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Members in attendance: Ms Bell, Ms Hammond, Mr Joyce, Ms Kearney, Mr Laming, Ms Ryan, Mr Young.

Terms of Reference for the Inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training will inquire into and report on the education of students in remote communities and the role of culture, family, community and country in delivering better outcomes. The Inquiry will focus on but not be limited to consideration of:

- A child's journey through early childhood, primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary education in remote communities, like the tri-border region of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory;
- Key barriers to the education journey, including the effects of environmental factors such as drought on families and communities;
- The role of culture and country in a child's learning;
- Community and family structures that support a child's education and their attendance at school;
- Effective government initiatives, past and present, that support remote communities to enable greater educational outcomes, including those that have improved attainment in literacy and numeracy;
- Innovative approaches to workforce, including recruitment, professional learning, retention and support, and lessons from communities that could be more generally applied;
- Access and support to deliver the Australian Curriculum (including STEM) in a flexible way to meet local learning needs and interests of remote students, including examples of innovative ways in which the curriculum is being delivered in remote schools; and
- Successful pathways to ensure students have the knowledge and skills they need to enter further education and the workforce.
WITNESSES

BLACKWOOD, Ms Beth, Chief Executive Officer,
Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

1
BLACKWOOD, Ms Beth, Chief Executive Officer, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

Committee met at 11:35

CHAIR (Mr Laming): Welcome and thanks for appearing today. We're declaring our inquiry open for today and we're welcoming the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia. In your submission you noted a number of factors that can have a negative impact on schools' educational provision and the aspirations of students, and the impact of remoteness. Obviously, our focus is on the work you're doing in strategies to help students, particularly those living away from home or those with an education in regional and remote areas.

Today's hearing is being broadcast, as you can see to your left, through the parliament's website, and there'll be a transcription available afterwards to make sure that everything is accurate. We ask anyone filming or recording and those who are present or may be listening to report fairly and accurately. We remind you that you are not necessarily required to give evidence under oath today but the hearings are still legal proceedings of parliament, so they warrant the same respect. False or misleading evidence is a serious matter which can be a contempt of parliament. On that serious note, don't feel that you can't give a completely open and honest account of your view in the areas we'll be investigating.

Ms Blackwood: Certainly. Firstly, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to attend this hearing. I've prepared an opening statement, if I could start with that. I'd like to begin by acknowledging that we are on Ngunawal country and paying my respects to the Ngunawal elders, past, present and emerging.

AHISA is a professional association of principals. We strongly believe that those who are leading schools in remote and regional areas, and who are facing some of the complex issues the committee is considering, have much to contribute to the committee's deliberations. Our submission to the committee lists key findings and recommendations arising from data that we've collected over a number of surveys and inquiries during the past couple of years. I don't intend to repeat that list now but I would like to highlight one recommendation which we would be very happy to see the committee take on board as a guiding principle in forming its own recommendations to the government—that is, policies or government funded programs that are targeted at school education must take into account that schools are unique communities which, while they may share some common challenges, will need to address these challenges in ways that are best suited to the school community if interventions are to be effective.

In our submission we refer to a report by Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre which highlights that the nature of educational opportunity gaps can be area specific and that these differences invite either different solutions or at least a flexible suite of programs and initiatives that can be weighted differently, depending on the local environment, and needs based. In other words, it's not one size fits all in terms of determining some of the solutions to the opportunity gap for students in these regions. We would argue that complex issues can be specific to individual school communities, and we concur with BCEC that flexibility in programs is fundamental if governments are to help address those issues.

The release yesterday of the 2019 NAPLAN annual report highlights the importance of the committee's inquiry. The report provides stark evidence of the opportunity gap facing young people in regional and remote areas, particularly our young Indigenous Australians. We have collated some of the data from the report for the benefit of the committee, and that's been forwarded to the committee secretariat. As noted in our submission, internet connection and bandwidth are vital to realising the potential of digital technologies to help address education provision and teacher professional development challenges faced by schools in regional and remote areas. We welcome the Australian government's actions to expand access to NBN Sky Muster satellite services, but urge the government to maintain a relentless focus on resolving availability and access issues in regional and remote areas.

Thank you. I'm happy to take any questions about the submission that we provided.

Ms RYAN: Hi, Ms Blackwood. I'm the member for Lalor in Melbourne, and I was a public school teacher and principal for 27 years. So, a very warm welcome to the parliament. Could you give us some specific examples to help the committee understand what you mean by 'specific needs' in each school and why they're important?

Ms Blackwood: I do have some examples. If you take the remote Indigenous school communities, their needs are very different from some of the regional schools that might have a mixture, particularly with staff shortages. That undoubtedly is one of the major challenges that schools face in remote and regional areas. There are different approaches that are being taken in those very remote Indigenous communities. What seems to support some of those communities is training local Aboriginal elders in being engaged in the education of the young in...
those communities. In some of the more regional schools, they're looking to employ staff from overseas, with a more nuanced approach to visa qualifications—

Ms RYAN: Is that for language education or—

Ms Blackwood: It can be broader than that. It's about attracting people to regional areas, which, as we know, is a challenge in all parts of Australia. It's a challenge attracting good-quality teachers. But also, I think, if you look, for example, at the provision of VET studies—that will differ from one region to the next, in terms of schools being able to tap into whatever their local needs or opportunities are. They are some examples of how different schools are approaching and providing that.

Ms RYAN: Firstly, I welcome the comment. I think we've had a history, particularly with the Commonwealth, of funding a particular program and pushing it out. In my experience, each school is in a particular place in its cultural journey, if you like. So, if you've been spending five years embedding it and you're at a certain point—and the schools are very well aware of what they want to resource—and then you have a new idea pushed down, it creates a culture where teachers are going, 'If we wait five minutes, it will go away'—

Ms Blackwood: Or that they will go.

Ms RYAN: Yes—rather than buying into it as ongoing professional development.

Ms Blackwood: I would agree.

Ms HAMMOND: Hi, Beth. We met—

Ms Blackwood: We have known each other in a previous life.

Ms HAMMOND: That's exactly right. It was at a wonderful school in Curtin. Thank you very much for this submission. I'm really interested in the change of terminology from 'achievement gap' to 'opportunity gap'. Having worked in education, I sometimes think that there are fads in terms of terminology. When I was told that you no longer talked about 'teaching and learning' and that it had to become 'learning and teaching'—it did my mind in.

But, on this particular one, why the move to 'opportunity gap' as opposed to 'achievement gap'? Is it just glossing over—is it perhaps hiding a problem?

Ms Blackwood: No. I guess it comes from our frustration that there's a deficit model about education in Australia—full stop. It's about trying to move beyond that deficit model. It's also about trying to recognise and acknowledge that there are some wonderful innovative programs occurring in remote and regional education. It's about seeing problems as opportunities rather than just problems. Yes, we still have to identify where the achievement gaps are—the NAPLAN data that we've submitted clearly identifies writing as a significant achievement gap—but I think it's trying to acknowledge what is occurring and trying to acknowledge that while we have problems they are also opportunities.

Ms BELL: I have a particular interest in solutions through technology to remote areas and I also serve on the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts. Last week, we were in Sydney and we heard about how in the UK, with the advent of the rollout of 5G, Vodafone have undertaken their first trial of a holographic telephone call across 350 kilometres.

Ms Blackwood: Wow.

Ms BELL: That was my reaction as well. Trying to put them together as a solution with regard to your shortage of teachers, do you see that that could be part of the solution to our problem?

Ms Blackwood: Undoubtedly, and it is happening now. There are partnerships between city schools and regional and remote schools where they are delivering classes online but something like a holograph would be just so much more visual and engaging, I would imagine, than what is at this point in time fairly unsophisticated but still helpful online courses. We see as artificial intelligence and augmented reality become far more commonplace then they too will add to what is going to be available for schools in remote and regional areas because the first thing is having that reliable access, and it is cost effective too.

Ms BELL: My understanding is that communities could in fact have their own 5G network within a community or, indeed, build their own if they wish to. That was my understanding from the hearings last week. I think there are some extraordinary opportunities to take the teacher to the children via holographic messages and teaching for the future. I just wanted to put that on the Hansard record as a possible solution. Thanks for your feedback.

Ms KEARNEY: Can I ask a really stupid question?

Ms BELL: There is no such thing.

Ms KEARNEY: Are they pre-recorded? Does it allow for any real interaction?
Ms BELL: It is the very first holographic communication that has occurred, so I guess it was under trial conditions. Vodafone have done that successfully, I don't have any more details than that. It was in one of the submissions that came through from Vodafone. But it is a very exciting for opportunity for rural and remote Australians and indeed people around the world.

Ms RYAN: The notion of having a teacher somewhere else and coming in via the internet has been around for a long time but it won't remove the need to have the human being present with the children. Someone needs to know the names and be interested in them, and the hologram won't be, or they might be in an interesting way.

Ms KEARNEY: They could have both.

Ms RYAN: They could have both. I know schools are very worried that this will be seen as a panacea and therefore a save in that you won't need the physics teacher because we are going to plug into Melbourne grammar's physics teacher. It is great that you can plug into Melbourne grammar's physics teacher but it won't replace the living human being in the classroom at the other end.

Ms BELL: I think happy management by hologram is probably not very effective either.

Ms RYAN: Nor will the hologram be interested enough in the students.

Ms BELL: But certainly as a short-term, in the VET sector—

Ms Blackwood: As a part of a suite of programs it could work.

Ms BELL: Exactly.

Ms Blackwood: And then there are, and you would be aware of, those collaborations between city and regional schools, where they may have a teacher who provides online courses but will also spend maybe two weeks and run a 10-day or 10-week program on land so that they do become familiar with each other so it is not just somebody online.

Mr JOYCE: My issue is, having been someone who has lived in a remote area, Danglemah, everybody where I lived went to boarding school—the whole lot—because that was the only option we had. The other issue is my own experience living in far western Queensland. I'm very fortunate that one of my daughters got into medicine and the other one went to ANU. But the courses they needed to do at high school were not available at St George high school; they just weren't and so we had to take the step to send them to boarding school, which was incredibly expensive for us—we had three away at one stage. I think there has to be an acceptance in remote areas that, if people are going to be able to congregate in a group so that they can actually do physics, do chemistry, do a higher level maths or higher level English, they're going to have utilise the boarding school environment; it is the only way that it works. You see schools, such as Mount St Bernard up at Ravenswood, that collect Indigenous kids from the Gulf. This capacity for many girls is just not there. The second biggest boys boarding school in Australia is Farrer. It's a state owned boarding school. When there is Helston and Yanco, and they're all boys boarding schools. But there is no girls state boarding school. Of course, independent schools are great, but they're also expensive, and some families are then left in the invidious position where the boys go off to boarding school and become whatever they want in life and the girls stay at home and go to the local school and become whatever is left over. How do we fix that?

Ms Blackwood: I'm with you. There should be opportunities, obviously, for girls as much as there should be for boys. The independent school sector does do a wonderful job of offering scholarships. In our submission we urge the government to look at continuation of programs. One of the frustrations is that those programs start and stop and start. There is a collective body of knowledge of what works and what doesn't work in boarding schools for girls, so, if you were able to initiate the establishment of one, there's a lot of shared knowledge to assist in how that might work.

Mr YOUNG: Is it possible to make the boys one co-ed?

Mr JOYCE: There are discussions around that. What I think could work and what we are doing at the moment is that there is support from the minister to some of the girls boarding schools. There are a lot of families that just have to suck it up. We've seen it—and I saw it with the drought: they'll have meetings with the headmasters and say: 'Look, we're now owed $9 million or $10 million. We can't wear it anymore.' It's a hard argument to come in and say we've got to actually
children, doesn't cover much. I'm also seeing these kids in other areas such as Boulia. You'd see them at a service station, and you'd go, 'What on earth are you doing here?' 'School's finished for me.'

CHAIR: Just pulling in Barnaby's point and yours, Joanne, if three young women want to do advanced math in year 11 and 12 in a fairly small town, where is this opportunity to provide an online skills portal that is completely curated and connected to the Australian curriculum so that the actual lectures can be seen by those three girls? At the same time, the year 10 maths teacher, while not a year 11 advanced math teacher, could work and collaborate with Australia's best teachers to make sure those three women can continue that and need not go to boarding school.

Ms HAMMOND: I think we've got a funding problem—

CHAIR: I'm asking these guys here.

Ms HAMMOND: Schoolteacher to schoolteacher, we don't do lectures in secondary school. That's university. We teach.

Ms Blackwood: That facility is there already. It's about linking the right schools with the schools that have that need. It's determining who has the capacity and who has the willingness to do that. I was a principal of a girls school, and we had a brother school. We were sharing classes where it wasn't viable to run the same class on each campus. We were sharing.

Ms HAMMOND: Is there state variation in people's capacity to do that between private and public? Does that vary?

Ms Blackwood: I suspect it does. I think many of the independent schools were first cabs off the rank in terms of using technology, so they're a little bit further ahead. Sometimes that can stymie though because they're locked into ways of doing things. I don't see that there should be a distinction between them.

CHAIR: Do know one state fairly well that you could—

Ms Blackwood: Western Australia.

CHAIR: So you can confirm to me that the entire ATAR range of subjects is available online in a specialist-taught class—

Ms Blackwood: It could be, not is.

CHAIR: Is it anywhere at the moment that you're aware of?

Ms Blackwood: I'm not that familiar with the state online courses, but they do offer online courses for year 11 and 12 students in regional areas.

Ms KEARNEY: There's a public school called the Victorian School of Languages. It's in my electorate, actually. We should go there if you're interested in this, Chair. They were originally set up to teach languages in remote schools, where it's hard to get a French teacher, for example. They now have incredible technology to do that, but they're also branching out into teaching other things via this amazing technology. I went into one classroom, and the teacher had a great big computer screen there. She had all her students on the screen. She could see them all at once. If she touched on one of them she could talk to that particular student. It was amazing.

CHAIR: Where's that based?

Ms RYAN: It's distance education.

Ms KEARNEY: It's in Thornbury, in my electorate. They do amazing things, and they're developing curricula all the time to teach online. It's pretty incredible stuff that they can do now, and they can have that one-on-one interaction via a screen. It's extraordinary.

Ms RYAN: And in Victoria the numbers in that space are actually growing, even though we're physically a much smaller state. They're growing because there are growing numbers of people who think they're going to homeschool but then find that they don't have the capacity to homeschool. So distance education is becoming an alternative in that homeschool space, and the curriculum—

Mr HAMMOND: Western Australia has a long-established remote and distance education industry. If they haven't made a submission it might be worthwhile approaching them for feedback.

CHAIR: We typically get the member of the committee from the relevant state to do that, so we can drive that.

Ms KEARNEY: I'll write to the Victorian schools too.
CHAIR: That would be good. But I'd just point out, though, that one has to be enrolled in that school of distance, and the classes are in real time and sequence, so there's no ability to move ahead or to dive in, as an out-of-field teacher, to see these lectures. It's still very contained to those that are enrolled in the school.

Ms Blackwood: But it's also only available to one sector.

Ms RYAN: Yes, distance ed is public.

CHAIR: There's an opportunity there to broaden the scope.

Ms Blackwood: It could include other, independent regional schools if they had access to it.

Ms HAMMOND: Let's look at the opportunity gap.

Ms Blackwood: Yes, there's an opportunity.

CHAIR: Are there any other questions?

Ms KEARNEY: I just want to make one quick comment. I'm interested that you drew the link—one which seems painfully obvious to me—between the provision of community health services and school access and provision. It's obvious, really, when you think about it, that that would be an issue. Would you talk about that for a few minutes.

Ms Blackwood: Student wellbeing is such an important part of learning. Unless a student is physically, emotionally and intellectually well, they're not going to learn. One of the greatest gaps that our heads identified in remote and regional areas is the access to GPs, occupational therapists, counsellors and psychologists. Without that access, you're not going to be able to sustain the learning of those students. There are the frustrations of those who have students from remote and regional areas in boarding schools, particularly where there are mental health issues—suicide ideation, for example. You send that student home knowing there are no support services in that region. So, to me, technology and the expansion of those services are critical to being able to provide equity in education.

Ms KEARNEY: Thanks for raising that.

CHAIR: As you know, there's an organisation that specialises in bringing remote—particularly Indigenous—children down into boarding schools in the major cities. I wasn't sure what degree of oversight you had there. My interest is whether the strategy is school-to-school based or school-to-family based, or if it is basically just lifting an individual out to go to school and then dropping them back in again.

Ms Blackwood: That will never work. I speak from experience. At the school I was a principal at, we had a program for Indigenous girls from the Kimberley area. At any one time we had between 25 and 30 students in the boarding house. It took significant resources to make that work, and the key was mental health and wellbeing. The sad reality is that most of those girls that came—even though they were, if you like, the high-aspiring achievers—had family dysfunction and often family violence and sexual abuse in their backgrounds. So they needed a whole support system to be able to do well in school. It cannot be a one-way relationship. So we needed to establish a relationship.

CHAIR: Is there evidence of a more mature two-way relationship?

Ms Blackwood: A two-way relationship with their community and their parents.

CHAIR: Is that happening?

Ms Blackwood: It is indeed.

CHAIR: Can you point to some good examples?

Ms Blackwood: We have, at that particular school—I'm still saying 'we'! At that particular school, PLC Perth, they send a group of students every year to help with the Mowanjum Festival, to spend time engaging and learning about Indigenous culture in that area, and to connect with the families of the girls who are in the boarding facility. So it is a genuine two-way relationship. We learn as much from them as they can gain from us.

Ms HAMMOND: I have a follow-up to that. I understood some time ago that data was going to be collected—because there would be cohorts that have now finished from the school—one what the girls ended up doing.

Ms Blackwood: That's right. That's my retirement plan—to do that longitudinal study. At the moment, it's anecdotal evidence, although what we do know is that the students are staying at school until year 12, so they have year 12 completion. We know a significant number of them are going on to tertiary or VET studies beyond school. But it took a good 10 years to really develop that program such that we can confidently say now that the majority of students that come do move on.
Ms RYAN: In WA, the private sector aren't linked into a statewide collection of that data?

Ms Blackwood: Linked into a statewide—

Ms RYAN: In Victoria, that data is collected for all schools, public and private.

Ms Blackwood: Yes, it is collected.

Ms HAMMOND: It just hasn't been analysed. I have one further follow-up on that. There are a number of those programs in WA. Some other schools do them as well. One criticism that I used to hear voiced about them was that students who came from remote areas and studied wouldn't go back. Is there any evidence for that?

Ms Blackwood: My experience is that many of them go back there. Their connections with the land are so strong. They may not go back to live, but they do go back to their communities. Our argument was always that, until the Indigenous people have their own teachers, their own doctors and their own specialists, things are not going to change. So I think that, as role models in their communities, they are really significant, because other young people can see what they can be, and you don't know what you can be unless you can see what you can be, and those opportunities often aren't there in those areas.

Ms HAMMOND: Yes.

CHAIR: I'll just finish by saying that, if we're going to assess those future pathways of people that are taken away to boarding schools, we need to assess the entire cohort from which they came to actually understand the potentially deleterious impacts of lifting the star out of a cohort and losing their impact in the community.

Ms Blackwood: Absolutely. AIEF have done some significant research in that area and have put out a book that provides advice on placing students in boarding situations.

Ms RYAN: Is there any data from the public sector about interrupted education? I can only imagine. I did a year's teaching in Darwin, and I taught the kids from Kormilda at the time; they were in my class. I know that there were high numbers of students from the outer suburbs who were doing the equivalent of the VCE over three years or perhaps over four or perhaps over a multiplicity. So is there any data on remote kids and how long it takes? How often would you expect that kind of interruption?

Ms Blackwood: That data would be there. Whether there's somebody who's collating and collecting all of that I don't know, but I know individual schools would.

Ms RYAN: I would expect that remote and regional students would have a higher number of interruptions to their education.

Ms Blackwood: Absolutely.

Ms RYAN: They decide not to go back in January.

Ms Blackwood: Or there's sorry business and they miss a term.

Ms RYAN: Yes. We have very linear views in terms of K to 12—whichever way you want to look at that. I would think that in remote and regional communities we'd actually need to be looking to ensure that the funding is there so that, if that takes 14 years, it takes 14 years.

Ms Blackwood: It takes 14 years, yes. That's where I think the VET programs are increasingly valuable as well. They offer a lot more flexibility in terms of moving in and moving out of shorter-term courses.

Ms RYAN: Yes.

CHAIR: One of the challenges we have is that, when we look at schools containing students with similar starting scores on NAPLAN—which is the only thing we have to objectively compare schools—we see wildly different outcomes two years and five years later. It just invites the question: why is this happening? The conversation is always the same with the principals. They just give me the 'unique conditions' argument, which is in no way correlated to what's actually happening with exit scores. From a health point of view, if we just took this line that everyone is unique and it's impossible to find consistent, systematic ways to improve the system, then we just wouldn't use any medical research, and every GP would just treat with whatever medicine they have at hand on the day. But clearly there are more consistent elements to a school education, recognised by academics all over the world. Do we just leave it to principals to have an annual review and trust that the PD is working okay?

Ms Blackwood: No. I think there needs to be provision of programs, but I think those communities need to be able to determine whether that is something that suits them and be able to tap into it.

CHAIR: When the progress isn't the same as an otherwise socio-educationally equivalent school down the road, what do we do, except have a chat to the principal, who tells me there are unique conditions? I say: 'What
are the unique conditions? Where is the data collected to suggest that you are any different to the Catholic school five kilometres away with an identical socio-educational profile?"

**Ms Blackwood:** There's such a complex array of situations that contribute to that. They may be only five kilometres away, but they may be in a much lower socioeconomic situation, with poor employment opportunities and little aspiration in the homes, and parental support is not there because their experience of education hasn't necessarily been that positive either.

**Ms RYAN:** Varying cultural profile.

**Ms Blackwood:** So five kilometres down the road you can get a very different situation, and what's going to suit that particular environment will be—

**CHAIR:** But just to interrupt: it's all picked up in regionality, ethnic component, non-English-speaking background, socio-educational elements of income—all of it's picked up. If something is not being picked up, just tell us what it is and we'll add it.

**Ms RYAN:** But even NESB is much more complex than that.

**CHAIR:** Yes. Some could be Asian and some could be—

**Ms RYAN:** We did this study in Victoria. Non-English-speaking background used to be a funding mechanism. In Victoria we changed it to what was the most compelling data, which was around parental education levels. That's what was compelling. That's what was the most significant contributor.

**CHAIR:** And that's at the heart of ICSEA?

**Ms RYAN:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I'm just asking the question of our guest. So the question is—

**Ms Blackwood:** There are many things that are going to help—

**CHAIR:** what should we be collecting that we're not collecting to get a more fine assessment of how schools differ? What would you like to see added to the ICSEA score, for instance? I respect that you could break down non-English speaking background into Asian non-English speaking background compared to some other linguistic bridge. That's a more complicated one than, for instance, having a French background. I'm just suggesting: how do we improve this index?

**Ms Blackwood:** Quality teachers is one way of being able to improve it. We know that attracting quality teachers is a real challenge in these areas. We give a range of possibilities there to supplement the teaching that's available, to support more nuanced visa applications to bring people into those areas, to provide online training for those teachers, but I think quality of teaching and opportunities for that professional growth is an important one, and research on what does work, and what seems to work particularly in the primary years is direct instruction—so support to provide those teaching methods and other research that is available that might be of advantage to those schools.

When it gets into the secondary area, I think engagement is just critical in so many of these areas. Again, we provide a range of opportunities there to address the VET system, and it's difficult to provide VET, because teachers are required to be qualified RTOs, and the duplication of qualifications is a barrier. So have a look at that duplication of qualifications and whether we can facilitate some of these teachers in these areas being able to take on VET programs that will engage students in their local communities, which again engages the parents, engages the community so you get a greater growth and greater buy-in to supporting the educational aspirations of children in those schools.

**Ms RYAN:** In the independent sector are you collecting the cultural data—attitudes to school from staff, parents, students? Sometimes that opens up a whole other can of worms that can be looked at in relation to why are the same schools having to hear them there, and this school is going forward and this school is stagnant. It is often about attitudes.

**CHAIR:** Attitudes towards the importance of education.

**Ms RYAN:** Or teachers' attitudes towards the community.

**Ms Blackwood:** And leadership. Leadership is critical in these schools.

**Ms RYAN:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** Finding a way to quantify it—
Ms Blackwood: Continuity of leadership is a serious issue. So by partnering them with perhaps metropolitan schools, where you've got a strong leader and continuity of leadership, to mentor and coach the leaders in the regional areas, it's another way of being able to build capacity of leaders in those areas.

CHAIR: Without picking and choosing. We have heard from another witness that while continuity may exist in a country school, it may well be that a number of the small teaching body are second income earners from those that are working there for other reasons, and teaching is basically an income supplementation exercise for long-term teachers. So these regional towns may actually benefit from some turnover, potentially. It's not just about tenure. We've really taken a lot of your time. That has been very valuable.

Ms Blackwood: Not at all. Thank you. It's such a critical issue.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time.

Committee adjourned at 12:11