



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

(Roundtable)

Reference: Combining study and work

TUESDAY, 7 APRIL 2009

ADELAIDE

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

INTERNET

Hansard transcripts of public hearings are made available on the internet when authorised by the committee.

The internet address is:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard>

To search the parliamentary database, go to:

<http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au>

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Tuesday, 7 April 2009

Members: Ms Bird, (*Chair*), Dr Jensen (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Clare, Ms Collins, Mrs D'Ath, Mr Irons, Mr Oakeshott, Mr Sidebottom, Dr Southcott and Mr Zappia

Members in attendance: Ms Bird, Mr Irons, Dr Jensen

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The impact of combined study and work on the success of youth transitions and Year 12 attainment, with a focus on:

- providing opportunities to recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students' part time or casual work;
- identifying more flexible, innovative and/or alternative approaches to attaining a senior secondary certificate which support students to combine work and study;
- support that may be required to assist young people combining work and study to stay engaged in their learning, especially where work and study intersects with income support;
- the potential impact on educational attainment (including the prospects for post-compulsory qualifications and workforce productivity); and
- the effectiveness of school-based training pathways and their impact on successful transitions, including opportunities for improvement (particularly in relation to pathways to employment for disadvantaged young people).

WITNESSES

ANLEZARK, Ms Alison, Manager, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, National Centre for Vocational Education and Training	2
APOSTOLOPOULOS, Mr Con, Assistant Principal/VET/Senior School, Para Hills High School	18
BEDDIE, Ms Francesca, Acting General Manager, Research, National Centre for Vocational Education and Training.....	2
BOB, Parent.....	54
BRADLEY, Student, Para Hills High School	31
BRENNAN, Prof. Marie, Private capacity.....	2
BRUCE, Helen Ms, Coordinator, Para Hills High School	18
CADE, Student	54
CHANDAL, Former student	54
DAVID, Student, Smithfield Plains High School.....	42
DIANNE, Parent	54
ELEANOR, Student, Smithfield Plains High School	42
ELIZABETH, Student, Smithfield Plains High School	42
EMMA, Student, Craigmore High School	31
GARRETH, Student, Paralowie R-12 School.....	31
JAMES, Student	54
JAMES, Student, Salisbury High School	42
JONATHON, Student, Craigmore High School.....	31
JOSH, Student	54
JOSHUA, Student, Paralowie R-12 School.....	31
KENNEDY, Mr Craig, Coordinator Counsellor, Para Hills High School	18
LEA, Parent	54
MERCURIO, Filomena Ms, Assistant Principal, Para Hills High School	18
NICHOLAS, Student, Paralowie R-12 School.....	31
NIKITA, Former student	54
NIKOLA, Student, Para Hills High School	31
OWEN, Student, Craigmore High School.....	31
REBECCA, Student, Smithfield Plains High School	42
RENEE, Student, Salisbury High School.....	42
SCOTT, Ms Janette Dawn, Principal, Para Hills High School	18
STEPHANIE, Student, Salisbury High School.....	42
TAMARA, Student, Para Hills High School.....	31
THUY, Student, Paralowie R-12 School	31
WEBBER, Annemarie Mrs, School Services Officer, Para Hills High School	18

Committee met at 9.36 am

CHAIR (Ms Bird)—I declare open this third public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training as part of its inquiry into combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions. I thank you all for your attendance here today. Before we begin, I will place on the record the committee's thanks to Mrs Janette Scott, the Principal of Para Hills High School, for allowing the committee the opportunity to conduct proceedings here at the school. We look forward to holding discussions with staff and students from the school later today.

This inquiry was referred by the Minister for Education, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP. Fifty-one submissions have been received to date from various parts of Australia and from a broad cross-section of interested parties. Copies of these submissions are available on the committee's website. I remind participants that in order to maintain the structure of the proceedings it is important that all comments are addressed through the chair. I also remind participants that, although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and warrants the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by Hansard and will attract parliamentary privilege.

[9.38 am]

ANLEZARK, Ms Alison, Manager, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, National Centre for Vocational Education and Training

BEDDIE, Ms Francesca, Acting General Manager, Research, National Centre for Vocational Education and Training

BRENNAN, Prof. Marie, Private capacity

CHAIR—Welcome. We would normally ask you to make an opening statement and then go to questions from the committee. Is someone prepared to make an opening statement for us about the work that you are doing? I understand there is a submission to come in the near future, so perhaps you could give us an update on what is happening with that.

Ms Beddie—I will hand over to Ms Anlezark, who is the principal researcher on the piece of work that is coming to you. I am glad to say that we can give you a sense of those findings today, but that we will pass the detailed report to you very soon. I am sure, in conversation, there will be some questions about LSAY that I might be able to answer, but I think it is better you hear from Ms Anlezark.

Ms Anlezark—I would like to talk about the research in quite general terms. As Ms Beddie said, the details will be within the paper and we are still refining some of the analysis. The paper seeks to answer the question of whether combining school and work is detrimental or beneficial to students in terms of their school outcomes, their post-school study outcomes and their post-school employment outcomes. We felt this was the critical question at the nub of a lot of the anecdotal stories that you hear. We would like to try to nail it down with some statistical analysis and evidence against that.

We look at the effect of combining school and work on retention to year 11, year 12, on TER score, post-school full-time study and full-time employment for people who complete year 12. It sounds quite simple, that is, looking at whether working is a good thing or not, but there are a lot of dimensions that you have to consider. One of the new pieces of information we provide in this research report is to look at what happens when you work in the different school year levels—and not only that but also the intensity of work in the school year levels. We are looking at work in year 10 and how that would affect your retention to year 11, and if you work in year 11 how that would affect your retention to year 12. We are breaking it down into the subcomponents rather than just saying, ‘Do you work in year 10? How does this affect completion of year 12?’ That has taken a little bit of unangling and that is why we have taken so much time over this. We originally anticipated finishing it in February, but it will hopefully be finished soon.

Dr JENSEN—Has this been a longitudinal study?

Ms Anlezark—Yes. The data we are using is from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, which is a program that has been going since 1995 in its current form. There are currently four cohorts of students in this study. There was a group who started in 1995. They were in year

9 in 1995 and they were followed through to 2006, when they had their last interview. There was a similar group who started in 1998, called the Y98 cohort. They were in year 9 in 1998. They stayed in the survey and are currently still in the survey. They were interviewed last year, will be interviewed again this year and probably next year as well. There are two newer cohorts, the Y03 and the Y06, and there will be a new one coming on board, the Y09. Those students were first surveyed in 2003, but they were 15 years of age, not year 9 in that first wave. They also sat PISA, the International Student Assessment test, and then they became part of the LSAY program after that.

One of the issues for us in terms of comparing our results with previous research is that this group of people we are looking at is an age based cohort whereas they were school year level based. Some of the kids in the other surveys such as the Margaret Vickers report were a little bit younger. Some of them may have even been too young to have worked when they were in year 9. It is quite tricky trying to align these different cohorts together to replicate others' analyses. In this study we have used the Y03 cohort. They were an average of 15 and 7 months in 2003. We have looked at their activities from 2003 to 2007. That was the available data at the time we started the survey.

CHAIR—In 2007 they would have been 19?

Ms Anlezark—Yes. Most of them were one to two years post year 12 at that stage. We found that combining school and work appears to have a negative impact on study outcomes. That is in terms of retention between years 10, 11 and 12, and on TER score, but there was a positive impact on getting a full-time job. These results are consistent with other findings in this area. We also find, though, that the results are modest unless the number of hours are long, which leads us to conclude that individuals can combine school and work with minimal impact on their study if their hours are moderated.

Dr JENSEN—What are you referring to as moderate?

Ms Anlezark—More than 20 hours is potentially too long. Different individuals appear to tolerate different hours. I would not like to put a figure on it at this stage, but in the final report we can certainly look at something like that. Certainly, over 20 hours is too long. Where hours are longer it appears that individuals show a stronger orientation towards employment rather than academic pursuits. It is almost as though they become a bit disengaged with the school and they are more interested in work than they are in their schoolwork.

Dr JENSEN—Which is chicken and which is egg?

Ms Anlezark—I do not know. That is a summary of the findings in the broadest terms. Do you have any other questions that you would like to ask?

Dr JENSEN—I have a few.

CHAIR—Clearly, we are anticipating the details of your work with a great deal of interest. At our initial roundtable the point was made that there had been some work done. From memory, up to eight hours is generally a positive experience on all three aspects and then over that—I thought it was 16 or 18 hours—it began to have a negative impact on retention and TER results.

It is going to be very interesting for us to have a look, because that is obviously a significant issue when we are trying to look at the issue of work-school balance. It is positive to a point and then seems to become a negative.

One of the things raised with us in terms of the hours was not only the number of hours but when the hours are worked. Are you looking at that? Some of the student surveys that have come back to us have said their shifts are actually until midnight or 1 o'clock on school nights, and that is clearly a much different effect from a Saturday shift or whatever. Are you looking at that aspect of it in terms of what you meant by the intensity of hours? What did you mean by that?

Ms Anlezark—The intensity of hours in our study is the sum of hours of all jobs that a student works averaged over a week. We are not looking at the times that they work. It is tricky looking at intensity, school year levels, outcomes and retention, but there is certainly work on that covered in other people's research. One of the US studies looked at whether people were working sporadically—so they were working for long periods of time and then they did not work for a while—or whether it was moderate, steady work that they were doing. They found that moderate steady work seemed to be more beneficial than the longer durations.

CHAIR—When you are talking about the retention, are you looking at the year 10 group's return for year 11? Are you also looking at whether that year 10 group completes year 12 or do you just do it from year to year?

Ms Anlezark—We are looking from year to year. The Longitudinal Surveys of Australia Youth, LSAY, have some attrition bias in them, and you find that nearly everybody who starts year 12 actually finishes it. These are the people who have answered the survey as well. That is why we are looking at retention, because we have a little bit more to play with in terms of people not making it. We look at retention between years 10 and 11, and then retention from year 11 to year 12, so that means they have commenced year 12.

CHAIR—The inherent nature of the study itself means that you are more likely to have results from those who were least likely to leave school. So, you are balancing that out?

Ms Anlezark—The retention rates are reasonably high. We retain about 85 per cent of the students from year to year, so it is not a huge effect but you do have to take into consideration that those people who tend to leave school early tend also to disappear from the survey.

Dr JENSEN—A few questions spring to mind. Obviously, some of this is going to be fleshed out in your report. Have you examined the issue of the actual age at which they start working? In other words, is there any difference between someone who, let us say, started at 15 compared with someone who starts at 17 in year 12?

Ms Anlezark—No, we have not looked at that. We have looked at whether you worked in year 10 and how it affected your retention to year 11, if you worked in year 11 how it affected your retention to year 12, and if you worked in year 12 how it affected your TER score. That is how we have looked at the school outcomes. Certainly, that would be something worth probing further, because we do have age in the LSAY survey and we do know what months they are working.

Dr JENSEN—That might be an interesting breakdown, if the data is there to support that. What sort of standardisation did you use? Obviously you have two different cohorts and you are wanting to see their relative performance, particularly with regard to, say, TER score. You could have a bunch of students that, for argument's sake, are averaging 70 and not doing work, and another cohort averaging 60 and doing work at the year 10 level and then they go to year 12, and the cohort averaging 70 and were not working are still averaging 70 and the others are averaging, let us say, 65, they are still shown as performing worse although relatively they have improved. Have you done any analysis looking at relative positions or is it just an absolute?

Ms Anlezark—No. In this study we are using only the Y03 cohort. Margaret Vickers used the Y95 cohort and Lynn Robinson used an earlier predecessor of the LSAY cohorts called the Youth in Transition Surveys. We are looking at an individual one, but we are controlling for background characteristics when we are modelling the effects on retention. We are taking into consideration the parental background and location, where they are living. We are controlling for a range of characteristics when we are doing the modelling.

Dr JENSEN—It is the relativities as well. Interestingly, we had a discussion with Joel Klein, who is the head of the New York education system. He was speaking about comparisons of schools. One of the arguments that has been used is: how can you compare apples with oranges and with pears? The point he made was what you were saying; you correct for the socioeconomic demographic. But the other point that he made is that you need to look at the relativities within that demographic. Let us say you have a cohort of 10 schools in the same socioeconomic grouping. If one was in, say, fifth position scoring in one year and then you had that cohort of students moving up another couple of years and they were suddenly fourth, that school has performed well, even though in an absolute sense, compared with other schools, they may not have. Have you made those relative comparisons in your study?

Ms Anlezark—No, we have not. We used technical propensity scoring to control for the background characteristics. We are not looking within and we are not looking at student characteristics and saying, 'This group has this and the other group has that.' We do separate analysis by gender. We are looking at the difference in effect on boys and girls.

Dr JENSEN—What I am trying to say, and I am saying it in a very verbose and not very succinct way, is that it is basically very important that we know where those students were when they started and where they are when they finished, so that a judgement can be made on the benefit or otherwise of the working out.

Ms Anlezark—The tricky thing for us is that we are looking at a cohort. We are trying to ask, 'Is working a good thing or not? We are not trying to differentiate and say, 'It's good for this group and not good for that group.' We are looking at them as a whole, but just splitting them by gender.

It is very difficult. There are so many different dimensions and angles that you can approach this from. We looked at the characteristics of people who were likely to work when we did the propensity scoring and you find that the characteristics are spread right across the school population, but there are some characteristics that differentiate those who are most likely to work from others that are less likely. For example, females are slightly more likely than males. Those people from higher, but not the highest, socioeconomic status seem to work more, but they do

not work as many hours as those people from the lower socioeconomic groups. An interesting finding was that people on youth allowance, who are generally from the lower SES whom we would expect to be working the longer hours, do not seem to be so perhaps that is giving them some protection in that area. That will be fleshed out a little bit more in the paper.

Dr JENSEN—Depending on how you work the data, a lot of interesting things could come out of this.

Mr IRONS—Did you look at the types of vocations that the working students went into after they had finished school and whether that had any effect on their working time? Did that affect their ability to gain certain types of jobs?

CHAIR—Or if it is linked?

Ms Anlezark—We did not but in other research that I have looked at there is an indication that people tend not to go into the same fields. The majority of work that young people do when they are at school is not the old babysitting and paper delivery but the supermarkets and hospitality. It is mostly in retail and hospitality. Whilst young people may go on to work in those fields there is not that direct match. A lot of people are doing it because it is a part-time job that provides some financial independence from their parents.

Mr IRONS—They are just using it as an income.

Ms Anlezark—Certainly, in ‘24/7 Teens’, the House of Representative’s paper, there is some motivational information about why people are working, and it is certainly that they do not want to be flipping burgers for the rest of their lives.

Mr IRONS—You talk about hours and how it affects them to a certain point. My son spends about 25 hours a week playing sport. I am sure that affects his academic performance as well.

Ms Anlezark—I have a son who does the same. You asked earlier about the hours that you work, whether it is doing night fill or working a couple of hours a day. At the end of the day something has to give, be it sport or academic studies; you might throw the shift in and do something else. It is the sum total of the hours. There are only so many hours in a day. Whether it is two hours every day after school or four hours in the middle of the night, the sum total of it all probably has the same effect at the end of the day.

CHAIR—Is part of your study looking at the motivation for work or were you just talking about the propensity characteristics?

Ms Anlezark—No. It is not looking at the motivation. Lynn Robinson, in a previous LSAY report, did some work on motivations and why people worked. It tended to be for some financial independence from their parents more so than out of necessity.

CHAIR—Do you remember what group she was looking at?

Ms Anlezark—She looked at the Youth in Transition Survey. These were birth cohorts that were the precursor to the current LSAY.

CHAIR—Is that pre-'95?

Ms Anlezark—Yes. I have the details and I can provide that later.

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Anlezark—In their survey they had specific questions about why there were working. She had some information on that. We were not looking at that. We were just looking at the sum of the hours and how that affects their school and post-school outcomes.

CHAIR—I think that is important. One of the things that came through at the roundtable was that, in terms of managing how this occurs as a community, there is a real silo thing happening; young people feel that what they do with their work is their business and they keep their family, parents in particular, out of it. They do not see that it is relevant to school; school is not relevant to work. They are trying to balance all of these competing things. As Mr Irons said, you then add sporting commitments and other responsibilities on to that. If we want to provide some guidance and structural feedback for things such as the Youth Allowance then it is going to be useful to at least have some broad parameters about at what number of hours, generally speaking, it starts to be a problematic situation for young people to manage effectively. That is what we are keen to see. We have discussed the retention side of it. Do you have any preliminary information on the actual TER results side of the survey regarding the effect of work?

Ms Anlezark—We used technical ordinary leave squared and looked at the impact on TER scores. There was a difference of up to five TER points between working no hours and then working different levels of hours up to that, in general terms. Males and females were similar.

Dr JENSEN—What was the statistical significance of that five points? Is that in the noise?

Ms Anlezark—Yes. We can do a statistical test and say P less than 0.05; this one is significant. But is that what we are really trying to get or are we trying to look at the general trend in that the more hours you work the lower your score is, and it keeps getting lower the more hours you work? Whether it is significant between one level or not may or may not matter. We have to be a bit clever with this.

Dr JENSEN—As the chair was asking earlier on, was that the case right through, that if you work any hours and there is a negative effect on your TER and it is just that as you do more and more it gets worse and worse, or was there a number of hours where you had net benefit to a certain point and then it fell off after that?

Ms Anlezark—For males not working and working up to five hours it was really just the same. There was no significant difference. It started to become significant as you worked more hours. The difference in TER points is only a couple. We could say it is significant in statistical terms, but is two points significant in life? We are trying to interpret the results in the most meaningful way, so we can say it is significant, which is the statistical point.

CHAIR—Is this a salami situation? There are only two points with every couple of hours. You could say, 'That's only another two points', and at a certain number of hours you say, 'This has actually had a really big impact on the result.'

Ms Anlezark—That is right.

Ms Beddie—Yes, it is.

Dr JENSEN—How many students do you have in that study?

Ms Anlezark—Some 13,000 started out in the first wave of the survey. We can split it by different school year level, because in the first wave there was a split across the different ones. There were 10,370 in 2003; there were 9,379 in 2004; 8,690 in 2005; 7,720 in 2006; and 6,658 in 2007. It is a reasonable sample.

Dr JENSEN—It is a decent sample size. That gets back to the issue that I was bringing up a bit earlier on, the issues of normalisation or standardisation at the beginning before they start working. Has that been done? My concern is that those two TER points that you are talking about, particularly for just over five hours, may in fact be that cohort of students that have opted to do work. If you had a look at their scores before they started working they were, let us say, two below, anyway, so the work has not done anything but it is just the relativity.

Ms Anlezark—As to the two points, we have included the control for the background characteristics. One of the characteristics that we use is their academic ability in year 9. We are controlling for their ability in giving you that two point difference.

Ms Beddie—One of the things the study will look at is orientation. It is not quite the point you are making, but if someone has an aspiration to work rather than to go on to year 12, the role of part-time work does change. The study is confirming that orientation to work or to study is important. That is not quite the same relativity, but would it be too tough to say that there is self-selection, that there are some motivational things?

CHAIR—There are people who are there because they are not allowed to leave until they get a job. We all know some of those. We might go to Professor Brennan. I invite you to make an opening statement to us and we will take the opportunity to ask you some questions as well.

Prof. Brennan—I was supposed to be there at the roundtable early in February, but my back did not allow me to get out of bed, so I am grateful for another chance. Some of the things that were in the submission that I put together with Dr Katherine Hodgetts, who was there, will obviously have been raised at that roundtable. If I repeat things then just tell me.

I would like to start by suggesting that we need to be fairly careful about setting up the fact that kids ought to work or kids should be working or that work is desirable or even not desirable. It seems to me that at the moment, because so many young people work, it is really important that that does not necessarily become the norm. If I talk to my colleagues in Europe or most parts of Asia, they are absolutely horrified at the idea that young people are working instead of doing their work at school; that that is their work. There are some expectations that it is more helpful to have had a job at school in order to get post-school work, even part-time work, or while you are studying at university. The majority of the students five minutes down the road at the University of South Australia are working 20-plus hours a week in the school of education. It is a really scary issue for their capacity to survive at university.

It is also an issue in terms of who are the people most likely to need to work or to want to work for a range of reasons. The people who often need to work are the ones who are in the lower SES and they are the ones who often tend to work the longer hours. Our study of part-time South Australian Certificate of Education students, which was funded by the Australian Research Council, was funded as a national project because South Australia has the largest number of part-time students. It is a growing phenomenon everywhere. We wanted to really understand what was going on. For many of them, the accepted myth or the commonsense was that they were part time because they wanted to work. We did not find that. We had a survey of 1,000 students. We had 14 detailed case study schools, rural and metropolitan, and the issue for many students were issues of stress and needing to balance other things in their lives, not just work. In fact, while there was a significant difference in the bit over 1,000 students whose surveys were returned and examined properly, there was not a very significant difference between the percentage of students working who were full time at school and those who were part time. I think that is a really interesting parallel and complementary bit of work for the NCVET.

The issue for me is: which students and in what schools? The background study for our work conducted by Professor Eleanor Ramsay showed that the part-time students were very significantly clustered in the low SESs. They were very significantly clustered there. There were two groups, an older group, that is, 20 and over, and then a younger group. The older group tended to be trying to come back to school after some time away and were clustered more in year 11. Some of them were not trying to finish school, they were just trying to connect back into a formally recognised institution, which would also help them with social links and other networks. Some of them were very clearly trying to continue their study part time.

Perhaps the most useful thing I could say at this stage, rather than repeat some of the things that went on early in February, is to think about the issue of what the effect is on schools and what schools can do about it. We had two groups of schools in our study. We called one group the 'reactive'; they reacted to the part-timeness in different ways, making accommodation or trying not to. The others were very much proactively saying, 'It's here and we better deal with it in a different way.' The schools who were reactive were doing so usually for very good reason. For example, they did not want the students to all leave, go to work at the local abattoir or supermarket and then be kicked out as soon as they reached adult wages because it meant that they would never come back to school. They were actively saying, 'It's too hard.' They might have been quite small schools, which made it really hard to run an active timetable with a range of subjects and it was almost impossible to give students real choice of subjects if they had a particular fixed set of times in their workplaces.

Also, the different kinds of assessment that people do in relation to different kinds of subjects often require continuous work, and if you are continuously missing it is very hard to catch up. Part of that is connected to the extent to which workplaces are flexible themselves while expecting schools to be flexible and they do not want to be. It is very difficult to design work for classes or groups of individuals when the basic staffing formula is such that it is a disadvantage to a school to have students who are part time, because they get pro rata EFT and it does not actually assist, whereas somebody who is part time actually requires sometimes even more assistance than somebody who is full time.

In the case study of Mount Gambier that was described to you at the roundtable they have individual case management for every student, and on the honour board you cannot tell the difference between who was part time and who was full time. That was really important.

We have to look really carefully at what are the barriers at the school level that are real to being able to make enough flexibility. It may be possible in schools that, for example, are separate senior colleges, where you have a large enough school to have a range of subjects, or where there is real capacity to use the ways in which the certificate itself allows flexibility. For example, in the new SACE in South Australia there is not only a personal learning plan, which counts as a subject; they also have an extended learning project, which is a research project. The students can conduct research over time worth equivalent to two subjects and count that as part of their work, as well as TAFE subjects and other school subjects.

It seems to me that some of it is: how can we make the year 11/12 certificate as flexible as possible and what are the tolerances? We do not know that yet. There is not enough information around to understand that, but we do know some of the issues that get in the way.

Lower down in the school, the issue of making it possible for younger ones to get a taste of what it is to be part of a workplace is often a really important aspect, and it used to be called just work experience. That is what I did and you probably did. The middle class schools are much more successful in doing that. The private schools are much more successful because of the same reason; they have better networks of people who are in employment or running their own business. Continually we come back to one of the reasons that the young ones who have low SES want to work is to get the networks that their peers have via their families and that they do not normally get.

An interesting substudy in our bigger Australian Research Council funded study was done by our doctoral student Rochelle Woodley-Baker. Her work was just with young women. There were two groups. One group was extremely articulate about why they were back at school. They were young mums. They wanted to do better for their kids. When their kids were able to go to school, they wanted to go back to work full time. They wanted to have a qualification. All of them understood the importance of the credential of year 12. All of them understood that. They realised that they would not get jobs if they do not have some kind of a credential, even if it is just a passport and the content is never used.

There was another group of young women with a very similar SES background and they had very limited connection with anybody other than their local immediate family, and often they were very small families. They did not understand how to negotiate any of the infrastructure or services that were available to them. Their aspirations for themselves were very limited and very short term.

There was an issue of being able to have something that is connected with school in, say, years 9 and 10, for example, which actively helps young people to make the networks and to understand something about how to negotiate with different agencies and what they are there for, and how you work with employers, a Centrelink office and so on. All of those issues are really hard to do if you do not have any networks that are successful at doing that. That group of young women who did not have those networks were almost inarticulate in explaining their current lives and had very limited and short-term almost fantasies about what their future life would be.

For example, picket fence, a man and another few babies. Having an aspiration to have babies is very handy and useful, otherwise we will not have any children in school, but that, being self-interested. It is really important to recognise that if you do not have the networks then your default setting is—if you are a young woman—‘Well, I’ll just have some babies.’ They do not have a view outside that and they did not have much of an idea. They basically came back to school for childcare, support, friendship groups and did not really have much of an idea of completion that would get them into something else. However, they still recognised the importance of completion.

It is really important to get down to what schools can do. In South Australia, unlike most states, to finish school you have to be in school. That is why we have the adult re-entry schools here as well as more of a capacity than in some other states for young people to come back to school. The stresses that that places on the school are significant, and I am not sure how much flexibility can be built in.

The Mount Gambier model where you have an individual case management with every young person and you have very close relations with local community groups, employer groups and so on, works really well and it is clear that their retention rates, their TER scores and everything have gone up as a result of that. They have that really well documented. But in areas where there are not good employer networks and there are no real jobs for young people or no public transport to get them there, or they are in a much more isolated rural area with not much in the way of a service economy for young people to work in or farming industry to work in, it is much more difficult.

Part of the issue as I stand back and look at it is that there is becoming a norm that everybody works and the people who get the jobs most easily are the ones who conform, look nice, speak well and so on, even at McDonald’s. Often the most difficult jobs or the nastiest or most exploitative go to the poorest, and that is a really tough one to work through.

In our submission we talked about the role of the school in relation to the community and monitoring different kinds of student pathways at the local level in the way that the LSAY survey follow-up work is happening, but resourcing and supports are needed for that to happen. We keep adding more things on to the schools’ slate. We are expecting them to help the students do all the networking, help them find the jobs, help adjust everything inside the school until the school itself is so fraught that it is very difficult to keep going.

There is a new kind of teacher needed who is not necessarily a career counsellor or just an ordinary counsellor but somebody who does the networking work and understands the way that schools work and the way that learning happens in schools. We do not have a job of that kind in any school system. I think we could grow them. We started calling them ‘navigator teachers’ in our study because they were helping the young ones navigate, which made a really significant difference.

There is another study I am currently involved in called the Future SACE Literacy Numeracy School to Work project funded by the local Department of Education and Children’s Services. In that project we are trying to look at the ways that students could use this new personal learning plan as a way to have a relationship with a teacher advocate, if you like, who will actually help them track their learning over three years—years 10, 11 and 12. The danger that I see out of that

is that many of the students went part time did so because of the stress associated with doing years 11 and 12. It used to be, when I did years 11 and 12, it was year 12 that counted. Now it is year 11, year 13 and year 10 that count. It looks like we will engulf the whole of secondary schools in high stress levels, which is not a safe place for young people, and not a place in which good learning can happen. If people are stressed they do not tend to learn at high levels.

Part of the issue may well be some of the joined up institutions—getting away from the silos. Some of it may be co-location of services for young people around schools, whether that is people who do job networking locating around the school so that it becomes a place where young people can get health and job assistance and all sorts of services targeted to young people. We have not explored that one enough to think through what some of those services might be.

CHAIR—I would like to take up a few points. In terms of the transition criteria that we are looking at, there are some really challenging ideas there for us. One of the underlying presumptions, where some of the data is becoming useful, is transitioning from school to work and indeed to study. One of the things we hear is that people defer all the time in order to earn income. Earning an income will determine whether they can afford to go back and take up their deferred positions at university and so on. It is not the presumption that for students going from year 12 to a job having had work can be of benefit; there are also students who need to be earning an income in order to do further study. One of the things in both lots of evidence I am hearing is that if you are from—to use an old term—middle-class families you actually have much better access to that employment, if I understand what you are saying, in forms that are going to be useful rather than exploitative. Whereas if you are from lower income families you are more likely to be working because you have to. You are more likely to be in the position where the chance of exploitation is higher and you are less likely to have the skills to manage that in meaningful ways.

Can you indicate to us whether the students who are studying part time are also picking up some of those other skills? It is not a straight qualification thing, but they are actually learning how to better negotiate the workplace and so forth as well. Does that information come through?

Prof. Brennan—We did not get a lot of information on that in that particular study. We got some largely through the qualitative interview work in the focus groups in the case study schools. We have still got to go back over a lot of this data. One of the issues that we found was that if the school was proactive it would require them to be doing assignments connected to that or having debriefings and assisting one another and the networks. It was not just whispered things between shifts warning you. It was actually discussing the nature of work and what your rights and responsibilities were in the school themselves.

In places where you had a staff member who was directly working with you to help you manage the different aspects of your life, then young people would get a different idea of what they should be doing. Also, if the school had good relationships with many of the employers, then the employers were less likely to be exploitative, because they would be seeing themselves as part of a community. That is easier, in some ways, in the country than in the city because there are so many in an area such that in some places it is difficult for a school to know which employers you would actually work with. Some of the exploitation, we suspect, is actually occurring in family businesses, and it is not always paid. We had a lot of students who were

doing unpaid family business work and unpaid caring work at a very high level of hours and stress. It was a serious problem for us to try to track some of that.

CHAIR—In your survey do you record unpaid work?

Ms Anlezark—In our study we ask people if they have a job that includes working in the family business and farm work that is not paid, yes. That is all captured as saying, yes, they are working. In looking at the characteristics, we found that people in regional areas were more likely to work than those in metropolitan areas, which was a little different from other studies. I suspect that is because we captured the whole aspect of working, paid and non-paid.

Prof. Brennan—Interestingly, when we talked to Bob Gregory from the ANU in relation to our study, part of the problem is that a lot of the ABS statistics do not capture any of this part time. The idea of a part-time student or the whole school-work earning-learning mix tends to be obscured in a lot of the national data and it is really hard to unpack what that means. When we had our seminar with Professor Gregory about that he was really interested to go back and see whether there was any way that he could start unpacking what that might mean. It really does put a very different complexion on what school is, what is the normal school and what is a full-time student.

CHAIR—What you are capturing is not going to capture one of the big things that drive a lot of women from low SES out of the school, which is caring for sibling responsibilities. They are saying, 'I've got three or four younger brothers and sisters and I'm basically bringing them up. I may as well leave school, have my own, and get paid to have my own.' Even that will not capture that side of that unpaid work. From what you were saying to us about what your survey spoke to, it is not simply the stress of study but also the stress of their complex lives.

Prof. Brennan—They lead very complex lives. My dad left school at 13. He was seen as a young man then. The concept of youth going to 25 is bizarre. It is an infantilising process that you have to stay at school now till you are 17. I think we have to change the role of schools and the ways in which schools have been set up. We cannot expect people who in other eras would have been working for five years to be treated like babies in an authoritarian way. For example, 'You've got to take this test. You can't do this. You've got to turn up at 9 o'clock. If you haven't got your uniform on, you'll be sent home', and all this kind of nonsense that surrounds it and is being pushed a lot by changes in policies that come from a very different motivation about caring for young people. Part of the issue for why many of the students that we talk to were interested in work is that they actually were treated as adults, and they are adults in lots of cases. Technically, it is when they are 18, but even at 16 or 17 many of them would have had a job.

CHAIR—They are transitioning to adulthood and they want some signs of that.

Prof. Brennan—Yes.

CHAIR—The other thing that I picked up significantly from your comments was that that is all well and good, but we need to resource schools and create the sorts of positions that are meaningful. In my area we have had teen unemployment at 35 per cent through the good times. We have not even looked at it since the more difficult economic times. One of the things that came through is that it is a manufacturing based community in transition. It is nearly all young

males. They are people with families who have a long tradition of being electricians, plumbers, mine workers and so on. They do not know the rest of the work world. They do not know how you navigate it and what is available, so their kids just have a very narrow expectation. They want to get an apprenticeship, which is hard to come by, and they do not know how to look beyond that. With all the best will in the world, it is clear schools and the old careers advice model has failed them. They then go out and we have a completely decentralised job network with multiple choices to be made about training organisations and so on. They are lost. They just give up. It is too complex. I am particularly interested in what you were saying about that concept of navigation. I do not know that it is best in the school because maybe you are repeating the problems that they feel that they are back at school, but it is quite clear that young people just find the whole system complex.

We did a study in my region and there were things and services there that I did not know existed and I am the federal MP. We have created this plethora of things with everybody saying, 'We already do this. We've already got that on offer', but for young people it is just bewildering. Is that one of the issues?

Prof. Brennan—That is one of the issues. One of the reasons that some of the older cohort coming back to school to study to get their certificate is to help get access to those networks, but it is also true that schools are not necessarily the best place to do that and if we keep putting more and more things on schools then that is not going to work, either. The issue is the multiple definitions of what counts as a full-time load. It is just like your query about how many hours of work counts as real work or serious long term or high levels of work or low levels of work, what is steady and what is sporadic. There are some issues there for teachers in thinking about work for young people. I suspect that the economic meltdown will make it even harder for the young ones at school to get jobs, especially the ones who actually need the money, that it will be much more cutthroat to get jobs, and therefore employers are not going to be as willing to negotiate.

CHAIR—Or give anybody a go.

Prof. Brennan—That is right. That is why the National Schools Network called for an intergenerational youth compact. That is probably really timely for thinking about trying to buffer some of the young ones. That is the really critical age where, if they make some transitions to some paid work and some study, they can stay connected and feel like they are a valued part of society. If they do not get any of those things, we are really storing up longer term trouble and international economic crises get lived out in ordinary people's lives in really scary ways. The longer term consequences have been seen already in those rustbelt places, where the manufacturing industry has not been replaced.

Ms Beddie—I would like to refer you to some work Stephen Billett did that raises some of these issues. It was something that we published in 2006. He was looking at the value of work experience and part-time work. I think that is an interesting definitional issue. I do not know whether you have explored that. His view, in talking to young people, was that people very much wanted to talk about work experiences in school. He was looking at how teachers draw out the real experiences at work, not the work experience, and how students talk about that and learn from it in a school setting.

CHAIR—Photocopying experience.

Ms Beddie—I would not like to put words in his mouth, but extrapolating from that you get the notion that those network learnings can be encouraged at school by recognising what is happening in the real workplace as a learning experience.

CHAIR—There was something that struck me when I was at a local school and having a chat with a group of about 10 students. It was a feeder school group doing work for humanitarian things that they were interested in. We were just having a chat and I said, ‘How many of you work?’ All but two had casual jobs. We were chatting about them and the teacher said to me afterwards, ‘I didn’t even know that they had jobs.’ There is no formal connection in schools. I do not blame that teacher. You would not necessarily think to ask.

Prof. Brennan—They would say, ‘I come in to teach you science. I do not see that.’

CHAIR—Yes. It is not a particularly relevant thing, but you are both saying clearly that what happens in that experience should be discussed and part of it. If you are doing English and communications then why are you not talking about what is happening in your workplace as well and how that can be understood better? That is part of what we are interested in in terms of providing advice back to the government, if we do end up with some sort of passport or something that students also get when they matriculate from school at whatever point. It is what is meaningful in that and how that might drive a better interaction between the work experience and the school experience. Dr Jensen, do you have some questions?

Dr JENSEN—Yes, I do. Professor Brennan, you made an interesting point about Europe and Asia being shocked at the level of work that students do outside school. In your view, is that a side-effect of when we had a good economy? In effect, there were not really enough jobs to go around for all the adults and there was a driver for employing young people who were at school? Is this something that is going to change in these hard economic times?

Prof. Brennan—We know that most of the new jobs are casual and that casualisation tends to work across all the age groups. I am not so sure that it will necessarily all dry up because of the economy, but it is going to make it more competitive to get what jobs there are. I think there is a push to a service economy with lots of retail. You can look at where many of the young women are, in particular, and a number of them are in bistros, waitressing, washing up and so on. Young men are in retail as well. Those are the areas that are laying off staff at the moment.

In one sense, that will solve an overt problem, but in another sense it will not. It will mean that we have a different set of problems for the transition. If you do not network through actually having the experience of work, using the networks of that work and the people that you work with at work, which is what a lot of the young ones report—it is often not that they are getting the job from the boss but from the friends and colleagues that they make at work, the other networks—then that is going to make it more difficult and likely to stratify youth unemployment even further. When we are looking at job creation schemes we may have to think about job creation in particular high priority areas, whether those are the old unsustainable regions’ areas or some other mode. We need to think carefully about what would be an appropriate way to get the capacity to have that in the lowest SES areas.

Dr JENSEN—I guess you could almost say this is a philosophical question, which I would like to address to all of you. We keep talking about flexibility as if it is a good thing. The

question here is: is flexibility with school and work necessarily a good thing? Are we potentially damaging education? Are we, in effect, through flexible schemes, potentially going to get students dropping out of school because it becomes a little bit too difficult and non-formalised? Is there not a place for some form of formalisation and lack of flexibility, if you will? Yes, some students may want to work after school and so on, but if we go too much into the flexibility sides of it, are we potentially watering down the fundamental of what this should be all about, which is a good education and are we, in effect, going to end up being part of the problem in more students dropping out?

Ms Anlezark—Our study, in looking at retention and TER scores, suggests that working has a negative effect on school outcomes. I would say not so flexible for better school outcomes. But for those people who have an orientation away from school, how do you deal that group? It is not a one-size-fits-all.

Ms Beddie—I do not have the answer, but I would add to what Ms Anlezark has said. We need to look carefully at what is happening in Tasmania, where there is an attempt to do both, to have a series of different types of educational options for kids, as has happened more in Europe through polytechnics or more academically oriented schools. That is building a system that caters to difference but within that system you would have flexibility—I am not sure how much flexibility—but certainly different approaches. That is an experiment.

Dr JENSEN—You are talking about the flexibility not so much being within the school but within the education system whereby you have schools that are focused on different aspects?

Ms Beddie—Yes.

Ms Anlezark—It comes back to the old streaming.

CHAIR—It is one of those things where we went away to the very universal for a lot of good reasons, but then what has become clear is that low SES was not often the only predeterminer in preference about whether you wanted to get an academic or non-academic career. If you removed ‘coming from a poorer background’ it still does not guarantee that you are providing a meaningful education experience for people if that is not where their interests are. I would have to say that it is the age-old dilemma of every parent: how much are you flexible and how much do you just put the foot down and say, ‘You’ve got to do it.’

Prof. Brennan—I am an old technical school teacher from Victoria and I love teaching in techs, partly because they were a smaller system than the high school system and partly because they did offer really significant options in the seventies that were really educationally valuable. I also believe that the streaming of kids at whatever the first year of high school is, in whichever state we happen to be, in putting kids at that age, which is similar to the year 11-plus in England—deciding which way—is guaranteed to continue a stratification around education. It seems to me that we have to take really seriously, ‘What do we want education for?’ Education does not create the jobs. Everyone would think from the human capital theory that spouts out of many places at the moment that if you just got more qualified people the jobs would suddenly magically appear. This is not the case. We keep wanting to make the schools more and more vocational. Even in the technical schools and the apprenticeships you do not learn most of the job skills apart from very generic things like working with each other, learning to ask a good

question and to analyse the content of what you are told in answer to it. Those things are generic and come out of a good education. I would hate to see us going back to having separate technical schools and separate vocational work. If we are going to have any differentiation, it ought to be in the senior college area. That is where some of the issues could be readily resolved and reduce a whole lot more pressure on years 9 and 10. It just keeps seeping down the school and makes it more and more difficult if they think the only reason they are at school is to get a qualification to get a job. We cannot afford to have kids thinking that, because you create the very problem of resisting schools that you are trying to prevent.

One of the issues, from my point of view, is how do we help insulate the school and value the fact that you have a good broad general education for everybody that includes learning how to do things with your hands, do things intellectually and bring them together. The concept of design is a really critical one. The capacity to use ICT every day in all areas is important, but they are not ends in themselves, whereas a broad general education is helpful.

I do not know whether having separate senior colleges is likely to make a difference. I have worked in the Canberra system, where everyone went to a senior college. It certainly made a difference to young people post the compulsory years thinking that they were being treated as adults and it made it more possible to run a different kind of school. That makes it more possible for the school to be flexible about how you include debt, work, part time, caring responsibilities and so on. That might be possible and it is a helpful way for you to think about it. I do think that too much flexibility or requiring the school to be more flexible than it possibly can is not going to help, but the more there is change the more we put rigid requirements on schools the isomorphic tension is almost unbelievable.

CHAIR—Thank you for your attendance today. If you have been asked to provide any additional information—and we are conscious that there is a submission coming—please forward it to the secretary. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence, to which you can make corrections of grammar and fact. Hansard may wish to check some details concerning your evidence, so just check with the reporters if they have any questions before you leave. Thank you once again for your very useful contribution to date.

Proceedings suspended from 10.47 am to 11.08 am

APOSTOLOPOULOS, Mr Con, Assistant Principal/VET/Senior School, Para Hills High School

BRUCE, Helen Ms, Coordinator, Para Hills High School

KENNEDY, Mr Craig, Coordinator Counsellor, Para Hills High School

MERCURIO, Filomena Ms, Assistant Principal, Para Hills High School

SCOTT, Ms Janette Dawn, Principal, Para Hills High School

WEBBER, Annemarie Mrs, School Services Officer, Para Hills High School

CHAIR—I now welcome representatives of Para Hills High School to today's hearing. I will just repeat the committee's great appreciation for the school hosting us today. We are obviously very keen, with the topic of the inquiry, to get as close as we can to the coalface, if you like, in terms of evidence, rather than only talking to those who might research in the area and so forth. I was just discussing with the secretary of the committee that we have had an online survey for students and we were not sure how that would go, but we have now got about 2,000 young people that have taken the time to go on, so it is obviously a significant issue for them. The other side of it, of course, is the schools themselves and their experiences, and so we appreciate you taking the time to be with us today as well.

Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses.

We invite you to make some opening comments. We would appreciate if you could keep those fairly brief because we would like to have a chance to question you and have an interaction. Would you like to start, Ms Scott?

Ms Scott—Yes. I would like to give a brief profile of the school and then an overview of the summary of some data that we have collected about our students on part-time work and so on that you might find of interest.

Para Hills High School is a medium-sized high school with about 600 students in years 8 to 13. There are a small number of students in year 13. They are students who come back for various reasons. It is sometimes to increase their score to go to university and sometimes because they are part way through a VET course. It is sometimes because they are not sure of where else they want to go and they have not quite let go. There is a range of reasons.

In South Australia we have an index of disadvantage and this school is category 4. Categories for metropolitan schools go from category 2, which is low socioeconomic, right through to category 7. We are in the lower middle area. We have about 100 students from ESL backgrounds from over 30 different cultures in our school, including some new arrivals being refugees from Afghanistan and some of the different countries in Africa.

We have approximately 30 Aboriginal students within our group and also about 30 students in a special unit. Six of those students are severely autistic and cannot communicate verbally.

We have about 65 staff, with 50 teaching staff and 15 or so support staff. The school is 37 years old and, when it opened during the early eighties, was a school of about 1,400, so suburbs change over time.

There are two organisations that I wanted to mention. We work very closely with 10 other state secondary schools in the north. We are at the southern most end of the northern region. We are part of an alliance. We have a formal board and we work as a very close and very effective cluster to deliver a range of programs to students. We also work with that cluster of schools and another nine non-government schools in a cluster of about 20 schools in Northern Futures. That is who we are.

I have done a very quick survey to get some up-to-date information for the committee about our students, their part-time work and so on. This data relates just to our year 10 and 11 students. Other people might like to talk about the year 12s. We have more anecdotal data about their responsibilities in terms of schooling and part-time work. About 30 per cent of our year 10 and 11 students have part-time jobs. There are about 230 students in years 10 and 11, so that is just over 70 students. Of those students about 13 per cent have jobs which are up to five hours a week. Twenty-six per cent have jobs for between six and 10 hours; 33 per cent between 11 and 15 hours per week; 17 per cent between 16 and 20 hours per week; and nine per cent more than 20 hours a week, which is roughly six students out of that group. We would have some students in year 9 with part-time work, and also of course some students in year 12. It is not the complete look, but I would imagine that is where the most concentrated numbers would be.

We asked students for the main reasons why they are working part-time and the one that came out was money—money to run a car, to save to buy a car, for spending money so that parents did not have to give them pocket money. One young man put it as, ‘To support my lifestyle’, which is interesting. Many said it was to pay for mobile phone bills, to keep busy or something to do. One young person said entertainment and then there was a group around doing it for interest. It was also for independence. A couple of students said they loved the job and they wanted to work. Responsibility was another response. A couple of students said pressure from parents to earn money to pay their own bills. One comment was, ‘Mum made me get a job.’

CHAIR—Is that linked to the mobile phone?

Ms Scott—It might well have been. In the last bit of it we asked students what was the effect of their part-time work on their learning at school. It was broken into positive effects and negative effects as they saw them. The positive effectives were that it improved their attitude to school; work harder to get good grades; feel more organised; better time management. There were quite a few students who said that it built their confidence. They can talk better to staff and peers. A number said that they had developed better communication skills and they use those at school. They learn about money. One said that it improved maths because they cannot use calculators at work. One said that it provided money for lunch and excursions, so that child is paying for some of the expenses of coming to school.

The negative effects were usually just in two categories. It was about being tired and unable to do homework. Tiredness was one area and there was quite a lot said about homework; cannot learn for tests; do not finish assignments; forget to do homework; use work as an excuse not to do homework. A negative effect was leaving school early for a shift and the lack of social life.

Mr IRONS—How many had to leave early?

Ms Scott—That was mentioned by one student. I have a story about that which I would like to talk to you about later, but I will let my colleagues make some comments and start the discussion. I hope that was of interest.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for that. One of the things that is very useful, as we have just heard from some of the researchers, is that good data is so important. As you would appreciate, we tend to make presumptions on our own experiences and what is coming through is that for young people their experiences are different and that there are some different pressures. That is very useful information for us and not dissimilar from the sorts of information that we are getting from the online survey from students as well.

Did anybody else want to make an opening statement? I should indicate to you from our terms of reference that a large part of the focus is the aspect of casual part-time work and study, and the balancing of those, but it is also within the context of young people transitioning through to either further study or to full-time work. One of the divisions that is clearly opening for us which has real policy implications is the young people who are at school with the intention of leaving and getting work. Probably a large part of the time they are there because they are not allowed by their family to leave school until they get a job, and so they are engaged and continue on clearly because they, and hopefully their family, see a value in continuing to learn while they are looking for work, as opposed to the other cohort who are working, but they are working for money because they have so many more things that they want to buy these days than when we were young, as young as we all still are. We get quite a bit of evidence about young people who actually work because they have to. As you were saying, it could be because there are excursions or other costs and their families are just not able or willing to carrying some of that, so they do it for those reasons.

We are interested in what is happening with VET, as part of that transition, and how we link. We are good at doing VET in schools, but how well do we link that to the real work experience? Quite a lot of students have said to us, ‘Why on earth do I have to do work experience in my VET course when I’ve got a part-time job?’ There are obviously some real issues there for young people about how all of these things are integrated in their lives and the really outstanding thing is how siloed their lives are. Work is one thing. Family is another thing. School is another thing. It is either because we do not do it well or because they will not let us. I think we have all had the experience with, ‘Don’t go in and talk to my boss about my shifts. I don’t want you anywhere near them. If you go and complain then I won’t get any more work.’ They silo themselves to some extent as well. They are the broader issues and we are interested in your experience in confronting those in an actual school. Would anybody like to make a particular observation about something that has really hit you in recent years?

Mr Apostolopoulos—It is interesting the numbers that Ms Scott talked about—70 kids out of the senior school doing part-time work. It would be interesting for us to go back and see whether

these are the same people who are poor attendees and late to school in the mornings. We start at 20 to nine, but for some of them it is 10 past nine. It would be interesting to see whether there is that correlation there.

They do come to school tired. I have noticed, in particular this year, that there has been an increase in the amount of Mother soft drink or these high energy little boosters that they are using to get them through the morning. They are coming to school in six packs. They could be sharing them or keeping them throughout the day.

CHAIR—It is whether the size of the pack equates to the length of the shift!

Mr Apostolopoulos—We do have kids in class that will fall asleep. They are less effective and less efficient, which is a worry. We talked about part-time work and how that relates to VET. In my role, I have used part-time work in an area as a filter for an area that they want to go into in VET. If they are doing Maccas and they want to do a bricklaying course, I cannot count that. I use that as a filter. You say, 'Don't go and call our bosses', but we do find that there is some exploitation. Some of the kids to get signed up to do on-the-job traineeships, but these go for so long because they do not necessarily give them on-the-job training. They might go for three, four or five years, by which time the kid has left the employment agency. My understanding is that while they are on those they are on a traineeship, which is the lowest rate of pay, so it is in the interests of the organisation to keep them on that low rate of pay for as long as they can, which they do. They are keen to jump into it, and it is good training in some areas, but I do not think that they get the idea that they get exploited a bit as well. We do spend a bit of time explaining that to them. The region and the state have supplied us with some excellent people, apprenticeship brokers, where we can confirm that for them, but this is what is happening.

Ms Bruce—I teach a VET course, the transport and logistics in business administration. This is the fourth year that I have done that. The work placement there is really useful because they are actually getting some work placement in the industry. We have had a high success rate with placing students in that industry, both through school based apprenticeships and then on to cert. III and further work. Even if the employer who takes them on does not keep them on after the first year, there is usually an employer in the industry who will take them on, which has been our experience. For that small group of students that has been very successful. In the families that I have worked with, many of those students have kept their part-time jobs mainly through the need to have money to continue their education, so those students are extremely good at time management. They are very good at their goal setting. They know where they are going. They are not quite sure how they will get there, but they generally have a really good vision about where they are going. It is about finding out how many different ways you can get to where you need to be.

I find that the VET course where you have the same group of students for the whole day every week is a really useful teaching tool. You build the relationships with those students and their families. Last year we successfully took seven of our students to Brisbane for an international trade fair. Initially they booked their airfares, but we only had carry-on luggage, which was not a lot of use, so they had to then get back. You let them make the mistakes along the way. That practical experience was really good. They planned all our transport, food and budgeting around Brisbane and our trip to the Gold Coast. Had we ended up in the wrong place then they would have had to get us back. It is just that whole practical experience of being able to do that was

really useful for them. The parents of those students said they learnt so much from having to actually do that.

We have found it very successful in those areas where we are able to get them work placement rather than work experience. Those students have maintained their hospitality jobs and things like that while they have been doing their year 12 plus their VET course.

CHAIR—That raises one of the challenges. The NCVER are doing some research. We have not yet got the results, but the evidence seems to indicate that up to a certain number of hours is a positive.

Ms Bruce—Yes.

CHAIR—But then there is a tipping point at which it becomes a negative.

Ms Bruce—It is the time of night that they finish as well. If they can finish by 10 pm they generally can manage that. They have half an hour to get home and chill out for a while. They do not get their homework and assignments done, but they are still in a good state to manage at school the next day. If they work after 10 pm I generally find that they do not function until 11 am the next day, which means you lose the first double lesson.

CHAIR—It comes back to what you were saying about the exploitation. We have a lot of evidence of young people, particularly in the fast food industry saying, ‘The shift finishes at 11, but in reality I do not leave until 12 or 12.30 because they are expected to do all the clean up tasks.’ You are nodding. You are hearing the same thing.

Ms Bruce—When you get home you have still go to have some down time and have something to eat. It is effectively another hour after you get home before you actually get to bed.

CHAIR—Have you surveyed the student body before in this way? Were there some surprises to the school itself about the outcomes of that survey?

Ms Scott—Not in the time that I have been here. This is the beginning of my third year here. One of the pieces of work that we do with all of the students is that they work on an individual learning plan. Within their particular care group, their care group teacher would be aware of the patterns of work of all of the students in that class. I am not aware that we have had that school profile before. It is certainly something that I have been curious about, but it was prompted by your visit. It was very simple to do.

CHAIR—There is so much to do.

Ms Scott—There are so many surveys that we do. There is so much that we collect from students and teachers. We were a bit circumspect about whether we should put out another survey.

CHAIR—My background is teaching and it struck me that we come into a classroom with a curriculum and a task. It has been a while since I was in a classroom. My background is English history, so if I was doing English I do not think I would ever have thought that if I needed to do a

task about interpersonal communication skills and styles I ever would have linked it to work. I would not have naturally had that thought that the students in my classroom would have real life experiences that I could draw on from their work life. I was at one of my own high schools and talking to a group of students. They were a human rights group at the school and I was there about human rights. I asked them about work. There were about 10 and all but two worked. The teacher afterwards said to me, 'I didn't know that about them.' This was a history teacher and she said to me, 'It really sparked to me that you are coming into the school; you are coming into my classroom; this is what we have to do.' It is just that understanding of what the other things were that were going on in their lives. These students were talking about dealing with bullying behaviour in the workplace, often by other students—their managers were other students—and how that affected relationships in the school. It struck me that there was a whole area there that we have not traditionally focussed on. Dr Jensen quite rightly said we cannot expect schools to be everything and do everything, but it is very interesting when you have a look at those issues.

Ms Scott—If you walk around and talk to staff in this school there would be staff who know lots and lots about the personal lives of students and other staff who know them as, dare I say it, chemistry students or art students; their knowledge of and their working relationship with the student are very focused on the subject. I think some teachers have that sort of knowledge. I do not know whether they are more curious or that is the way that they relate to students and they know a lot about them.

CHAIR—It is not having the knowledge itself, it is actually how you integrate their life experiences into what you did in the classroom. Maybe it was the way I was trained, but it never occurred to me to look at the curriculum I was delivering and how it related to their life experiences. In some respects, we are looking for ways in terms of that transition stuff, without recreating all your workload, to find ways in which we can integrate that a bit better. My fear is that we just fall back on the VET. We just say, 'There's VET in school and they do all of that.'

Ms Bruce—The additional thing to VET is the new SACE personal learning plan. For four or five years now students have been doing an individual learning plan, but the formalising and the compulsory nature of the personal learning plan means that all of those transferable skills and all of those life experiences are being valued and can be used for part of their learning. That is an opportunity that is linking a lot of that stuff together.

Mr Apostolopoulos—The linking of school work to life work is almost that we have become pimps for business and industry. We had somebody from the transport industry saying, 'You're not preparing your kids well enough for what we want out there', and we are scratching our heads saying, 'Our kids are getting their qualification. Don't give them the qualification if you don't think they're meeting the standard.' I think they want a lot from us. Back in the glory days—I am not saying the good old glory days when civilisation reached its peak when we were kids—I think the industry took some of that upon itself; the learning process was slower and inducting them. Now they want them in and hitting the ground running. There has got to be a lot of work back here for that to happen. There is frustration all around.

In respect to this part-time work a lot of the kids get the other benefits of organisation and so on after getting the money for the house, particularly in the struggling suburbs that this area is in where the family is in need of the money. They will get that, and if it helps with those other

things then that is a bonus. Sure there are the exceptions that are going to be that way and that can fit it all in.

CHAIR—One of the other concerns that has been raised with us concerning the social equity and social justice side of it is that kids who have access to part-time work tend to be from the middle class and not from the lower socioeconomic classes, which I suspect is around a whole lot of presentational issues and networks. If we are going to say that there is a benefit to up to eight or 10 hours a week part-time work, then that also means that we are building in a disadvantage for students who are not getting access to that sort of work as well. The other piece of information that we were given was that the kids from the lower SES who do get work are much more likely to be in the highly exploited areas and more likely to be doing the excess hours. I am just interested in whether you have seen issues along that line?

Ms Scott—Certainly. One of the conversations that I had at the end of last week was with a colleague who is a principal in a category 2 school that is not far from here. Some of the students from that school you will be talking to this afternoon. She was telling me that 40 per cent of their students had work, and I also had that information in my head. I was thinking that it would probably be lower than the number of students from, say, this area or from other upper middle class areas, and I was surprised about that. It would be interesting to hear more from those people.

CHAIR—Yes, the nature of that experience.

Ms Scott—That is right.

CHAIR—To some extent the parents in the middle class families are more likely to be containing the engagement. They are more likely to be putting their foot down and saying, ‘You’re not working five nights a week when you are at school’, and so forth, whereas the more struggling families are probably more intimidated, less likely to say no and less likely to put boundaries around the nature of that work.

CHAIR—Ms Mercurio, did you want to add something?

Ms Mercurio—There is another complexity that we have touched on, but have not expanded on. I have a lot to do with our refugee students, our culturally and linguistically diverse students, who come into our school after perhaps two years of intensive English training. Many of them are in the senior school and it is really important for them to have a pathway that they know that they are working towards. For some of them, realistically, it is not a possibility because their level of standard Australian English is very limited. However, in understanding their backgrounds, many of them have not had any formal educational training or background, or very little, and many of them have come from refugee camps, which in itself is quite a traumatic and horrific experience.

What we have tried to do here at Para Hills High School is to ensure that everyone who wants to have a pathway, or has some interest in a pathway, is given that opportunity. At the moment we have nine of our students who have had about four or five years of life in Australia and have an opportunity to complete a VET pathway, and they are succeeding. Three of them will complete a cert. II in a nursing pathway and, if all goes well, will complete their SACE and also

go on to TAFE. Many of them have aspirations to go on to university, but at the moment that is not accessible because it demands a higher level of English. However, their determination to be in a pathway and to transition into TAFE is very strong.

I have to say that a lot of them are here independently and some of them live independently. Some of them organise their home life as well as manage to get to school in a reasonable amount of time. They are succeeding. Of course, there are success stories, but there are not always success stories. For many of them to succeed is very much about their self-esteem and very much about being a worthwhile member of their community and an active participant as a citizen of their new country. Many of them have part-time work, as well as study and doing the VET course.

CHAIR—What sort of work would they do?

Ms Mercurio—One of the boys is a cleaner and he cleans up until late at night. Many of them are trying to get into the fast food industry. Most of them are cleaning or doing factory work, but it is very menial work.

CHAIR—It is not technical?

Ms Mercurio—No, it is not technical. It is a fascinating area. It is one where we are really working with the students. It is a partnership with TAFE, the school, the kids and with the community liaison officers as well. Where families are involved, and not necessarily their mothers or fathers, it is a partnership with them as well.

Dr JENSEN—One of the points from an earlier witness was that in Europe and Asia they are quite shocked at the level of part-time work and so on that is done over here. This is going to be a very simple yes/no answer, but it has obviously got multiple levels, so I am asking for a simplistic view. In your view, is part-time work as part of the life experience of an upper high school student a good thing or not? I know that there are all sorts of complexities.

Ms Scott—My gut feeling and readings based on the American legislation and American research over a few years is that a good thing would be up to 10 hours a week. It is a good thing. It helps with organisation, responsibility and communication skills.

CHAIR—You raised the example of the refugee students. I remember saying to my son who is now 19—this is about two years ago, ‘I met a girl today from an African nation who used to walk two hours in the morning to get the water for the family, get back, walk an hour to school—so she has done three hours before she started school—do her full day at school, come home in the afternoon and evening, and then have to walk and get the water again for the evening meal so there is another two hours. She really valued and managed to get her school qualification. What is your problem in terms of that life experience?’ Certainly some of the evidence has been to us that some students—not through the traumatic circumstances of that example—do have the capacity and motivation to manage a lot of multiple tasks and responsibilities much more effectively than others.

The Prime Minister on Sunday talked about pushing forward the COAG agenda about retention rates, so this is why we are particularly interested in the experience that you are having

at the school level with all the varieties of students trying to make transitions and what that actually means. If you could say one thing to the Prime Minister through this committee, when we talk about raising those retention rates what would it be in terms of successful transitions?

Mr Kennedy—I am not sure whether I am commenting on that or what you posed. I am a student counsellor in the school and get a fairly in-depth view of some of the issues that our students deal with, and some of them are quite mind-boggling. You can understand why sometimes education gets pushed down because there are more important survival things that are going on.

As far as work and school, I think that some kids have the capacity to have long-term goals. Their long-term goal could be university, TAFE or whatever. They have that vision. Unfortunately, a lot of kids do not have that vision and they are in the here and the now. Because they have a part-time job their part-time job takes priority over their long-term vision. So if it is a choice between sacrificing hours and money to achieve the long-term, they cannot deal with that. What happens is that their education falls away because they need to be working or they think they need to be working and they need to be making that money. Rather than saying, 'No, I can't work Saturday night because I have an assignment to do', it is 'I have to work.'

I have been at this school for six years. At my previous school, Valley View, which is just down the road in a similar socioeconomic area, about eight years ago we were concerned about the grades of our senior students, so we did a survey similar to what Ms Scott was doing. This has obviously been around for quite a while.

The other thing is that I had a conversation with a parent this morning who has two children in our school. Her older son is in year 11. We were talking about him and she made the comment that he has finally got a job at Foodland. He was desperately looking for a job and could not understand why he could not get one, but now he has finally got a job at Foodland. When they said, 'When can you work?' He said, 'Whenever—all day Saturday, all day Sunday', and this is a senior student from a reasonably affluent family. The pressures that he has are that he has now got a car and the family put some responsibility back on to him to provide some money to pay for his lifestyle, which is the word that we used before, such as his phone and car. I hear him talk about what he wants to do to his car and I know that if you want to put new tyres on your car, because I just did, how expensive that is, and then if you want to put the such-and-such exhaust on and the flash bit here and the flash bit there then that will cost a lot of money.

I often have to talk to kids about it being important to work, important to get those life skills and it is important to be able to put that on your resume, but what is the important thing down here? What is it that you are aiming for in the future?

CHAIR—How successful are you? I personally failed twice.

Mr Kennedy—Yes.

CHAIR—I had two boys pull out at the end of year 11. I think it is a real issue, particularly with boys. Mind you, both of them ended up going back and doing their HSC at TAFE in New South Wales. It is a real struggle.

Mr Kennedy—I recently had a young lad who was away for a week because he was working at Clipsal. If I had suggested to him and his family that he not work at Clipsal then we would have been at loggerheads, because it was an absolute priority that he work for that week. That was his priority, working there for a week to make that money, not staying at school.

CHAIR—Was that with the view to getting work there?

Mr Kennedy—No. That is the view to earn money.

Dr JENSEN—In your view, how much flexibility should the school offer? To me there is a real trade off. If you offer too much flexibility, in my view what you are doing is devaluing the message of education and saying that this other stuff is more important than education. How much flexibility do you think that a school should offer?

Mr Kennedy—It is the issue about what is a school supposed to provide. Is it supposed to provide an education in relation to the subjects that you teach, or is it supposed to provide a life-long education, or a life-skills education? It is very difficult. Even though I am counsellor and do a lot of work with kids, I am still a bit of a traditionalist when it comes to what schools are supposed to be providing, which is an education about knowledge and, within that, hopefully there are some other bits and pieces put in there. It is very difficult when you have young children that you are talking to. The silos are the thing. There are so many silos and yet, to me, when you are 13, 14, 15 or 16, education should be one of the biggest ones. It may start off as a big one and then gradually it gets whittled down and whittled down until the others take over.

CHAIR—One of the interesting things that was told to us was part of the problem was how we measure retention. I think we are doing a classroom visit shortly. Our retention rates in Australia would actually be higher if you took it at 23 or 24 because it is not an uncommon pattern, particularly a male pattern just around maturity issues, for them to pull out of school, go off and do something else and then come back. Indeed, the universities tell me they are increasingly seeing the mature age entry of 21-year olds. It is not the 40- or 50-year olds that it was originally designed for, it is actually 21-year olds coming back in. Do you have much opportunity to follow up with students after they leave to see what sort of patterns happen there?

Ms Scott—Only in the first few months. We track all students that leave. For example, at the end of last year and the beginning of this year we track all of the students so that we know where they are. Ms Webber has done some of our phone surveys.

Mrs Webber—It is probably only for six months that we follow them up. We have a destination survey that we provide the Education Department with. After that, we do not.

Ms Scott—It is just by students dropping in.

CHAIR—I do not think you should have to do it. I think it is probably something that, as a society, we are not quite clear on the pathways that people take.

Mr IRONS—It was good to see the aspirations of putting widgets on cars has not changed from when I was at school. I was able to leave school when I was 15, do an apprenticeship, earn the money I wanted and do the things I wanted to do. Kids nowadays do not have that

opportunity. I am sure the education system does not fit every child and that there are some children who probably should be out working rather than staying in the education system. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr Kennedy—You are absolutely correct. That is why we have some of the battles that we have. There are some kids that honestly do not want to be here. I often find that at a particular point in time kids do not want to be here. I had a phone call yesterday from someone who wanted to enrol here who is 19. He told me that he left school when he was 16 and it just did not work out, and now it is a little bit further down the track. That is often what happens, you are trying to put kids into a box between the age of 13 and 17 and some of them are just not able to fit in that box at that particular point in time. It is great that a lot of kids do come back and then realise the value of learning and education. It is usually because without that you cannot get very far.

Ms Scott—There are real improvements from the time that you describe to now.

Mr IRONS—I will not say what decade it was.

Ms Scott—It was a later decade than mine. If you came to our school from about 7.30 every morning you would see we have taxis and buses out the front and students are going to other schools to do VET courses and to TAFE to do VET courses every day of the week. We have at the moment 90 to 100 of our senior students who, one day a week and for a small number it is two days a week, are learning elsewhere. It is not all here or all in the workforce anymore. There are different sorts of structures. We have been able to keep a lot more students, very quickly, in terms of retention, in the three to four years that I have looked at the retention rates and so on in this school; they have gone from 60 per cent to last year 78 per cent. You would put all of that down to the VET courses, the increasing flexibility in terms of students learning here for maybe four days a week, learning at V-Tech Automotives one day a week, learning in work placements, having school based apprenticeship and having a whole range of options.

We are not quite up to the state average in terms of retention yet, but we are above the state retention average for boys. There are some things that are really working here; it is about that flexibility. It is really important that we have a clear message to parents and young people that if you do more and more part-time work, or if you do not give enough work to gaining these fundamental foundational skills, then you are going to short change yourself in the future. I concur with Mr Kennedy in that sense. We have to be very clear. If students and their parents are making other decisions it is still for us to provide that advice by saying, 'That may not be in your best long-term interests, but you can always come back.'

CHAIR—That re-entry is important. As you said, they are planning and envisaging. You say, 'Five years down the track even in the career that you have got a job in now you are going to hit a brick wall.' They would go, 'That's five years down the track.'

Mr Kennedy—Exactly. We have to be flexible. One of my roles is Aboriginal Education Coordinator. As Ms Scott said, we have about 30 Aboriginal kids in this school. I could think of half a dozen just off the top of my head who would not still be here now if we did not have a flexible program to provide to them. These are the kids that do not fit into the box of sitting in the classroom all day.

CHAIR—Another thing that has been raised is that probably one in five of the kids that are dropping out are not VET kids, they are creative, new-generation wise types or whatever they are who just do not want to be square pegs in round holes and all this sort of thing as well. We are really struggling to take up the challenge for them. It is that or because they tend to not be defiant; they are present, but the lights are on but no-one is home type of thing in terms of engagement in the classroom.

Ms Scott—I invited Ms Webber for a different perspective. She is not a teaching staff member, but probably knows all of the students in our school and all of the parents in our school. I would like you to hear her perspective.

Mrs Webber—I was thinking about what Mr Irons said before about school not being for everyone. For example, as Ms Scott said, I do not see the kids in the classroom, but I hear from parents, see the kids in the front office and deal with kids on work experience. Some of the kids that play up here, that are suspended here, have excellent work experience reports because they are out doing something that they want to do.

One of the students, in particular, did an automotive course last year. He mucked up at school quite often, but he got the best report from the course and from his work placement because he wanted to do it. We are back to what you were saying, school is not for everyone. These days the kids are lucky because they have got these VET courses. Back in our day you would just leave school.

CHAIR—Back in our day hundreds of apprentices were employed every year by large organisations and you could go off and do what you did. I come from a mining family. My dad used to recruit 100 apprentices a year. They would be lucky if they take 10 on now. It all falls back on you guys to be providing these other areas.

Ms Mercurio—We have a traditional structure of schooling that has not moved or has not changed with the changing nature of the way we work and the way we learn. That is a problem.

CHAIR—We then expect you to be flexible and do not always resource it very well, either. That is another message that we got.

Ms Mercurio—It is not well resourced, as well.

CHAIR—I am conscious that we have got to go to a classroom.

Ms Scott—I just thought you might like a break in the middle of the day to get up and meet some year 9s.

CHAIR—We are used to being tied to the desk and driven for hours.

Ms Scott—They will be very keen to meet you and show you their bits and pieces.

CHAIR—That would be tremendous.

Ms Scott—Even if it is for 10 minutes or so.

Mr Apostolopoulos—I would like to go back to the apprenticeships before we go off. In the past they did have a lot of apprenticeships, but a lot of the kids would have liked to have gone out and got part-time work as a school based apprenticeship, where they are here for three or four days and working for one day. A lot of the part-time work they are doing is not always related to the apprenticeship that they would like to get to. The tradespeople of today are individual subcontractors. You will get one brickie; he is not going to take an apprentice. If we could expand that model where for every four employers you have got to have one apprentice, which is only a 25 per cent replacement, then that is not bad, but the electricians and traditional trades are on their own. They want the people, but they do not want to train them. The kids want to be out there learning, but it is leaving school totally and hopefully trying to get a certificate at school to show that they are keen.

The other thing is that technology has made it harder. In the past you would get these big strong strapping boys that would be digging holes, but today they are serving cappuccinos and we wonder why.

CHAIR—I always made the point in my own area where we had very high teen unemployment which was largely male. I said, ‘If you had a choice between a 16-year old very savvy young woman and a pimply gangly 16-year old boy, because of the physical realities of how they age, in terms of retail and hospitality, it does not exactly match up particularly well. Often, for young men, if they are looking for part-time work it is more of a struggle and they tend to end up doing something that is more likely going to pull them out of school. I suppose that is my only concern with school based apprenticeships; are we then creating the situation where they do not fully commit? Young people I know in my area have said to me, ‘I do the English and that because I have to.’ They are not engaged. They are not really doing it because they want to do it; they want the apprenticeship part. There are some real challenges for us there.

It has been tremendous. Thank you very much. I am not surprised you opened with the, ‘We know this is going on because they’re asleep in the classroom.’ We hear that consistently and it indicates to us that there are some things that we do have to look at from a government policy perspective. It has been invaluable to hear directly from people who are actually dealing with it every day and we really appreciate it.

Ms Scott—Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR—You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence to which you can make corrections of grammar and fact. If you have been asked for any additional information you can just forward it to the secretary of the committee. Hansard may wish to check some details concerning your evidence, so please check with the reporters before you leave. Thank you, again, for your contribution.

Proceedings suspended from 12.04 pm to 1.41 pm

EMMA, Student, Craigmores High School

BRADLEY, Student, Para Hills High School

GARRETH, Student, Paralowie R-12 School

JONATHON, Student, Craigmores High School

JOSHUA, Student, Paralowie R-12 School

NICHOLAS, Student, Paralowie R-12 School

NIKOLA, Student, Para Hills High School

OWEN, Student, Craigmores High School

TAMARA, Student, Para Hills High School

THUY, Student, Paralowie R-12 School

CHAIR—Welcome. I will just explain what is happening here. This is the House of Representative education committee of the Commonwealth parliament. I am Sharon Bird, the chair; Dennis Jensen is the deputy chair; and Mr Steve Irons is a committee member. We have an inquiry underway about the challenges that exist for students of your age in balancing work and school and in transitioning from school to work or further study. We want to talk directly to students and we really value that you have given us of your time today. Justin, who is seated here, is secretary to the committee; he has the joy of taking notes and writing them up, while we just enjoy talking with you. Over here we have Hansard, who are the official recorders of the parliament. They record everything that is said in an official capacity by representatives of the parliament, and it all becomes a permanent record of the parliament. That is what they are doing here during this time.

Mr IRONS—So no swearing!

CHAIR—That is right. Nobody in parliament ever swears on the record! First I will read an official statement that will become part of the *Hansard* record and then I will invite you to give us your observations about the issues we are inquiring into.

I welcome all students in attendance at today's hearing. As you are aware, the committee is conducting an inquiry into how students combine school with part-time work. We are interested to hear about your experiences and any views you might have about how to improve the situation faced by students who are trying to balance study and work commitments. We have been receiving feedback on these issues from students across the country via the committee's student survey, which is on our website. While many students tell us that they are coping well and their employers and teachers understand their needs, others tell us that they are doing it

tough, working late hours on week nights and not feeling comfortable in asking their employers for time off.

Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and, therefore, has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. We have Hansard recording proceedings here today, so I am going to ask each of you to state into the microphone your name and what school you are from. We have a roving microphone over there so that students sitting at the back can let us know who they are as well, in case they would like to participate. Please give your name, what school you are from and what year you are in.

Jonathon—I am Jonathon. I am in year 12 at Craigmore High School.

Amber—I am Amber. I am from Craigmore High and I am in year 11.

Owen—My name is Owen. I am in year 12 at Craigmore High School.

Thuy—I am Thuy Le. I am in year 12 at Paralowie R-12 School.

Joshua—I am Joshua. I go to Paralowie R-12 School and I am in year 12.

Bradley—I am Bradley. I am in year 12 at Para Hills High School.

Nikola—I am Nick. I am a student in year 12 at Para Hills High School.

Tamara—I am Tamara. I am in year 12 at Para Hills High School.

Garreth—I am Garreth. I am in year 12 at Paralowie R-12 School.

Nicholas—I am Nicholas. I am in year 12 at Paralowie R-12 School.

CHAIR—Thank you. Welcome, everybody. We might get everyone to give two or three minutes on their situation: what they are studying, whether they are working and information they might have from friends and colleagues at school about these issues, at the conclusion of which we will have a bit of a question session and a chat around the issues. Would somebody like to start with their story?

Mr IRONS—As I explained earlier outside, we are looking for what effect your work has on your schooling.

Jonathon—I work for about 20 hours a week as a cook in hospitality. I have sport and I am in year 12.

CHAIR—What sport do you play?

Jonathon—Football and cricket.

CHAIR—Two sports.

Jonathon—Yes, although it is not the cricket season anymore. When I get home from school, basically I have to have tea and go to work straightaway and normally I do not get home until about 9.30 to 10 o'clock, If I can do homework then, I will do it; and, if not, I will do it during study periods. I think it is probably best if I do it in my study periods.

CHAIR—How many study periods do you get a week?

Jonathon—I have four double lessons a week.

CHAIR—Would that normally be enough to do your assignments?

Jonathon—No, but I do not go out on weekends any more. I have stopped the whole weekend thing. My social life is out the window.

CHAIR—So that is a sacrifice.

Jonathon—Yes.

CHAIR—Why do you work?

Jonathon—Just to have money to spend. I have a car and I have to pay for that; I cannot scab off mum forever.

CHAIR—I endorse that sentiment.

Amber—I am a school based apprentice. I am doing a baker's apprenticeship. I go to TAFE every Wednesday and I work every Sunday and Monday; on the other days I am at school. Basically, I do not get to see my friends anymore; it is really hard. I do not have much time to do my homework, but I manage at school when I have double lessons. I work about 20 hours a week. In fact, tomorrow I have my practical exam for my traineeship; I had my theory exam last week. Currently, I am in the last four months of my traineeship. When it finishes, I get to choose whether to continue on where I am working or to go on to another place.

CHAIR—Does your course count as a subject towards your matriculation?

Amber—Yes. It also gives me SACE points.

CHAIR—How many other subjects do you have to do as well?

Amber—I do two other subjects: English and work education.

CHAIR—Do you manage those subjects okay?

Amber—Yes. I have only recently got back into work education; I dropped the hospitality course.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Owen—I go to school and am doing my year 12. I have just taken on a school based apprenticeship in the caring industry for people with disabilities—certificate III. I have a part-time job at a fast-food restaurant, McDonald's. I go to TAFE to study for my certificate III in aged care every Tuesday. Initially, I am only at school on a Monday and a Friday, so I have to try to rack up as much as I can with my teachers in order to get all my work done. Then, with my part-time job, I work all weekends and I do not get off work until 11 o'clock at night, so I do not get a great deal of time to get my homework done. I try to work out with the teachers when they will be free so that I can catch up, and we just try to get done as much work as possible.

CHAIR—Is your school based apprenticeship part of your study?

Owen—Yes. Every Wednesday and Thursday are initially training and work days. Tuesdays I am off at a TAFE and Mondays and Fridays I am at school.

CHAIR—What subjects are you trying to cover at school?

Owen—I am doing psychology, voc studies and English. I think that is about it. There are about three or four subjects that I have to do there.

CHAIR—You say that you would be working the whole weekend. Is that right?

Owen—Yes. I get called in to do a lot of shifts during the week also, so I work anywhere from 15 to 20 hours.

CHAIR—Are you comfortable with saying no? Is it easy to say no, if you cannot take shifts on?

Owen—I do struggle a bit saying no because they try to use some sort of guilt trip on you. They ring you up and say, 'Oh, can you work? We really need you. We could really use you,' and all that stuff. Then you just give in: 'Yeah, I'll come and work.' You fall behind in your studies quite a bit, but I have the support of my teachers to just kick back into gear.

CHAIR—What is your motivation for working?

Owen—Really, I have made a big social sacrifice because I just do not have any time for mates. As for my motivation, I think, 'Yeah, you can mess around with your mates but, in 10 years, where will that have got you?' In 10 years time I will look back and think, 'Well, yeah, it's been pretty hard yakka, but it's got me where I wanted to go.' My long-term goal is to be a paramedic.

CHAIR—So is it mainly to earn some money and to give you some experience and networks—that sort of thing?

Owen—Yes. It is exploring all the opportunities for getting into a career and then there is the bit of money going into the pocket, although I do not get a lot of time to spend it. It is good for the savings side of things, like a car and everything.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr IRONS—When you work on a Saturday and, as you say, finish at 11 o'clock, what time would you start?

Owen—Anywhere; usually around 12 o'clock or perhaps earlier. It depends. They get me to do a lot of double shifts there. Most people at Maccas think, 'Well, I don't need to work Saturday; I can go out and party,' so I am the silly fool that is back there doing their shift.

Mr IRONS—So you are covering for other people who are out partying and socialising.

Owen—Yes.

Thuy—I do not know what to say, because I do not have a part-time or full-time job. I have five full subjects and I have responsibilities at home. I come from an ethnic family. My mum and dad will not let me go and find a job and labour hard, because they feel that, if I go out and work, I might just worry about earning money and forget about my studies—I will not study hard and then have to work hard later on. I see my friends who have jobs coming to school tired all the time and not doing all of their work. I try to motivate them, but it does not seem to work. Most of my friends have quit school, which is sad to see.

CHAIR—What are you studying?

Thuy—I am studying legal studies, maths studies, chemistry, biology and USAL studies.

CHAIR—What do you want to do when you have finished?

Thuy—I am not sure right now. I am just going to try to get the highest I can get and then choose my course.

CHAIR—Would you like to go on to university?

Thuy—Yes.

CHAIR—You are just not sure yet of which particular area you want to work in.

Thuy—Yes. I find it really hard just keeping up, especially when I do not go to teachers. If I do not go to teachers, they do not—

CHAIR—You have to ask for what you need.

Thuy—Yes, I have to ask for help. If I do not, I just fall behind. It is hard.

CHAIR—What are your responsibilities at home? One of the other things we hear is that it is not just paid work that is responsible; a lot of young people have responsibilities for younger siblings or all sorts of jobs around the home as well.

Thuy—Yes. I have to look after my little brother. I have a little sister and a little brother. My mum has to work and she does not have time to look after my little brother. He is in year 1 right now and my sister is in high school. I have to help him to eat and get dressed. I try to take care of him when mum is not home. There are times when we have to go to church and attend family events and we cannot just not go. That is it, pretty much.

CHAIR—Are there sometimes arguments about not going, because you have assignments to do, but you have to go?

Thuy—Yes. Also, sometimes I refuse to look after my little brother, and my mum is not very happy with that.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Joshua—Currently, I am unemployed, but I used to have a job. I quit my job because I did not feel that I had enough free time. I was either working or at school or studying. That really conflicted with my personal life. I found that by quitting my job I had more free time.

CHAIR—What sort of work were you doing?

Joshua—I used to work in the hospitality industry, in KFC. I used to find that, every time my friends wanted to go out, I would be working on that specific day. The people at KFC would always call me in, because I used to work there for a while. I found it quite hard coping, just trying to get some free time.

CHAIR—When did you work? Was it when you were in year 10 or year 11?

Joshua—Yes, at the end of year 10 and at the beginning of year 11.

CHAIR—Have you heard the same thing from other students?

Joshua—People usually do not complain, but it seems that they do not have enough free time. People will say, ‘Oh, I’m working on that day,’ and they cannot seem to get to do stuff with you. People do not seem to get to socialise when they are working.

CHAIR—Did it impact on your study time and your school work as well, do you think?

Joshua—Not really; but, because I was studying, I just did not have enough free time.

CHAIR—So your social life was being sacrificed in order that you could keep working and studying at that time.

Joshua—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you. Would others at the back like to tell us if they work?

Bradley—I do not work at this time.

Nikola—I am a casual employee in a part-time job, which I got last year at the beginning of my year 11. I have found it quite simple to keep everything going. I also do sport; I do tennis outside of school. I am also a member of Young Labor. So I do all that while also having a social life. But I just have everything really structured when I come home. Everything needs to be structured; if it is not, basically everything falls apart. I do about 10 to 12 hours a week of work, which is not too much. I am in year 12 currently and I am doing five subjects. At the moment I am doing chemistry, legal studies, nutrition, English and SOCE. I am doing the mathematics of flying as well, so I am doing about six subjects. I want to go on to uni and do law and commerce and, hopefully, get into politics later. Once I finish year 12, I would like to stop work, minimise as much as I can and help to do a bit more campaigning for Young Labor so that I can get better recognised and get more into that area.

CHAIR—What sort of work are you doing at the moment?

Nikola—Angus and Robertson, the book store.

CHAIR—So it is retail type work.

Nikola—Yes.

CHAIR—Is that mainly for the money?

Nikola—My parents provide everything; they provide sufficiently for me. I feel that getting a part-time or casual job gives you some sort of independence as well. Also, you are in the real world and are experiencing everything. If you keep it to a limited amount, it should not affect your studies too much. It just depends on what kind of person you are or your personality, whether you are an organised person. I find it quite simple to manage, if I just keep on top of things and keep organised. The support I get from my school is really great. If I go to teachers that will help me, I get all the support that I need, which is fine for me.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Tamara—I do not have a job.

CHAIR—Okay.

Garreth—I am unemployed right now, but last year I had a job for the whole year. I purposely looked for work that would be at the school; I helped out in the cafeteria because I sort of needed the money. However, at the same time, I heard a lot about people who never had time for anything.

CHAIR—How many hours were you doing?

Garreth—Usually about four to five hours a week.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Nicholas—I have a part-time job at a Foodland store—which is kind of a bludge, everyone says, because it is a supermarket. But I have been having a few troubles with my employer lately and, between school work and out of school commitments, I have been getting really stressed. I used to work 20 to 25 hours a week; because my employer has a few problems with my personality, I now work only five hours a week. I am also on the committee of a war gaming club, which is currently going through its constitution in an effort to try to change it as much as possible. I am a member of the committee of that club, which I am now being kicked off because I am not there enough due to work. I am not even going to make it to the meeting where I will be kicked off, because I have to work tonight. In the last month, I have had two stress attacks at school. I have gone home early and have seen a psychiatrist three times. I get stress related illnesses pretty much all the time now. I am finding it quite difficult to keep up with my school work, although I try my best. I try to use my weekends to relax as much as possible so that I am ready for the next week, but it gets difficult because my brother has his friends over then. However, they try to include me in whatever they do, in trying to help me out as much as possible, so they are really good. I spend my time after school either with my parents, going through job vacancies to find another job—but nobody will touch year 12s anymore—or trying to catch up on as much school work as I can.

CHAIR—Is it your experience that employers are looking mainly for people who are not in year 12 so that they do not have worry about those people's study commitments?

Nicholas—I honestly do not know. I am fairly qualified to do most jobs; I have a certificate II in business. I do not know whether it is year 12s that they do not want to hire or they just do not want to hire anyone.

CHAIR—These are more difficult times too; that is one of the issues. Thank you. Did we miss anybody along there? No. We are also looking at the capacity to recognise the skills and knowledge that you get from your non-school subjects. That might be paid part-time work, volunteer community type work or organisations that you are involved with—you were talking about the constitution of a club. Legitimate skills and knowledge come from being involved in such areas and they are not actually recorded anywhere. One of the things that we are talking about is having some sort of passport so that, when you leave school, you have not only your certificate but also a document that tells of the skills and experience that you have gained in those different areas; even with your sporting activities, it might be coaching or helping with younger teams and things like that. I am interested in knowing whether any of you have received feedback or qualifications from volunteer organisations you have been involved in that you are able to put into your CVs and resumes when you leave school. We have covered paid work; has anybody done anything beyond that?

Amber—I worked in a cafe that my mum used to own. I did not have to work there; I just did it because I could. We had to give it up after a while because the business went broke. That taught me a lot. I was only 12 at the time. I stood behind the coffee machine and I was really short; I had lots of tall customers looking down at me. That taught me how to talk to people—communication skills.

CHAIR—Communication is a common one. Do you think it is a really important one?

Amber—Yes.

CHAIR—Confidence is another. Young people say that it gives you more confidence.

Amber—It does. It gives you a lot of confidence in talking to people.

CHAIR—What about the club? You must be learning skills and getting knowledge from that as well.

Nikola—There are always skills and there are always things to do. Because we are a not-for-profit organisation, we do everything ourselves. Last year our roof collapsed, and that was fun. I also volunteered for two months at my friend's gaming store, which was one of the old toy collector franchises; he went broke a month after I stopped working there. I also do some Labor work with my aunt every now and then.

CHAIR—Do you think it would be useful to have a passport documenting all of that experience and knowledge, as it could be used when you leave school?

Nikola—It would certainly help. The person I used to do work experience for in the toy collector franchise has written me references and stuff before, and it helps.

CHAIR—What experience have you had in getting references? Are people willing to give them? I know that people are a little more reluctant these days to provide references and such things.

Amber—I actually lost a job because I asked for a reference. I used to work at the Cheesecake Shop—I think that was in 2005—and I was 13 at the time. I was not meant to get the job but was employed, my employer said, because I was good. About five or six months later I found another job that I wanted and I had turned 14. When I asked my employer for a reference, he stopped giving me hours. Then I found out that he had fired me—and I thought, 'Thanks for telling me.'

CHAIR—That is really interesting. Young people say that one thing in the struggle with working is being able to say no; they are worried that, if they say no to shifts or, 'No, I've got school work due,' or whatever, they will not get shifts and so forth. Has anybody had experience like that?

Owen—Yes. Once I started saying no, they cut my hours dramatically. But now they are starting to pick back up. I thought, 'Well, I'll start covering all these shifts and get back into it,' and now I get a phone call each day asking, 'Can you come into work today?'

CHAIR—Do you think they were more amenable when you said, 'No, I've got exams coming up; I have to study,' or did the reason not matter?

Owen—The reason does not really matter. Their initial goal is just to get you in on that day. If they are not doing that, they are not succeeding and then they are not happy.

Amber—We just got a new manager in the Bakehouse. Our old manager, if I rang up and said that I could not come in, would guilt trip me over the phone. I came into work one day really sick; she said I had to come and I was not allowed to not come in. So I came in and ended up going home, throwing up and being really sick. I nearly fainted in the store, and she really did

not care. She called me in the very next day, asking me to work again. I was starting to do five-hour shifts before school. I would start at 5am, finish at 10 and then go straight to school afterwards. That was really killing my sleeping time. By the time I got to school, I had no energy left and I would fall asleep.

CHAIR—We have had lots of evidence from teachers, saying that they know this is going on because people are falling asleep in their classes during the day. Another issue that has been raised is around school. I know this is hard as well, but sometimes school does not take into consideration the other demands that are on you. People say, ‘Well, I was working a heap of shifts and my assignment was late because I was working, but I couldn’t get an extension.’ The attitude was, ‘Well, you choose to work and you should give your school work priority.’ Have people had experience of the other side to it, where schools are particularly good at this?

Jonathon—A lot of teachers are like that, but some classes—say, biology, chemistry and maths studies—are a bit more structured and, if you do not have your assignment in, you have to face the consequences. I do justice and society and, if I rang my teacher and said, ‘I’m not going to be able to get my assignment in by the due date, because I have to work tonight,’ she would say, ‘Okay, that’s all right; get it to me as soon as you can.’ I think it is about giving them enough notice. If you know that you are going to work or you get called into work, you should ring and tell them. A lot of our teachers are mates of ours; in year 12, we talk together a lot more.

CHAIR—It is a more adult relationship.

Jonathon—Yes. We get along heaps better. If you go to them and say, ‘I’m not going to get my assignment through, because I’ve got to do this,’ they will say, ‘Okay, then make sure you get it to me by’—a certain day.

CHAIR—So your work responsibilities are seen as being legitimate.

Jonathon—A lot of teachers accept the fact that we have a job, but with some teachers it is just, ‘I don’t care. It’s too bad that you’ve got a job; you’ve got to do more work.’

CHAIR—So it depends on the person and it is not formalised or anything like that.

Jonathon—Yes.

CHAIR—Does anybody else have anything to add?

Thuy—I reckon it rests on the student. Some students keep using the same reason over and over again, and the teachers are just sick and tired of hearing it. It is the same person saying the same thing over and over again. It just seems like a cliché. If you know that you cannot balance those two things out, you have to sacrifice one of them. I cannot work and I have to study, but even so I experience stress and everything like that. I know that this is what I have to do. I reckon the student has most of the responsibility for knowing what they want; they just cannot use that reason over and over again.

CHAIR—You feel that sometimes the school feels that the priority should be school.

Thuy—Yes. It is not compulsory to go to year 12. If you want to go to year 12, you can; if you do not want to, you can quit and just go on to an apprenticeship or a traineeship. There is TAFE as well. You do not have to go to uni. You can go to uni when you are an adult and do it part time, if you want.

CHAIR—So it is about prioritising.

Thuy—Yes.

Nikola—It is all well and good to say you should prioritise your year 12. But I have the full support of my family, my parents, but some students do not have that support at home. I was at a different school last year and our dux there struggled a lot because he did not have that sort of support at home. He had to work lots of outside hours to pay for certain stuff, which we get and sometimes take for granted. Sometimes students do not have a choice and they have to work. They want to achieve their academic goals but, at the same time, they need the basics that all the other kids get. I am truly lucky because my parents support me to the full extent; but we need to recognise that not all students have the same support at home as we might get.

CHAIR—We have had it raised with us that a significant percentage of students work because they have to. One of the issues around that is the availability of the Youth Allowance, which is government funding to assist students. I am interested in whether people have had any particular issues with the Youth Allowance. Would the gentleman to whom you have referred not qualified for some sort of youth allowance?

Nikola—Yes, but some kids say that their parents take the Youth Allowance when those kids need it for their basic needs. Most students have mobile phones, say, and they need to buy credit for them, but their parents may have taken their Youth Allowance. For example, I do not take my Youth Allowance from my parents, because they provide everything. I do not even need to spend the money I earn at work; it is my money, but they never ask for it.

CHAIR—So it can depend on the family relationship.

Nikola—Yes, it definitely depends on that, as I said, and it is different in each family. The expectations on student are different in each family, and that needs to be considered as well.

CHAIR—I think the next two schools are waiting. Thank you very much. You have given us very useful information. We appreciate it. Obviously, we get lots of information from researchers, academics and so forth, but we find it is particularly important and useful to get the story from you directly. Hansard may need to check a name, a spelling or a detail with you. Just before you leave, please check with them. Once again, we thank you very much for the evidence that you have presented today. Your school will be sent a copy of the transcript of this particular session, which you will be able to look through and read. If we have got a fact, a figure or something like that wrong, you can let us know and we will get it corrected. Once again, thank you very much for your time today; it has been most useful.

[2.11 pm]

DAVID, Student, Smithfield Plains High School

ELEANOR, Student, Smithfield Plains High School

ELIZABETH, Student, Smithfield Plains High School

JAMES, Student, Salisbury High School

REBECCA, Student, Smithfield Plains High School

RENEE, Student, Salisbury High School

STEPHANIE, Student, Salisbury High School

CHAIR—I will give you a quick rundown on what we are doing here. This is the House of Representatives education and training committee of the Commonwealth parliament. The minister has asked us to look at the challenges that exist for young people in balancing school, study and work—in particular, paid jobs but also other forms, say, in doing VET courses and so on. I am Sharon Bird, the chair; Dennis Jensen is the deputy chair; and Mr Steve Irons is a committee member. We are all members of parliament. Justin is the secretary to the committee. At the end is Hansard, whose job is to record everything that is said, as a parliamentary process, and to produce a permanent record of the parliament of all these sorts of discussions. We are particularly keen to hear from each of you. Just give your name, what school you are at and what year you are in, for the purposes of Hansard having a full record of who is here today.

David—My name is David. I am a student in year 12 at Smithfield Plains High School.

Eleanor—My name is Eleanor. I am in year 11 at Smithfield Plains High School.

Elizabeth—I am Elizabeth. I go to Smithfield Plains and I am in year 12.

Rebecca—I am Rebecca. I am in year 12 at Smithfield Plains High School.

Renee—My name is Renee. I am in year 10 at Salisbury High School.

James—My name is James and I am in year 11 at Salisbury High School.

Stephanie—My name is Stephanie. I am in year 10 at Salisbury High School.

CHAIR—Perhaps we can run down the batting order, if you like, and each of you can give us an idea of what you are studying, whether you have had or are doing part-time work, what your experience has been in trying to balance those things, what problems you might have had and so forth with that and how well the school and the employer work to support you with all the demands that are upon you.

David—I am doing five subjects at the moment, most of which are community study subjects. I am a casual worker at Maggie Beer products in Tanunda. Most often I leave school before the end of the day so that I can get to my work.

CHAIR—What time do your shifts normally start?

David—They normally start at 2 pm. I finish around 10 and sometimes 11.

CHAIR—How many nights a week would that be?

David—About two to three nights a week and sometimes more.

CHAIR—Does that have an impact on your ability to do your school work?

David—Sometimes. I pretty much leave at nine o'clock in the morning and I do not get home until about 10.30 to 11 and sometimes later.

CHAIR—When do you manage to do assignments, homework and so on?

David—I pretty much lag behind and do them whenever.

CHAIR—Whenever you can fit them in.

David—Yes, pretty much.

CHAIR—Is the school understanding of that, or does it become an issue sometimes?

David—Sometimes it becomes an issue, but then I just have to pull my socks up pretty much and get along in my work.

CHAIR—Why are you working? Do you need the money or are you looking for experience?

David—Money, skills and future employment outside of school.

CHAIR—So you hope that it will lead to some longer term employment?

David—If not there, hopefully I have the skills now to go somewhere else.

CHAIR—Some skills that you can transport to another job.

David—Yes, and to build on my resume.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Eleanor—I work at Subway and it has not really affected me too much. If you get the work done at school, it is all good. Being in year 11, it is not that big a deal as being in year 12. But, with one of my year 12 subjects that I am doing, I just have to make sure I have time to do that.

CHAIR—How many hours are you working?

Eleanor—I think about a minimum of 12.

CHAIR—When are most of your shifts—weekends, week nights? What do you normally do?

Eleanor—It is at least one day on the weekend and two in the week.

CHAIR—What would be a normal night shift? What sorts of hours would you start and finish?

Eleanor—It varies. I can start from four, six, eight or stuff like that. It just varies, depending on who else is available.

CHAIR—When would you normally finish?

Eleanor—Depending on how long the shift is, the latest that I have had to finish is probably 10.30. How long I actually work to just depends on what time I start.

CHAIR—Have there been situations where you have had to say that you cannot work, that you have an assignment that has to be in or whatever? Is there any problem with your telling work, 'I can't do that shift; I can't come in'?

Eleanor—There is only problem if I cannot find anyone to fill my shift. But I have not had to say that yet, because I find time somewhere.

CHAIR—So you ring around amongst each other to see if somebody else can do your shift.

Eleanor—Yes.

Elizabeth—I work at KFC. If you get behind in your work, you just do it in study time.

CHAIR—You have said that you are doing year 12.

Elizabeth—Yes.

CHAIR—What sorts of hours and shifts would you do at KFC?

Elizabeth—Normally between 15 and 20.

CHAIR—Over a week, you do 15 to 20?

Elizabeth—Yes.

CHAIR—Mostly is it on weekends or week nights?

Elizabeth—I do about three a week and then one on the weekend.

CHAIR—Three nights a week.

Elizabeth—Yes.

CHAIR—What would be your normal start and finish hours?

Elizabeth—They change around a bit, but normally it is around five to 10.30 or six to 11.30.

CHAIR—Is there a problem with your being tired the next day at school? Have you had any of those sorts of issues?

Elizabeth—Not really, because if you have study in the morning you can just—

Dr JENSEN—We are getting nods from the back.

Elizabeth—sleep in the next day.

CHAIR—What about managing your assignments and school work?

Elizabeth—You can just do it in your study lines; I have two study lines.

CHAIR—So you have to make sure that you use that time really effectively to get things done.

Elizabeth—Yes.

CHAIR—Some of the students in the previous session said that having work really impacts on their social life.

Elizabeth—Yes.

CHAIR—It is the same for you?

Elizabeth—Yes, it does a lot.

CHAIR—Do you do any sport or anything like that as well?

Elizabeth—No.

CHAIR—It is just work or school.

Elizabeth—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr IRONS—Do you work for the money?

Elizabeth—Yes, pretty much.

Mr IRONS—Is it just to buy things?

Elizabeth—Yes.

Mr IRONS—Is it lifestyle, say, to pay your phone bills?

Elizabeth—Yes.

Rebecca—I am in year 12; I have two part-time jobs and I am doing a VET course. I work at Woolworths and at Tunza Fun, both of which are in Elizabeth. In that way, during the holidays, when I work at one and then go and start at the other, it is more convenient, although I do live in Kudla. Before I worked there, I worked at KFC. I started when I was 15, so I have been working for nearly three years now.

CHAIR—How many hours would you do in those two jobs? What is your normal week?

Rebecca—During a week, I will get 15 hours at Woolworths and about 12 to 15 at Tunza Fun.

CHAIR—So you are working 27 to 30 hours, on top of school?

Rebecca—Yes, and my VET course. My VET course is every Friday and requires me to go to Elizabeth TAFE from 10 to four. It is convenient for me, obviously, if I am starting work at one of the other jobs, to take my uniform. I go to TAFE and then I go to work. But TAFE and the school understand if I have to leave early.

Dr JENSEN—How are your studies going? Is this impacting a lot on your marks?

Rebecca—I have been doing two jobs for about nine months now and it is not impacting on my study a lot. It did not impact a lot last year because—I am not bragging—I am a pretty good student; I get a lot of Bs and As. I get a lot of my work done in class. But I have two study lines this year and I had two last year. So, in my study line, I always have to do something; otherwise, I will get behind. After school I have something like an hour before I start work. I usually start at 5.30 and sometimes I will stay back to help with night fill. Recently I have been staying back to help with night fill, working until 2.30 or three in the morning, then coming home, sleeping and going to school. I do not do it just for the money, but I do need the money because I had a car accident. I did not cause the accident but I did not have insurance, so I have to pay the insurance company. So there is a lot of pressure in knowing that it could put a strain on my school work and so forth. It is like a little web.

Dr JENSEN—A candle has only two ends, you realise.

Rebecca—Yes, I have been told that before.

CHAIR—So it is being super organised and maximising what time you have?

Rebecca—Yes, and it does impact on my social life a lot. I cannot go out on the weekend, because I have to start work really early. This Easter long weekend, I am working for double time and a half on the days that Woolworths are open, so I cannot go away for the long weekend. I have just realised that next week I have 32 hours at Woolworths and 20 at Tunza Fun, and I wanted to get some school work done. Don't laugh; that's mean. Now you are making me feel as though I am some big nerd. You are not allowed to do that!

CHAIR—I am just amazed at the hours that you are doing and managing.

Rebecca—Yes. As soon as I have paid the insurance company back, I will be quitting because, from working both jobs, I will be getting taxed double. Sometimes having both jobs does not play out to my advantage.

Dr JENSEN—What do you want to do next year?

Rebecca—Uni. I have chosen the subjects that I have this year in order to get portfolio entry, because the subjects offered by the school are not the ones I was looking for, and they are really understanding about that. I am doing drama, art, English and voc studies because, with my VET course, it looks better on my portfolio entry, as it shows me interacting with the community.

Dr JENSEN—What do you want to do?

Rebecca—Probably something to do with art; maybe teach art. I do not know. I am just trying to keep as many doors open as possible. That is why I am doing my VET course. I am interested in make-up and I figure that, if I do not get into uni, I can always fall back on that. Perhaps I could go for an apprenticeship or something like that. That is why I have a hairdressing certificate as well. I have been doing a VET course every year since year 10.

CHAIR—How old are you?

Rebecca—Seventeen.

CHAIR—In a way, you have lived nearly three lifetimes.

Rebecca—I am turning 18 this year.

Dr JENSEN—That makes a difference then!

CHAIR—I became exhausted just listening to all that you have done.

Rebecca—Sorry.

CHAIR—That is great. Do you find that employers are pretty understanding?

Rebecca—Yes. Tunza Fun do not have a problem with me booking days off for assignments or that sort of thing. Woolworths only get angry if I ring up, for example, an hour before I start and say, 'Yeah, I can't work today.' They are understanding and that is really good.

CHAIR—So you do not feel hesitant in saying, ‘Look, no, I can’t do extra shifts next week,’ or whatever?

Rebecca—Not at all. If I need to do that, I just have to give them to someone else—and they do not mind the extra hours. My boss understands that I have another job and school and stuff, and they are really cool about that.

CHAIR—Thanks, Rebecca.

Renee—I am Renee. I work at Springbank Chicken and Seafood. My minimum is about 16 hours a week.

CHAIR—You are year 10; is that right?

Renee—Yes.

CHAIR—What is your motivation for working?

Renee—To get money for myself, really.

James—To buy shoes.

Renee—I want to save up for a car because I am turning 16 this year.

CHAIR—So partly it is to do with savings.

Renee—Yes.

CHAIR—How many hours did you say you are doing—about 10 or 12?

Renee—Sixteen is my minimum. Then, if I get called in or whatever, I always go in.

CHAIR—So 16 is the minimum.

Renee—Yes.

CHAIR—In a normal week what shifts do you work?

Renee—I work three days during the week and one day on the weekend.

CHAIR—When you say ‘day’, do you mean after-school hours?

Renee—Yes.

CHAIR—What would be your normal start and finish time?

Renee—It would be 4.30 to 8.30.

CHAIR—So it would be a shift of about four hours.

Renee—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you do homework and so on when you come home after that, or do you try to manage it—

Renee—Yes. I normally do it after work or just on the days that I do not work.

CHAIR—So, to have that done, you have to be really organised.

Renee—Yes.

Dr JENSEN—How are your studies going?

Renee—Good. I am getting As and Bs this term.

Dr JENSEN—What do you want to do later on?

Renee—I want to be a police officer.

CHAIR—What about other activities? We have heard that social life goes out the window.

Renee—Yes, because I play sport as well.

CHAIR—You are a sportsperson?

Renee—Yes. I do not get to see many of my friends and so on on the weekend.

CHAIR—So are your weekends spent playing sports, training and that sort of thing?

Renee—On Sundays I play basketball and on Saturdays I work from 11 to 8.30.

CHAIR—What about training? I am just conscious that training is usually two or three nights a week. Do you have to make a sacrifice or get some balance there?

Renee—Yes. Work always try to call me in on the days I have training and I always have to tell them that I cannot come in.

CHAIR—Do you have to tell them over and over?

Renee—Yes.

CHAIR—So they do not remember—

Renee—They always try to con me into working.

CHAIR—How is school? Is school pretty good? If you really get stuck with not being able to get an assignment done or something like that because you have had to work and so on, have you had any problems talking to school about that and managing it?

Renee—I will normally do it after basketball on a Sunday in order to catch up.

CHAIR—So you just try to make sure that you have it done by the time it is due.

Renee—Yes.

Mr IRONS—At what age can you get your licence in South Australia?

Renee—Sixteen.

James—I work at KFC in Salisbury. I have only started there recently; I have been working there for about a month or two now. I get a lot of shifts and a lot of hours. I work just about every day of the week, except for Thursday and Sunday. Although at times I will have to work on Sundays, I cannot do so on Sunday mornings, because of sport. Usually the time I work is from about four o'clock to about 11 or midnight.

CHAIR—Did you say that this is four nights a week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday?

James—And Saturday. When I get home, I am straight on to the computer pretty much so that I can do my homework. I am in year 11 and I am serious about what I want to get into. I need to get into uni, which is why I am working. My family is not really the best off with cash and that, so I have to get out and get the money so that I can go to uni.

Dr JENSEN—What do you want to do?

James—I want to be a journalist or, preferably, an English teacher. It impacts a lot on my school work. I will be up until about five o'clock in the morning just doing homework because I am doing stage 2 English studies, which is the highest English that my school offers. I am doing basic math, which is a bit embarrassing, which is a lot of work as well. I have other subjects where I need to concentrate very hard. With some subjects, I will think, 'No, I can't do this work, because I have to balance and prioritise this other work'—which is my compulsory work, whereas the others are just my selective work.

Dr JENSEN—Do you have much in the way of slack in order to compensate one way or the other? I am aware that you are saying that you are very focused on what you want to achieve in life and you want to go to uni, so you need to do the work. When it comes down to it, studying until five in the morning and so on is a bit unsustainable. What is going to give?

James—Good grades, which is what I need.

Dr JENSEN—No; how are you going to have good grades, when you are up studying until five in the morning and working until 11 o'clock at night? What is going to give, if your grades start going downhill because basically you have overstretched?

James—I am sorry; I do not understand.

Mr IRONS—He means, what will you give up? If your grades go downhill, which means you cannot get into university, which is your ultimate goal, what are you going to sacrifice?

James—I have already given up half of my sporting time so that I can get to work and still have time for homework.

Mr IRONS—So you think that what you are doing is sustainable.

James—Yes. I am trying to balance out everything.

CHAIR—How would work react if you got to the point where you said, ‘No, it’s starting to impact on my school work now and I want to cut back on my shifts’? Have you tried that?

James—I have. Work is absolutely fine with it. I get along really well with my managers. I am part time but I am still getting paid as a casual, so I am getting more money than I should be getting; but I get along with my managers, so they give me that. Generally, they do not like it when people book days off. But, because I am so into what I am doing, as soon as I need it, they allow me to have a day off; but I still have to cover my shift.

CHAIR—Does that mean calling on somebody else to do the shift for you?

James—Yes. But I have a friend who is absolutely fine with doing that, if I need her to do it, because she knows that I would do it for her as well.

CHAIR—We have heard evidence from teachers that they know there is a problem because students are falling asleep in class.

James—I have never done that.

CHAIR—Honestly, you have not fallen asleep?

James—I have done it in my study line period though.

CHAIR—Your eyes are open but you are not quite there?

James—Okay, I have been guilty of that—but that is only in legal studies.

CHAIR—Okay.

Mr IRONS—You carry a pillow around with you?

James—Yes. It does not help that my legal studies teacher reminds me very much of Pauline Hanson.

Rebecca—Can I ask a question?

James—You can.

Rebecca—Do you find that your energy levels are different from those of others? For example, some people feel best during the day and some people feel best during the night; but do you feel that your energy levels are the highest or at their peak from 11 until about one to two?

James—I do, actually.

Rebecca—That is how it is with me as well.

James—I am a very backwards person.

Rebecca—Yes, it is the same with me.

James—While I am wide awake, I can be the tiredest, most boring person in the world; but, when I am absolutely exhausted, I can be bouncing off walls. I am so energetic when I am exhausted.

Rebecca—Yes, I am the same.

CHAIR—To some extent, it is horses for courses. People operate in different ways.

Stephanie—I am Stephanie and I work at Angle Vale Foodland. I am really happy there because they know that school is school and they work around it, which is really good.

CHAIR—Can you just explain to me what Foodland is?

James—It is a grocery store.

CHAIR—I am sorry; none of us are from South Australia. How many hours would you do?

Stephanie—I have had over 25 hours, which does not bother me. A minimum is about 12, so it is not that bad because I am only in year 10. But I am a little worried about when I am in years 11 and 12 and have to go to work as well, because I am not a very focused person sometimes.

CHAIR—What would your normal weekly shifts be? Do you work them in the evenings or on weekends?

Stephanie—Normally I have two night shifts during week days, and they are four to nine. Sometimes I work on Sundays or Saturdays. I just do whatever they need me to do.

CHAIR—Is your employer pretty amenable and supportive if you need to make changes?

Stephanie—Yes.

CHAIR—Have you had any problems with school?

Stephanie—No, not at school. I have just got into the routine of coming home at nine, having a shower, getting some food, going to bed and then waking up fresh for the morning, and on those nights that I am not working I can study.

CHAIR—So you have organised yourself pretty well.

Stephanie—Yes.

CHAIR—Have you had to give anything up? Is there a part of your life that you—

Stephanie—I miss my friends but that is not too much of a worry, as I can see them at school anyway.

CHAIR—We are sorry to rush things through at the end. We get quite caught up chatting with you. If we are going to make recommendations to the minister about policies to support students better, we need to make sure that we hear directly from students about what their life experiences are. We take on board that people experience things differently. As you say, some people operate best at different hours of the day and so forth. and we do not make particular judgements about that. But it is quite clear that it is much more common for young people to be working and studying. When we were young, the system was designed so that additional trading was done on Thursday nights and Saturday mornings; so, if you had work, you could contain it pretty much. You guys are in a different world, where trading happens over all sorts of hours and has all sorts of pressures. We really appreciate the evidence you have given today. Hansard have been trying to record things as we have gone along and they may need to clarify one or two things—a name that you have used or something like that—for the record. Please check with them before you head out. Again, from us, thank you very much for your evidence today. It is very useful to our inquiry.

[2.43 pm]

BOB, Parent

CADE, Student

CHANDAL, Former student

DIANNE, Parent

JAMES, Student

JOSH, Student

LEA, Parent

NIKITA, Former student

CHAIR—Okay. Welcome here today, everybody. I will provide a very brief explanation. Here you have the members of the House of Representatives education committee. I am the chair, Mr Jensen is the deputy chair, and Mr Irons is a member of the committee. The committee secretary will do the organisational stuff for us and help us write up the report. Hansard will be recording today's proceedings, so every word is part of the permanent record of the parliament.

We have an inquiry into the challenges for young people in balancing school and work demands. To a large extent that has been about paid work, such as casual jobs, but it also includes work that you might do as part of a vocational course, such as school based apprenticeships and things like that, and how that affects your transition after school to further study or work. So we are really keen to hear directly from students, parents and teachers about what their experience is of this. I am very glad to see that we have a mix here today. We have been relying on our own parental experience, so it is good to have some parents join us today. Cade, are you doing a work component with the TAFE course or is it a straight TAFE course?

Cade—I am not too sure.

CHAIR—You might have a work experience component in it somewhere, perhaps?

Cade—Yes, probably.

Bob—I have two kids in year 9.

Nikita—I graduated last year. I work in a veterinary clinic. I started as a school based apprenticeship, and have just transitioned into my second year apprenticeship.

James—I did a school based apprenticeship, but am only studying now.

CHAIR—I will start with the parents, because we have just had two lots of schools, and then we will come back to the students. We are particularly interested in the former students, with some perspective looking back at what you were doing. That will be very useful for us. Would you like to give us your observations about what might be happening with young people in this issue today of balancing school and work, and some of the challenges about retention rates and keeping young people engaged at school. It is a measure that governments are committed to achieving but it is not always so easy to do. Does anyone have some observations they would like to make? We will presume it is not personal; we will presume it is a general observation.

Ms Scott—I think you should ask Nikita to talk, because she will need to leave shortly.

CHAIR—Are you on a time frame? No problems at all. Thank you for making me aware of that. Do you have work commitments that you need to get to?

Nikita—Yes.

CHAIR—Would you mind giving us a perspective on your experience?

Nikita—I started my school based apprenticeship last year, at the beginning of year 12. I had been working in the clinic for the previous two years. I got the job through work experience in years 9 and 10, and then they offered me a job. Once I hit year 12, they offered me the apprenticeship to further my studies. I was doing full-time school. I did four subjects at school, and then I worked after school every day plus a Wednesday morning when I did surgeries and stuff like that at work to do that component of my apprenticeship. I completed year 12 and went on to my second year. I am still at the same clinic. It will be three years in August that I have been working there. It was tough, but it was good, because it kept my mind going and pushing, and I knew that I was heading towards a good career, stepping out of school. I stepped out of school straight into a full-time job that was waiting for me as soon as I had finished.

CHAIR—In terms of balancing the work commitments, all of the hours that you were doing was actually part of your enrolled study?

Nikita—No. I moved out of home at a young age, so I had to support myself. Therefore, I had that job as well as another job, and school, but I had to work as many hours as I could to support myself. So I was learning on the job as I was going, but it was really the Wednesday mornings and two of the nights that were to do with my study and learning.

CHAIR—The other hours were paid hours?

Nikita—Yes. All the hours were paid hours. Every hour that I worked there I got paid for, just because I did like a normal nurse does and stuff like that. It was just that I was learning as I was going.

CHAIR—So you started at the beginning of year 10, is that right?

Nikita—I started in August when I was in year 10.

CHAIR—You started out doing casual work with them, is that right?

Nikita—Yes. I was doing all nights after school, and then on Saturday mornings.

CHAIR—When you say all nights after school, five nights a week you were working?

Nikita—Yes.

CHAIR—What sort of hours?

Nikita—We are open until 7 pm, but we stay back until 7.30, so I would go straight from school to work, and it was three until 7.30 for the five nights, and then on Saturday mornings we are open between eight and 12.30.

CHAIR—Because it was not part of your school course then, you were trying to balance the two; how was that with balancing schoolwork?

Nikita—It was tough, yes, but I had no choice, really; I had to do it. I got through it all right by the end of it. It was tough as I was going along.

CHAIR—Then it became a more manageable thing because they then transitioned you into a school based apprenticeship?

Nikita—Yes. Once I had transitioned into the apprenticeship, obviously in year 12 I did not do as many subjects. I was not doing the five full subjects, so I had a little bit more time to catch up on all of the study that I was missing out on by working. Then I had the Wednesday morning off to go to work, which worked in well because I had a double study period in that time. So I did not miss a class to learn it at work as well.

Dr JENSEN—With your having had that experience, what recommendations would you like to give to this committee to make things easier for people in future?

Nikita—I did my course externally. I did all of my study externally because I did not obviously have the time to go into TAFE and learn there. I think it would be easier being a child who did not have to support myself by working so much.

Dr JENSEN—Absolutely.

Nikita—As an apprentice, it was good because I was learning when I needed to learn, and I had more hours on the job than a normal apprentice would in a school based apprenticeship; usually it is only one day out of the five that you are actually at the job and on the job.

CHAIR—Were you eligible for Youth Allowance?

Nikita—No, I was not, because I think my mum was earning too much, but I did not understand it as a child because I was out fighting against the odds trying to keep my head above water. My mum was not supporting me, and neither was my father. They would not help me out in any way, so I had to go out and work for that to keep surviving. That is one thing I did find difficult. I was out there trying my hardest to keep my head above water, and I had no help.

Dr JENSEN—So you would like improvement in the information and support structures obviously?

Nikita—Yes.

Dr JENSEN—Particularly as someone who would have been very young out on your own, not having available that information and the structures that are in place, but about which you did not know, do you think it is critical that you get that information out there?

Nikita—Yes. It was hard not having the help. I just did not understand why a person out there trying to survive was not getting any help from anyone because they were saying that my parents should have been supporting me when they were not. It just did not make sense to me.

CHAIR—Okay, thanks for that. We might just keep going along then. Josh, did you want to tell us what your experience is?

Nikita—I have to leave now.

CHAIR—That is fine. Thank you so much. We really appreciate your information.

Josh—I am in year 12 this year and I am doing five subjects. I work at night in a kitchen. Our kitchen closes at nine, so I am working mainly from five until about 9.30 to 10 o'clock. With working from five until 10, at 10 o'clock I still have probably two hours before 12 o'clock when I can do a little bit of homework and then go to sleep and try to wake up in the morning and drive my brothers to school. I started in September when I was in year 10, and I am still going, so it will be three years this year.

CHAIR—How many hours do you say that you work?

Josh—My minimum would be round about 10 hours, but this week I have done approximately 20 hours. It is really variable, because we might have functions on, so the work might be there or not. Because I have been there for such a long time now, with my exams, I have asked for the whole two to three weeks off, except for the weekends so I can study, and I have no extra workload on me.

CHAIR—They are okay with you making those sorts of requests?

Josh—Yes, because I have been there for such a long time. It is basically something I have just learnt. I am the first student they have basically had.

CHAIR—Is that part of a course that you are doing, or is that just separate from school—paid work?

Josh—Just separate. Over the last two years, between years 10 and 11, I did a certificate II in Business Management, and I did this at the school through VET here. I was doing that on top of my other six subjects that I had over the last two years. Balancing that with school and work was quite difficult, but I just had to try to catch up on it.

CHAIR—On the other side of it, how do you find your studies? If you have to do a number of shifts or a week where you have a lot of hours, is school fairly amenable if you say you cannot meet that deadline for that assignment?

Josh—Not really, because if I cannot meet a deadline for an assignment, I will stay back and try to do it. I would just make that a priority, and I would try to catch up on the work that I missed on that day. With work, it may change. If I have a really late couple of nights, or if I work four nights in a row until 10 or 11 o'clock, my workload may change because I might not get all of my homework done, and I would be a bit tired over the next couple of days because I cannot rest for the next couple of days.

CHAIR—In terms of the balancing act for you, are you saying that if you get an hour or two before midnight, that is fairly manageable if you have work to do then?

Josh—Yes.

CHAIR—What about your weekends? Are you required to work much on weekends?

Josh—When I first started I used to have to work nearly every weekend, but now I have it off because I play a lot of sport. I play two different sports. When I was in years 10 and 11, I used to actually manage two jobs as well as sport, my course and my school. I used to try to manage all of that, but it was a bit difficult trying to manage two different rosters as well as school and assignments.

CHAIR—At the same time, and not sacrifice something?

Josh—Yes.

CHAIR—Okay, thanks Josh. Did you want to say anything?

Lea—My son Cade is doing the VET course. We decided in year 11 when he was doing another certificate in IT hardware that, because he wanted to go onto the cert. IV in IT and it was over two years, he would go onto year 13 and split his year 12 over two years so it would make it manageable for him. As it was, last year he did three subjects and had to drop it back to two because he just could not handle the workload. In his previous course the school used to transport him to and from the courses. When he started his certificate IV last year, we found that all of the kids had their driver's licence except for him, so we had to find our own transport, but I could not do that because I broke my leg last year. That made it really difficult to get him to and from his course and to and from school. After he dropped that subject, he picked up in both areas of school and TAFE. Now that he is doing two subjects this year for year 13, he seems to be excelling in those two subjects and doing a lot better at TAFE as well. Spreading year 12 out over the two years has made a great difference.

CHAIR—I am from New South Wales, and I am baffled by this year 13 concept. Thank you for that, because I now have more of an understanding.

Lea—In my eyes, I call it year 13. The school does call it year 13, but I have found that in looking at the students who have returned it is the students who have not really done so well in

year 12 or they need to do extra subjects to get those extra SACE points. I am from Queensland, so year 13 to me is baffling also. In my eyes, I look at it not as a failure but that he is continuing on and spreading it over so he can have the best possible outcome.

CHAIR—What sort of work is he doing?

Lea—He does not work in employment.

CHAIR—No, what is he doing with the VET course?

Cade—I am doing information technology and networking.

CHAIR—So are you doing all of your subjects at TAFE at the moment?

Cade—And at school.

CHAIR—Okay. That is an entire VET subject in itself, and you are doing two other subjects?

Lea—He is doing photography and PE here at school, and three days at TAFE.

CHAIR—How do you find TAFE? A lot of students say to us that the TAFE experience is really good, being able to be at school and have the things you are familiar with, but also go to TAFE and experience more like an adult learning environment?

Cade—Yes, it is really good.

CHAIR—Where would you go from here once you have completed this? What would you like to follow on to do?

Cade—Probably finish off with anything I have not done, and then probably go on to another TAFE course and get some more learning.

CHAIR—So is certificate IV the next level of the course?

Cade—Yes.

CHAIR—What I am getting at, in IT, you are interested in continuing that as a career option?

Cade—Yes.

CHAIR—Okay, thanks.

Bob—I am here basically learning, because it has not affected our family as yet. My twin boys have only just turned 14, but we have discussed it a little bit, and I think next year we might have to consider it more seriously. At the moment I am rather learning, and am quite pleased to see that you are so interested in helping these kids.

CHAIR—One of the things that has been an issue and has come to our attention is the fact that, as parents, many of us have made the observation that you want to encourage your young adults to get a part time job, because we see it as having value for learning money management and independence, but the other side of it that we are hearing from students is that it is quite different to the Thursday night, Saturday morning sort of concept we might have had. As we heard from the last group, for them taking on a job can be four or five nights a week until late hours and things like that. The parents' perspective is very interesting to us as well. Would you like to give us some idea about what your views would be, and what the conversation would be that you would be looking to have with your twins about work and school balance?

Bob—It would be difficult at this stage, because they have not really made up their minds what they would like to do a bit later on. One of my lads thinks he might be doctor because I have a family from a previous marriage, and I have a son who is a doctor and he is making good money. So he has that in mind.

CHAIR—Okay; do not discourage the money-making focus.

Bob—Now his education is going to do that, but we are encouraging him, and so is Dr Drew. That is all I could say other than we are just on the sides of this conversation at home at this point.

CHAIR—Forewarned is forearmed. Would you like to add some observations as a parent?

Dianne—I do not know. My youngest daughter did just start a Saturday morning job. It is only five hours a week on Saturday mornings, and she started in February when she was 13, and she turned 14 in March, but it does not interfere with her schoolwork. It is just five hours on Saturdays, and it is a good way of getting pocket money for her and buying things that teenagers need. My eldest son did year 12 here in 2007, and he did TAFE at Davoren Park for two days a week. I found that just doing TAFE and year 12 was difficult for him, and he was not totally successful in year 12 because he had two days out of his week at TAFE.

CHAIR—One of the interesting things that we are hearing is the style and capacity of the student. Some students have been assuring us that they are juggling amazing amounts of work and school, which is just baffling how they manage it, yet for other students the reality is that if they really want to focus and achieve they need to focus on what it is they are particularly looking at doing. So that is the sort of situation you are obviously facing. I do not know if it is just a boy thing, but sometimes they need to focus a bit more and not multitask so much.

Dianne—He was doing an IT course, and he was very interested in that at the time and put a lot of time and energy into it, and I think probably his schoolwork came second. But now he does not want to go on with his IT. He is at TAFE again this year, but he is doing a business course rather than IT, and he has decided he wants to be an electrician.

Mr IRONS—A good job.

CHAIR—There is a bias here.

Mr IRONS—I am an ex-sparky.

Dianne—But when you look back and think that he took two days a week out of his school to do a TAFE course instead of doing his year 12, and then he has not gone on with the IT, you think, ‘Was it worth it?’

CHAIR—Yes, we know that frustration. Okay, thanks Dianne. Now, would you like to explain your experience? You are a graduate, is that right?

Chandal—Yes. I also did a course in year 10, a course in year 11 and a course in year 12. I managed that one all right, but when I went to studying, that kind of did get a bit harder, because I had two jobs. I had one job for a while, but that was only on weekends, and that was kind of all right. But then I got a second job, and that was night times, and that kind of made it a bit harder.

CHAIR—What were the jobs?

Chandal—They were both in hospitality. The first job was just setting up for functions, and the second job was waitressing.

CHAIR—Was that as you progressed and got more responsibility they actually wanted you to do more hours? Is that what happened?

Chandal—Yes. I got my first job from doing a course, and I did work experience there and then I just got a job out of that, and ended up getting more hours as you work longer. That is the same with the second job, but I did not start that until late year 12. So that did not impact.

CHAIR—What was the second job?

Chandal—That was waitressing.

CHAIR—Okay, so you were doing two of them?

Chandal—Yes, two jobs.

CHAIR—What sort of hours were you working?

Chandal—They knew that I was doing school, so they were pretty easy with the hours. I was not doing too many, so that was all right.

CHAIR—What do you mean by ‘too many’? What would be an average week?

Chandal—Probably 10 hours a week, I would say, all together.

CHAIR—So that was maybe two nights a week and a Saturday set up?

Chandal—Yes. It was usually both days on the weekend and then a night or two. It was not too bad.

CHAIR—When you look back now, were you happy with the results you got?

Chandal—My school results? No, I kind of failed, but I do not think that was due to the work. It was just—

Lea—Too much social.

CHAIR—There were other things competing?

Chandal—I kind of gave up.

CHAIR—Was the work for you just about earning some money, or was it also what you were more interested in doing?

Chandal—I am interested in being a flight attendant, so I need the hospitality to do that, and all the courses are helping me to be a flight attendant. But I did not really figure that out until later on.

CHAIR—So the motivation at the time was really just, ‘I want to be working and earning some money’?

Chandal—Yes, pretty much.

CHAIR—Dr Jensen asked this question earlier; are there things that school could have done, or government policy could have done, that would have made it easier for you to engage with school, if you could have integrated that work into your school more, or something like that?

Chandal—Yes, it might have been, but I was not doing too many hours, so I do not see what they could have done. The courses were all right, because they were with school. I could drop subjects because I did have the courses. So that made it easier to study on the other subjects.

CHAIR—Did you do a VET course around hospitality or anything?

Chandal—Yes. I did certificate II in tourism and hospitality, and then I did a top-up course in certificate II. It was just serving alcoholic beverages, and I did certificate I in hospitality.

CHAIR—So it was complementing the things that you were studying? Your work complemented the things you were studying?

Chandal—Yes.

CHAIR—In those VET courses, usually there is a work experience component. Did you have to do that as well?

Chandal—Yes.

CHAIR—You could not count your part-time work towards that?

Chandal—No. On my last course, I did work experience, and that is what got me the job. It might have been my second course; I do not know.

CHAIR—Okay, but it was a good outcome; what are you doing now?

Chandal—I still have those two jobs. I am trying to study to be a flight attendant, but I am only 16, so I have to wait until I am 18. My age makes it difficult. That is the hardest bit.

CHAIR—You have a few qualifications under your belt already?

Chandal—Yes.

CHAIR—All right; thanks very much for that. Thanks, everybody, for your attendance and participation.

Resolved (on motion by **Dr Jensen**):

That this committee authorises publication, including publication on the parliamentary database, of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 3.09 pm