port Lincoln to have access to the leisure centre because that's heated - that means you can do it every day of the year. Those parents get no financial support for that 150km trip and for them, this particular family are unemployed, and that's a significant burden for them. The school is unable to support them, and so that's important. The answer is from people 'Well, we can provide the swimming lesson. You're near the sea, you can have the lesson in the sea'.

Mr CRISP: That's true in some of it, what about the rest? And that's only one student, and it's not a lot of money, but it has a severe impact on that particular family. Getting people to country areas, specialist people, that comes under country conditions as well. But here I was speaking to the person in charge of special education, and he was saying that for the last 18 years in Port Lincoln they've only been able to attract three people who've had specialised special education training to provide support for people in schools. Now the support we get from the people that *are* there is good, but they have to learn it as they go and so on, and that's a real disadvantage. In other instances programs that are set up as a trial cease. Tumby Bay was a pilot school for a mental health

program which was funded by the Commonwealth government which was essentially a co-operative venture between the local medical service and the school to look at in a holistic sense about the child and what's the best way to deal with the problem. Is it a medical way, is it an educational answer, or is it a combination of both of those? That was funded by the federal government. The funding was then extended to the many parts of the Eyre Peninsula - that funding has now ceased and essentially that program has ceased.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Sorry what was the school that that was at?

Mr CRISP: Tumby Bay Area. And in particular it grew out of addressing the issue of suicide and depression, and you know that in rural areas that is a very very significant issue. Yet there is no funding to continue this program which was obviously very successful and could work where you had small numbers of doctors that were able to work with schools. It's difficult in larger communities where you can't get the agreement of all the medicos and all that sort of thing. But in small rural communities it was an ideal scheme and now that's gone.

Now they're just three examples, and we could talk about a whole lot of others, but that's just supporting the view that there needs to be a great deal more money or resources put into support services for those small groups of students that need it.

Mr DESLANDES: Can I comment on the remoteness of that. Yesterday I had a phone call from our Student Behaviour Management support person. There's one for our district. And he was asking me when I'm next visiting Oak Valley, he's been trying to get there for two terms, but it's actually an 11 hour drive. He's not prepared to drive beyond Yalata which is just off the bitumen because he would get lost and that would be pretty awkward. Now I won't be going for about another 4 weeks. The Special Ed Manager has asked the same thing. It actually takes a very long time to visit – both Yalata and Oak Valley actually takes a whole week, and yet our districts still only get the same number of personnel support resources as do other districts in Adelaide.

Mr CRISP: That does need to be qualified. There is some recognition on behalf of the Department where for some support services there are more personnel in this area – for instance in special ed we have the equivalent of two and a half; most districts in Adelaide have one, one and a bit.

Ms BURTON: So for a school of that remoteness, it's next to useless if nobody can get there or don't know how to get there.

Mr DESLANDES: And the issue of getting lost is a real one. It's not a joke.

Mr SIDOTI: I can believe it.

Ms BURTON: He'd only been as far – well he's from the South East when he came to Whyalla and has just moved to this district.

Mr CRISP: But even the close in schools – when I was at Kimba, if someone was coming in to Kimba and dropping into Cleve and Cowell in a day, by the time they travelled around there there's basically no time left for them to see the students. It's a

real issue that no matter how good the people are, and some people are very good, it's just not enough to do the job with the best will in the world. They could drive all night and they still couldn't do the job.

Ms BURTON: Well and they do just that in fact. Our speech therapist here 12 months or so ago on a trip she had to call into just about every school along the way – up the coast and on her way back had a very nasty car accident where she and she had taken another girl from the office with her to support, she was the hearing service person, and they were involved in an accident which she said probably was caused through some driving fatigue and lack of concentration or whatever but they could have easily been killed. And they are the only two in the district to service from past Ceduna way out up our end as well.

Mr DESLANDES: Our superintendent hit a kangaroo at 5 in the morning having left Streaky Bay trying to get back in time to Lincoln for a meeting. Our guidance officer who assesses our students for disabilities was requested to visit Yalata in March [1999]. He had a date booked for last term, there was a fire at the school, he was not able to visit that day, he has not been able to return since [to August].

Mr CUTTLE: Okay. You allocated us half an hour and we've taken more than that already.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: No that's alright, you're okay for another 15 minutes.

Mr CUTTLE: Well I think we just whip through. We'll leave you one of the papers.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Please do that. And I want you to leave time as well so Chris can tell me about schools on the Anangu lands.

[Support staff allocation formula]

Mr CUTTLE: As area schools generally one of the issues that we've talked about, pursued for a long period of time is the allocation formula for our support staff. Basically at the moment we get 41 hours base level for every area school, plus then there's a student or staff based component based on student numbers to add on to that. If we're an R-12 school in the city we would get the primary component which is 24, plus the secondary component 78. Give 102 base hours then the extra would be added to go with that. Now the primary component of that, the 24 hours applies whatever the size of the primary school. The secondary one of 78 hours applies whatever the size of the secondary school. So what it means is that my school with 450 students R-12 gets less SSO hours than Bordertown High School with 200 secondary students and nothing else. And every one of us would have similar examples.

Now the roles that those support staff play in country schools, be they area schools or primary schools or secondary schools, I accept all of those they play a bigger role in the way the school operates and the way the school operates within the community than do SSOs in large regional centres or in the city. When it's wet, they're taking phone calls about where the kids will be picked up off the buses or not picked up, or who's coming in to pick them up. Where parents live way out, the SSOs could be taking the kids to the doctor or making sure that the order from the chemist goes to the kid or whatever. Now

they're technically not educational functions, but they are functions that make our schools work within our communities.

Mr DESLANDES: Half an hour before the end of the school day, the SSOs are running around the school with phone messages: 'don't get on the bus, go to Auntie May's', 'here's a parcel from the chemist'.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: So what's the rationale for the reduced formula?

Mr DESLANDES: That's a good question.

Ms BURTON: There isn't one.

Mr BAILIE: It's not actually a reduced formula, it's just never increased.

Ms BURTON: The area school formula has been different, and we've been fighting this for 14 years.

Mr BAILIE: The start of R-12 schools in Adelaide have only been a recent innovation. So in the last few years they've just taken one figure and added it to another and come to that conclusion.

Witness ?: Which is a fair thing to do.

Mr BAILIE: However, area schools have been in existence for many many, well ours has been in existence for 50 years, and these R-12 schools in Adelaide have only been in existence for 2-3 years, how come we can't have the same staffing as them?

COMMISSIONER JONES: Well who has input into the working out these formulas? Surely they're not done by the bureaucrats who have no knowledge of the school. Surely some of you people are invited in to work on them aren't you?

Mr CUTTLE: No. We've tried to be invited in, and our school councils have tried to be invited in.

Ms BURTON: And our Parents' Association have been fighting this one.

Mr CUTTLE: Absolutely. And we've lost it every time.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: Everywhere we go there are funny little quirks. I mean, I could tell you about some of the quirks in other states, but this would have to be the funniest.

Mr BAILIE: This is not funny. I can tell you it's not funny.

[Staff incentives]

Mr CRISP: We won't say too much more, because you want more time with Chris, but there's two or three pages at the end about the key issue of country incentives to attract qualified staff, and I don't think we'd be different from any of the other states in that area but we believe that that's fundamental to the provision of quality education. It's not

only attracting the staff, but in terms of promotion positions, even though we would have all won our promotion positions no matter what the field because of our qualifications, the fact of the matter is in promotion positions in country areas there are far less people to apply for those jobs. In my position I know there were only three applicants and yet if this was in Adelaide in that position there would have been 23. Now you don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that therefore you're not necessarily getting the best person even though you've got good people.

That's a key issue that needs to be addressed in a whole range of different sorts of ways. How do we go about attracting people into country areas? And that's going to be exacerbated over the next few years with the teaching shortage and in particular areas. And each of us would have experienced this over the last few years where we need to hunt down our own staff in lots of cases.

Mr DESLANDES: I've got one coming Friday that I recruited last week. The staffing officer quite often says to us 'Can you fill this vacancy? Do you know anyone who can fill it?' Because they can't do it. I've got a vacancy coming up for next term and he said 'Oh, just give me the name and we'll just put the person in'. I said 'I haven't got a name to give you. All my TRT's have already got contracts and there's no-one suitable to fill that vacancy'.

I remember two Christmases ago we went away on holidays, and I spent the two weeks on the phone trying to recruit teachers to start in a week's time, because they were unable to find teachers through their head office structure. And then I would ring back staffing 'I've got someone'. They would check them out, run them through their computers to see if they were suitable etc. etc. but basically, in many country areas the principal does the recruiting, the chasing up, all we don't do is the paperwork to employ them, which is done through the head office.

Ms BURTON: Or we do that and fax that through.

Mr DESLANDES: So that's what happens. And what that does then is that detracts from the local pool of teachers, so I mean the days when teachers married into the community are getting less and less because of the population decline. So your pool of people to rely on is getting less and less and less. How do I attract an in demand physics teacher, that every school in Adelaide wants. How do I get him to Cleve? I can't offer him any more money. I can't offer him any incentive above and beyond what they get. So I'm desperately competing with these larger regional centres in Adelaide for an in demand teacher, and I've got to somehow convince him or her to come to Cleve.

Mr CRISP: Are you going to Locke?

Ms BALSAMO: Driving through it. We're going to Wudinna.

Mr CRISP: Oh, well you might have somebody from Locke who'd be able to tell you they had what \$50-60,000 spent on their Tech. Studies upgrade and they haven't been able to get a Tech. Studies teacher for three years.

[Clustering]

Mr BAILIE: I've just got one thing on clustering and then I'll finish up. We're all here for just one thing, and that's for the kids – for their learning. And we talked about this area about providing access for kids to get the curriculum that they need or require for their work. A lot of the things that we're involved in, we're trying to provide some base of face to face component of teaching. The time that it takes to do that for the kids which we've already talked about, for the parents, we're expecting staff to travel in their own time, weekends or after school to places. No support whatsoever, in their own vehicles, and they're not paid for anything.

Ms BURTON: Which are not covered either if they hit a kangaroo or anything.

Mr BAILIE: So if they roll, bad luck. The teachers do it. The staffing component - we get no extra staffing to do that; there's no extra training and development to do that; the costs involved and the distances we travel; the supervision of students, we're expecting them, and it's happened in our past, to get into a car and drive to another school; the duty of care issues and occupational health and safety issues – all those, and we bend them because we're trying to get the best deal for our kids.

[Information technology and telecommunications]

The technology we have, and you'll hear this tomorrow, the technology we have in rural areas is so substandard we can't even operate – I can't even operate an email to my colleagues because it keeps dropping out all the time. We have no access to mobile phones, the phone lines are so substandard as Jan's already pointed out we can't operate the technology that we have like Sharevision, the Internet kids can't access because it keeps dropping out all the time, so we rely on all these other things – the costs, as we've said to parents and to teachers themselves and the schools, we've got to find those sorts of money.

And I'll just in closing mention that we've had students travelling to another school after hours to meet their teacher, that they'd otherwise contact by phone or fax and they actually had an accident. At night, on a lonely rural road. They ran off the road. And this is the sort of thing we're asking our kids to do to get the education that they need.

Ms BURTON: We had two students going into [indistinct] school this first term and second term. I said to them that I was not prepared for them to go in the winter. I wouldn't allow them to continue and I stopped them doing what they wanted to do, but I would not take the risk of having them travel at night or on the wet roads. It was just not feasible.

[Anangu education]

Mr DESLANDES: I'll just mention a few things – what I don't want to get into is the actual education programs of the Anangu kids. Some of it was talked about earlier on with literacy and a whole range of things, so I'll just mention a few things. Recruitment of teachers and leaders, obviously the sorts of things we've already talked about, is hugely exacerbated in areas like that. One of the issues of course is that they get a reasonably generous locality allowance, but it's taxed at 50c in the dollar so it becomes quite useless because of the costs in those places. The teachers in their pocket are getting much less than their metropolitan or near metropolitan colleagues.

Training and development is a significant issue, and an example that I had yesterday is the principal of Oak Valley wants to come or asked to come to what is supposed to be a mandatory meeting with our Chief Executive to talk about Partnerships 21 later this week in Port Lincoln. Now for him to drive here is actually a 22 hour drive – 11 hours each way. Now that means that he's out of the school if he doesn't drive for more than he's supposed to, that's actually four days, you know 3 to 3 ½ days travel alone. So he asked if the Department could actually charter him a plane because we are all supposed to be there. Now the budget that our Superintendent was given to fund this mandatory meeting was \$6,000 for the whole district, and if we chartered him a plane that would be \$2,000 gone out of the \$4,000 budget.

Ms BURTON: And the meeting's how long?

Mr DESLANDES: Their meeting's 3 hours, that's right.

Ms BURTON: Three days for three hours.

Mr DESLANDES: That's right, or \$2,000. The staff there wanted to attend a conference in Alice Springs with other Anangu schools, the Pitjantjatjara Yankanjatjara Education Committee assistance has been a part of that. Oak Valley's not part of the PYEC and neither is Yalata. And we could spend a very long time going into that. We won't.

They had to close the school for 4½ days in order for the staff to attend. We looked at chartering a plane but that would have been \$9,000. But that would have kept the school closed for only 2 days in order to participate. The support services we've talked about – the other issues in terms of incentives for teachers, the vehicle expectations, when you're five hours north of the bitumen, there is no provision for using a government car. Although there is a government car supplied to the school, there's no provision for using that for personal use. Now to take your own car on that road would just be economic stupidity. Now when you couple that with the fact that the locality allowance is taxed at 50c in the dollar, it is a real disincentive to want go and work in those places.

We're talking about VET and provision of curriculum. Just one issue I will mention on that – there are 16 year old students at Oak Valley school and naturally we are keen to involve them in work education and VET modules, because there are VET modules they'd certainly be capable of being involved in and successful in. Now obviously there are limited opportunities for a range of VET modules. One of the things we are looking at is tourism. With the whale watch that their relatives at Yalata operate, now that's about 7 hours away, so that we're just looking at the cost of transport for those kids and accommodation is just huge, and there's no compensation for that. The other one is educational support with like schools. I mentioned earlier that Oak Valley is not part of the PYEC. Now the educational support currently comes from two sources – one is this district here, and the other one is Yalata and they are the only two Anangu schools in this district so therefore sharing training and development, curriculum development and having support people with good knowledge of that exacerbates the problems of isolation.

The other support services they have actually come from Aboriginal Education in Adelaide. Now those people are not geared – the support people are not geared -for

supporting the Anangu students. They are geared for students at Lincoln, Koonibba, Raukkan, schools like that. So culturally they're quite different.

The Commonwealth is changing the funding structures and reportedly significantly reducing both the funding to Aboriginal Education and Anangu Education in South Australia. Now that's going to have significant impact on people in remote communities for access to support. And I'll leave it at that.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: That last point, if I can hone in on that, where are the suggestions coming from?

Mr DESLANDES: These are the Managers of both those support services in Adelaide, Chris. They understand that they are actually going to have much less funding for supporting these schools – both their systems next year.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: So this is DEETYA funding?

Mr DESLANDES: Yes.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: I mean that given the Government's stated priority in Aboriginal Affairs education, health, employment, it's...

Mr DESLANDES: Well this is the last year of the current funding triennium and they are saying that it is going to change significantly. It will go to a formula base instead of a – this is my understanding – instead of a submission base. That way South Australia will really come out worse than other places because it has fewer Aboriginal students than many of the other states. Now given the distances that these support services are having to deal with, it makes it very difficult.

COMMISSIONER SIDOTI: I think we'd better stop. Is that all right with you Alby? Thanks for that. Thanks for all that.