



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Combining study and work

TUESDAY, 21 APRIL 2009

BURNIE

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Tuesday, 21 April 2009

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

Members in attendance: Ms Bird, Ms Julie Collins, Mr Sidebottom

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).

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Committee met at 9.35 am

CHAIR (Ms Bird)—I declare open this, the fifth public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training as part of its inquiry into combining school and work in supporting successful youth transitions. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your attendance today. Before we begin, I would like to place on record the committee's thanks to Ms Kathy Cameron, Principal at the Hellyer campus of the Tasmanian Academy, where we meet today, for allowing the committee the opportunity to conduct proceedings here on the campus. We look forward to holding discussions with staff and students from the academy later today. The inquiry was referred by the Minister for Education, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP. Fifty-one submissions have been referred 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 in order to maintain the structure of the proceedings it is important that all comments are addressed through the chair. I am sure you will manage that. 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 leading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by Hansard, who are here with us, and will attract parliamentary privilege.

[9.36 am]

BERECHREE, Mr Alan Francis, Vice President, Burnie Chamber of Commerce

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comments on the capacity in which you appear today?

Mr Berechree—I own the Burnie Newsagency, and I have been asked to represent the Burnie Chamber of Commerce.

CHAIR—Excellent. Thank you very much for that. Clearly, the committee is particularly interested in the issue of young people of school age who are also holding down part-time work. The reason is that it was indicated to us that that is around 50 to 55 per cent of young people these days, by and large with reasonable hours, managed effectively. The evidence is that up to probably 10 or 12 hours a week is a positive benefit for students, but we are particularly concerned about those who might prioritise work over study, who might be willing to undertake more than they should, and how employers manage that. Alan, would you like to make some opening statements to us about your experiences with the area?

Mr Berechree—I have been involved in the newsagency for 26 years now. Over that time we have always employed casual school staff. We have three juniors on staff at the moment, and they predominantly work an eight-hour shift on alternate Saturdays. There is occasional Sunday work, but we do not use them after school or anything like that. Generally, we recruit the juniors when they are 15 or 16, in year 9 or 10, and they stay with us as long as they like. At the moment, the three I have are all out of year 12, so they have been there for three or four years. When this lot goes through, most of them plan to head off to university. They can either stay and work or they leave, and then I can get some younger and cheaper staff again.

It is a good procedure for me because it allows me to not have to work my permanent staff on the weekends. It is slightly cheaper, but it also builds up a reservoir of staff, which I need for the peak Christmas period. That is primarily the reason we employ the school juniors, because, come the end of November, they come on staff full time for the two-month break, which enables us to rest the others.

CHAIR—Do they discuss their schoolwork very much with you?

Mr Berechree—Not very much at all. Basically, I find that they do not have a conflict between work and school; it is predominantly their other choices which may interfere with their work or schooling. The question when they are in years 9 and 10 is whether they are willing to give up their extracurricular activities to come to work. Some are; some are not. I had a staff of three girls but I then had to try five girls because one of the three decided to continue playing sport and another's family felt it affected her studies. That is the choice. It is really not about whether you work and go to school and how it affects your schooling; it is about whether you are willing to give up your extracurricular activities. That is up to the youth.

CHAIR—Yes, that is right. One of the things we have noticed in the evidence we have received is that the students tend to manage this by what we call 'silo-ing'. So they only tell the

school what they think the school wants to know, they only tell the employer what they think the employer wants to know and they only tell the parents what they think the parents need to know. So sometimes things looked like they were being managed quite effectively but they were making some compromises. We are interested, from an employer's perspective, about ways you might have experienced or seen where you can be a positive influence on that.

Mr Berechree—That is probably a thing, yes. They do not tell you whether they have issues at school while they are at work. There may be family circumstances. Maybe a parent will come in and say, 'She can't work this weekend because they have an exam next Tuesday and she really needs to study.' We have a system whereby, if they are unavailable, they write it in the book and we roster around that. But, again, it is still a decision they have to make. They will forego a day's wages and it might put them out of cycle on the roster, so it is a decision that the student has to make and sometimes we are not aware of the problems they have in making the decision. The decisions are more around, 'Do I go to this or do I do such and such.' Those are the ones that we are more aware of. All of a sudden you see a date where they are all booked out and you think, 'There's something on somewhere.'

CHAIR—What about the relationship with the parents? When they first sign up, do you have something happen?

Mr Berechree—In a small community like Burnie you tend to know the parents. You tend to recruit some of the children through their parents. Therefore, there is a direct relationship with the parents. At the moment I have a circumstance where one of the girls has got glandular fever, which she tried to—

CHAIR—cover up?

Mr Berechree—cover up for a period of time. But the parents eventually came in and said, 'She can't work for the next month.' I do not know where the pressure comes from that makes them try to cover it up. I suppose if you do not turn up you do not get the money.

CHAIR—Yes. That is what we hear from the students, most definitely.

Mr Berechree—Hopefully, we do not put the pressure on them. But, having said that, we probably do.

CHAIR—It has been very interesting for us in that we have found those students who do undertake work tend to have almost an excessive view of responsibility. In a lot of cases we have heard evidence, particularly in some of the bigger areas where the employers do not know the families and do not know the backgrounds, that the kids will just keep saying yes because they think that is the responsible thing to do. It is perhaps part of the sad problem that you have the kids who are working learning responsibility but sometimes they take too much on board.

Mr Berechree—That changes over time. As I said, we recruit them in year 9 and they either come on very keen or they do not last. If they are very keen then they will make the sacrifices to keep working. As time goes on, they probably get more comfortable in their positions and they know if they do not want to work one weekend they do not have to. The larger retailers or users of student labour might have different priorities.

CHAIR—Yes. Generally speaking, the feedback we get in evidence is that in small, family based business like your own, by and large, there is a bit of a community in the workplace. They know you and, if there is a problem, their parents can come and talk to you. We have heard a lot of evidence that they will block parents out for the very reason that parents will go and talk to employers and so forth. When we have got evidence from some of the bigger organisations we have found that they have got all the policies and practices in place but that they do not always filter down to the base. We are quite keen to make it more a community based attitude of, ‘Yes, they are workers, but they are still underage and we have a responsibility for them.’ Do you have any idea about what really makes that work and how you might—

Mr Berechree—I think the positive benefits of work for juniors far outweighs any detriment that I can see. Again, that is given the constraints that I outlined at the start. Some youth are not cut out to go work; they would still much rather go and play sport—although that has become a lot easier. So those that do enter the workforce benefit, because the amount of personal development is astounding, especially in retail. In the newsagency game they have to make decisions from the start. I think the personal development they go through is great. Again, they are mixing outside of the school environment. They are mixing sometimes with workmates who are not very different in age to them and they do grow up quite quickly.

CHAIR—I have one final question before I go to other senators. The other thing we are quite interested in is transitioning from school to work. The evidence is quite clear of the value, as you have described it, of having had work experience while you are at school, whether through school based apprenticeships or work experience or indeed paid part-time employment. But we do not document the paid part-time employment. So students leave school and there is nothing. The minister is interested in us looking at a work-ready type certificate that students can take with them that recognises their paid work. Our only concern with this is the amount of administrative burden on the employer. I would be interested in your views about ways in which we might do that constructively.

Mr Berechree—For a while during the prevocational training period, when you could get credits for the hours that you worked in part-time employment, that would appear on their prevocational certificate. I find when I am recruiting that a good reference is far better than an institutional certificate saying that they have worked X amount of hours part time or regularly. If you get a reference that says that they have worked at McDonald’s or KFC and they have lasted 12 months, it is always a very positive sign.

CHAIR—So an actual record of the work and the hours.

Mr Berechree—Not even that. If they are still working there after a period of time, they have sort of passed the test.

CHAIR—So you are not worried particularly about the skills; it is more that that reflects a commitment and an organisational ability?

Mr Berechree—That is right, and a willingness to work. It is not an overly pleasant occupation, working late shifts at KFC and McDonald’s. But if they have stuck to it, it gives an indication of the type of person that they are going to grow into. Having said that, I have not had any part-time workers become full-time staff, which surprises me. I put them on as grade 9s and

they continue with their education. I would say that 80 per cent of them go off to tertiary education and probably 20 per cent go off to another job. They do not see it as a way to get employment, as a career path, which surprises me. But I suppose at year 9 they have not determined what they are going to do for the rest of their career and they are just going to come out and find a job.

CHAIR—That is a challenge for us. What happens with many students is—you are exactly right—they do not want a career in fast food or hospitality or retail, but they also fail to recognise the particular skills that they have picked up. I was helping a young person apply for a youth worker job for council and there was some mention of having responsibility for government funds. I said to her, ‘You had that part-time job. Did you manage money?’ She said, ‘Yes, I handled money and totalled up the till and was responsible for it balancing.’ I said, ‘That is an example of your capacity there.’ They do not make those connections. We are interested in trying to help them document some of that for their longer term resumes.

Mr Berechree—That leads to a greater emphasis on training, which I suppose is what you are interested in. If they are going to make a choice between education and work, as long as they are learning and training, to me there is no choice. In life, as long as they keep learning it is a benefit.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I can vouch for the customer service in Alan’s newsagency, having been there on the weekend as well as during the week. I suppose it is hard for you to extrapolate on this beyond in your business, but why do you find most young people want to apply for a job? Is it for the same reasons or do they vary? You touched on the importance of casual work for young people and the benefits that you see. What skills do you expect of your workforce and do you have a program to systematically teach or impart those skills? I know that is a wide-ranging question.

Mr Berechree—Yes. The primary reason youth would work would be finance; it has to be the cash. It has become more and more the case. For example, I commented on coming in that the parking is scarce here and they said, ‘Times have changed; the youth have their own cars now.’ When I was first here 20 years ago doing prevocational training there were always parking spaces, but now they are all out there with P plates. To finance that they need cash, so away they go. Cash is the primary reason. We probably fall down a little bit in the fact that when we start a new junior they are really thrown in at the coalface. I always remember my father, when he started at the River Don Trading Company 60 years ago, saying it was 12 months before he was allowed to serve a customer. Now it is 12 seconds; they are shown how to open the cash register and away they go. Sometimes it is very daunting for a 15-year-old to be thrown in at the coalface.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Even for a 50-year-old bloke!

Mr Berechree—Yes. But each of them are different. Some require different levels of introduction rather than training to start off, and supervision is the main thing. Over the years I have learnt that you do not just throw them in; you have to have someone standing over their shoulder for at least the first month, and then away they go. So that is probably the training

structure—more one-on-one, to get them started. It is not rocket science nowadays. You scan an item and take the cash. Money handling is always interesting. It is always difficult. But they seem to learn. The customers help. If they see that there is a new person on they are very good. Training wise there is not really a structure involved. On a full-time basis, with any junior starting, there are courses they can do and they can do certificate I, II and III and that sort of stuff. For a casual junior, no, there is nothing formally to train them. I missed your other question.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You were touching on why you regard it as important that young people have the opportunity for casual employment for them, for your business and for the economy in general.

Mr Berechree—It is important for business on a cost basis, but for youth the confidence they can gain is fantastic. I think that is the biggest positive. As you are aware, it is hard for children to develop. To throw them into an out-of-school environment I think has a lot of benefits.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Do you think having young people working for you casually adds to your business? Do they bring benefits to your business—apart from working the cash register, which is pretty important?

Mr Berechree—We have a situation where full-time retail is probably not encouraged in youth. They all have drummed into them the fact that they need tertiary education, and away they go. But not all juniors are cut out to go on to tertiary education. When we do put the casuals on they tend to be a little bit smarter than the full timers that you get. That is good for customers. They love to see such and such's child there working. They go off to uni and further their careers having worked and they leave a lot behind. It is a benefit to the business.

Ms COLLINS—I have just a couple of questions. You said at the beginning that young people go to work for cash. I wonder whether you have any comments about the background of those people, whether or not any of them are eligible for Austudy and therefore need to go to work?

Mr Berechree—I think that is the situation. When they first start they are only juniors and, as I said, they come and work during the school holidays as uni students. They may be getting some assistance at that time but they still need the money.

Ms COLLINS—On that, have you ever had anybody actually say to you, 'I'm leaving because it's too much; I have too much study?' If that has occurred, when has it occurred? Has it occurred up to years 11 and 12 or while at university?

Mr Berechree—No, not because of study. Primarily, they leave because they want to further their netball, football. It is becoming less and less. It is the college based extra curricular activities which create more difficulty for them, such as the musicals and, say, dancing. Coming up to Christmas is when they are working and, all of a sudden, their Saturdays and Sundays are all taken up with dancing or something like that. It is not the educational side of it that restricts them.

Ms COLLINS—What would be the average age that somebody, whom you employed as a 15-year-old or a 16-year-old, would leave?

Mr Berechree—Some of them go right through to age 22 when they finish university, but some leave when they finish year 12. The last couple of students have furthered their education in Melbourne, so they have left. But of the last four or five they have worked the Christmas breaks from uni. In fact, one of them even used to work every second weekend—he would come back from Launceston—to do the Saturday, Sunday.

Ms COLLINS—So they were quite committed?

Mr Berechree—Yes, that is right. As I said, if they make the first 12 months they are there for life.

Ms COLLINS—Have other employers commented to you previously that students are leaving because of study? Have you had any experience of that in the local community?

Mr Berechree—No, I have not and, even amongst my friends who have children working, they never say that they are giving up work because of study or anything like that. As an employer, you are a little bit aware of when students are under pressure. Gone are the days when they all have November exams. It is now continuous through the year and it is a bit harder to pinpoint: ‘Yes, they’re going to be doing exams for that fortnight, let’s give them a couple of weeks off.’ When they were in a pre-vocational type training thing it was more structured, so you would not put them on three weeks before exams or make them full time back at work the day after they finish exams. You need to be flexible and, as a small business, you can be flexible with that sort of thing. I do not know how the larger businesses, which are probably more reliant on junior staff, handle it.

CHAIR—Just to pursue that a little bit further, to take you beyond your direct experience, one of the troubling things that we have taken evidence on was the disparity between what large employers of school-age children said they had in place and the realities of the stories that young people would tell us. Coming from your ethos, which is more a community base looking after their staff, I am interested in your general observations. We will not name anybody; I do not want to put you on the spot. A real concern with students is that they are responsible for replacing themselves. If their shifts are done and then something goes wrong with an assignment and they have to redo something the next night they have to ring around and get a replacement for themselves. Young people think this is standard behaviour. We have some concerns that that is not appropriate. With young people’s interactions, it can create real relationship issues and problems and not produce effective dynamics in the workplace, either. I am interested, from your perspective, in what your view is on putting that sort of responsibility back on young people.

Mr Berechree—I have two comments on that. I also tend to work that way. If somebody is on the roster and, all of a sudden, at the last minute they decide they cannot work I do put the pressure back on the staff. If, at the end of the day, they say the other two girls are not available to work then it becomes my problem. It is a matter of, yes, put the pressure back on them, but it does not make it all-empowering. If, at the end of the day, they cannot find somebody to take their shift then it is up to us rather than the employee. That is one side of it. The other side is that a lot of the communication between the employer and the employee is probably implied. As a

junior you tend to have a grumpier personality than who you actually are and it is implied but, if the wheels start falling off, you cannot approach that person, your boss—or your shift boss, if you are in a larger organisation—and try to work it out. That is probably a fault in the system.

CHAIR—You have touched on exactly what the problem is. The shift boss is often 12 months older than them and is at the same school as them, so a whole range of issues arise. What might seem a good lesson in responsibility can actually become not so much bullying but a whole series of issues around how those dynamics work in that workplace. The regional supervisor thinks they have all these procedures in place but, at the end of the day, they are teenagers—they are not full adults, so their capacity to manage and negotiate those relationships can be problematic. Whereas, in your organisation, they have you to come back to?

Mr Berechree—That is correct. They need to have an out and they do. The responsibility they do put on young people surprises me at times. I have seen circumstances where year 10 and 11 students—

CHAIR—The most senior people.

Mr Berechree—are responsible for opening and closing a business. When I am down there at six o'clock, the shop across the road has been opened by a 16-year-old, and I think, 'Gee, that's putting a lot of pressure on that young person.' But, again, that is how they respond to it. Whether there is an out option is probably the other structure that needs to be in place.

CHAIR—And that they understand what it is: 'We give you the responsibility, but if you get into trouble and there are problems you know there is an adult there' is an important part of that process.

Mr Berechree—That is important. But, again, it depends how much is implied and how much is there and that comes back to communication. As you said, hopefully the majors have their procedural menus in place where the youth can say, 'If I do have a problem, I don't have to go to my shift boss, I go speak to somebody else to make a decision.'

CHAIR—The other thing that has been quite shocking for us and, because you are a small organisation you would not see, is the number of hours some students are doing. We had evidence of students doing 30 hours a week. Given the deregulated shopping hours—it is less of a problem in Perth because fast-food outlets have to shut at 10 and they do not have Thursday or Saturday night shopping—in Adelaide and according to the online survey you have students who told us their shifts go to 11 or 12 o'clock at night. They have to clean up after that. They would get home at one o'clock, 1.30, try to do an hour or two hours of homework. They insisted that they managed that fine, there was no problem. However, the teachers who we then saw said, 'Actually, they are falling asleep in class; their performance is down.' So it is a stark indication that you are transitioning into adulthood; you are not always the best judge on what you are managing. One young man actually had a nervous breakdown. He was convinced that he was managing up until the point where it all fell apart. I am just interested in your view—there are some recommendations about regulating hours for under-18s—as to whether that is the way to go or whether there are better ways to do it.

Mr Berechree—I was going to say it really depends on the age of the student. There is a big difference in a youth from 15 to 18. At 18 I think they are quite capable of handling the pressure, and they should be strong enough to say, 'Hey, I can't handle it.' But as a 15-year-old it is tough if they are expected to. It tends to be the good workers who have this obligation imposed, and then all of a sudden the pressure comes back on the workplace that at the end of the day you may lose one of your workers if you overuse them. It is hard. It is all right to say that they can handle 18 hours a week plus schooling, but it is at the expense of everything else.

CHAIR—Balancing it all.

Mr Berechree—And they still have to grow up.

CHAIR—That is right.

Mr Berechree—They still need their social balance and sport.

CHAIR—And sleep.

Mr Berechree—Yes.

CHAIR—One of the teachers did say to us that sometimes they go home after these long shifts and play computer games well into the morning hours as well.

Mr Berechree—Yes, but again they are still youth. They are still kids and they need to have those outs. It would be tough if they sacrificed their youth for the sake of a few dollars. And that is probably the other side of it: are they being properly compensated for the number of hours that they are putting in? That is probably more the question. Once they get on the enterprise agreements, some of the anomalies in those must make it quite difficult for them. Still under the award they all get 16-year-olds' wages, regardless of how young they actually are.

CHAIR—Yes. You have touched on another very important aspect—that is, the negative side. The positive side of part-time work is the maturity, the self-confidence and the skills. The negative side can be that if it is a bad experience, if you are exploited, you can get a very negative attitude towards the workplace. I am sure it is not like that for your workers.

Mr Berechree—But they still grow up very quickly, and that to me is always a positive. Whether it is a positive or a negative growing up, the experience that can be obtained is vital, I think. As I said, when I look to recruit workers, if they have had two or three years, whether it is positive or negative, they tend to be better prepared for the workforce than those coming straight out of school.

CHAIR—Yes. It is an important issue. You hit it on the head exactly. I talk to employers in my area. To some extent they are beefing: 'These young people coming out are not really prepared for work.' I say to them, 'You know, when I came out employers didn't expect us to be ready for work. They expected to have to take us under their wing. We would have to be mentored through and learn on the job.' We have lost that, I think, to a large extent, so the pressure is going back onto the schools to say, 'You have got to do all of this.'

Mr Berechree—As you know, it is a catch 22, isn't it? Even at 17 they are looking for experienced workers. How can you be experienced at that age?

CHAIR—That is right.

Mr Berechree—They are expected to come in and be floor managers in their first couple of weeks of work.

CHAIR—It is a real challenge. I have two boys. I let the first one have part-time work but I am quite convinced it interfered with his school work—probably more because he wanted to work and not be at school, and that is an issue. I did not let the second one work part-time, but now, at 19, what does he put on a resume? For anything he wants to apply for they say, 'What work have you done?' And you are right—they expect, even at that age, that you have a couple of years of experience behind you.

Mr Berechree—That is right—unless you can say, 'I concentrated on my sport' or something like that. Education does not seem to be high on that list, does it? And it is getting more tailored education, too. With all the changes—I cannot keep up with them—the options for students to tailor a career is far greater now than back in our day, when you did maths, science and English and off you went. And, as you said, you trained on the job. Now they are trained through the polytechnics and those sorts of places, and we expect them to be ready to work.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Alan, do you think students should have the skills that they have developed through part-time work recognised formally in their certification? I was interested in your comment, too. You are more interested in reference rather than tick-the-box stuff.

Mr Berechree—That is probably a localised regional item too. I can pick up a reference and say, 'Yes, I know that person; they wouldn't give a reference if the person weren't adequate,' or such and such. If that student is going to go off to uni in Melbourne and look for part-time work at that stage then, yes, maybe it would be more beneficial to have a certificate in the resume to say, 'I've worked at the Burnie Newsagency in the school holidays.' But then the reader will not know what the Burnie Newsagency is.

CHAIR—Or how much responsibility it involved. This is the issue. You can have the same job, but you might develop and train your staff so that they can say, 'I've done cash register, some stock ordering and consoling cranky customers—I don't hand them all over to the boss,' whereas another boss might not do that; it might be straight, 'I was out the back unpacking boxes the whole time.'

Mr Berechree—Yes, and dusting. When the prevocational training and the VET courses were about, we had books to fill in so we could sign off what that junior had actually done.

CHAIR—How onerous was that?

Mr Berechree—Not very much at all. It was just that they were there for a 10-week block, one day a week for 10 weeks, and at the end of the 10 weeks you sat down for an hour or half an hour with that person and said, 'Yes, you did this, this and this; you need to improve that.' Then you would sign it off or something like that. It is really not that difficult, but the difficulty would

be to prepare the documentation—to go out with it and to cater for it. If you are going to send it out to every workplace, it would be difficult documentation to put together because in certain places they are not going to get the training that they are going to get—

CHAIR—And the variety, yes.

Mr Berechree—And the variety; they are never going to get that.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—But it is interesting, isn't it? Kids are doing more formal curriculum. We measure it, docket it and whatever else, yet here they are, probably developing the skills in your business that you admire as well and that you have contributed to, and they do not get one ounce of recognition for those skills, which are really important both now and into the future for the economy, for themselves and whatever. So there is a lot of learning and teaching going on, but it is not in the formal classrooms through a formal curriculum. I sometimes wonder that we downplay the benefits of that—we never recognise it, because it is too hard—and so it is missed and they do not feel as valued as for reading a poem or something else.

Mr Berechree—I suppose it could be a simple document, like your certificate when you finish year 12. You have a certificate which is ranked at A, B, C or D. It does not have to be a major piece of work; it could be, 'This person has worked x hours for me,' and it could be rated A, B, C or D. So really it is a formalised reference, isn't it?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I am sorry; I do not know what you do, Alan. You may well do it or write a reference for them or whatever.

Mr Berechree—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I am sure people would ring you, and you are respected enough. But, for a broader audience, would you look to be doing something like that for your work? Do you do that?

Mr Berechree—We do. When they are looking for a job, yes, we do give them a formal reference which could be as vague or as good as they are. You can read a lot into references.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Yes.

Mr Berechree—We just give them a period of time—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You do not specify? That is a possibility, though; you could.

Mr Berechree—You could—a combination of that and education certificate-type assessment. It would not be that difficult. It is probably easier than sitting down and trying to think of the key words to put into a reference, which can be difficult.

CHAIR—One of the reasons that came up was the issue of VET in schools that students had raised with us—'I have to do work experience with everything, yet I have a part-time job.' You might be doing a carpentry VET course, and the work experience you have at McDonald's in the evenings is not a direct career match, but there are common competencies in entry-level training,

no matter what you are doing—communications competencies and the personal attribute-type competencies about turning up to work on time and all those sorts of things. It does not matter. So students are saying, ‘Why do I have to do it again when I already have this part-time job?’ Do you think most employers who are using school-based students would be willing to feed into that side—the VET courses as well?

Mr Berechree—As I said, it should not be too difficult; it is just a matter of sitting down for 15 minutes at the appropriate time. If a student comes to you and says, ‘I’m putting together my resume’—or their end of year 11 report—‘would you be willing to sign off; I’ve got competencies?’ it would not be a major imposition, really.

CHAIR—Unless you are the 17-year-old’s supervisor and no adult has been around to observe it.

Mr Berechree—Then again, if it starts with a period of employment and, yes, you have been doing cash handling and you have been turning up on time, even a 17-year-old can tick off that you have those competencies.

CHAIR—We have picked your brain extensively, Alan; thank you very much. That has been very useful; it has been great. We have seen some big employers and it is good to also hear from a smaller employer, because there are some significant differences that we can learn from, I think.

Mr Berechree—Yes, I would hate to see the system change with regard to age restraints whereby you could not employ juniors, because every youth is different. Some are cut out to work at 14 and some are not. It is a matter of giving them the opportunity, and I would hate it to be regulated so that those opportunities are not available.

CHAIR—Yes, if we can manage it effectively, we can avoid the regulation. That, I think, is the hope we have in mind. Thank you for your attendance here today. If you have been asked to provide additional material, you will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence, to which you can make corrections of grammar and fact. Thank you, again, for your evidence today; it is most useful to us.

[10.18 am]

Brett

Heath

Jessica

Keith

Lauren

Luke

Melissa

CHAIR—I now welcome students to today's hearing. As you aware, the committee is conducting an inquiry into how students combine school and part-time work. We are interested to hear about your experiences and any views you might have about how to improve the situation for students. We have been receiving feedback on these issues from students across the country via the committee's student survey on our website and, while many students are telling us that they are coping fine and that their employers and teachers understand the needs of students, others are telling us that it is a bit tough. They are working late hours on week nights, and they do not feel comfortable asking for time off or indeed raising issues with their employer.

The committee does not require you to give evidence under oath but the proceeding is a legal proceeding of the parliament and has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. Firstly, we will get each of you to tell us whether you have, or have had, a part-time job or, if you have chosen not to, why you might have chosen not to so that we can just get an idea of your circumstances.

Melissa—I have a part-time job and I just work on the weekends and after school on Thursdays and Fridays.

CHAIR—How many hours would you do all-up?

Melissa—Usually seven hours for the whole week. So it is not very much.

CHAIR—Is that a good amount? You find that manageable?

Melissa—Yes, I like it.

CHAIR—And there is no pressure to do additional hours?

Melissa—No.

CHAIR—Keith, what is your situation?

Keith—I have a part-time job and I usually do about 15 hours a week. I find it is all right.

CHAIR—When would you do those hours, Keith?

Keith—I do about two nights a week and a weekend day, probably.

CHAIR—What are the hours at night?

Keith—Just about three or four. So it is not too bad.

CHAIR—Is it straight after school?

Keith—It is about five to nine.

CHAIR—That is not too bad. There is no pressure to stay back later than that?

Keith—No.

CHAIR—Can you give us an idea of the industry that you are working in? Is it fast food, retail, hospitality—

Keith—Retail.

CHAIR—Thanks, Keith. What about you, Heath?

Heath—I have a part-time job and I work roughly 15 hours a week. I usually work all day Sunday and then maybe one or two nights a week. It is retail and I usually do five to nine at night, because the store shuts at nine.

CHAIR—And there is no requirement for you to stay back when your shift is finished?

Heath—No.

CHAIR—Great. Luke, what is yours?

Luke—I work part-time, about 15 hours a week. I work generally Sunday afternoon and then I will do a couple of nights, probably about two nights a week after school.

CHAIR—What sector is that in?

Luke—Retail.

CHAIR—So it is a similar thing. It is about a 9 o'clock finish.

Luke—Yes.

CHAIR—What about you, Jessica?

Jessica—I work for my mother. She runs a restaurant.

CHAIR—She is a good employer, isn't she?

Jessica—Yes. I do not necessarily have set hours and it is extremely flexible, of course, with my schooling. It often varies. Perhaps every six months, if it is a busy week, for example, I could end up working probably four nights and a few mornings as well. That is also a family thing, helping your parents out. Last month was the first time I had to work all week, mornings and nights, and I had to ask for an extension on my schooling. That is very rare and I do not see a problem with that if that happens.

CHAIR—The school is okay with it?

Jessica—Yes, the school is okay. That is what I find especially here in the colleges. They are very flexible and very helpful with your schooling. We often have frees, so we can get studying done here, and if you see teachers they are often very flexible if it is concerning work and your school work.

CHAIR—That is great. Are you interested in a career in that area yourself, or are you just doing it to help out family?

Jessica—I am certainly not interested in a career in that. I think like many students we are not necessarily getting our part-time work for the career path that we wish to follow. It is simply more about having extra money when we need it and being able to become more independent. You can use your money and do what you wish with it. So it is not necessarily for your career.

CHAIR—Thanks, Jessica. Lauren, what is your situation?

Lauren—I do not have a job during school term, but in the holidays I work in the hospitality industry. Usually in the summer holiday I work between 50 and 70 hours a week, so I find that—

CHAIR—Between 15 and 17, did you say?

Lauren—Between 50 and 70. So I find that I do not really need to work during school time, because there are so many hours during the summer it builds up quite a lot. It lasts me pretty much the whole year.

CHAIR—So that is how you balance. You do a heap at that time and it keeps you going for the rest of the year.

Lauren—Yes.

CHAIR—Is that an employer who puts extra staff on, so there is no pressure on you to work during the year for them?

Lauren—Yes. It is in Strahan, which is very much a tourist town. In the summer there is lots and lots of work, whereas in the winter months there is not a lot of work, so it works quite well for them.

CHAIR—Great. Thanks, Lauren. Brett?

Brett—I am a casual at Woolies, so I work between 10 and 20 hours a week. It is not too bad. During school, like Jess said, we can get flexible times. We can get extensions on our school work, so it is not too bad.

CHAIR—What about night shifts, Brett?

Brett—I am night fill, so it is usually five to 10. Sometimes we stay until 12, if there is a lot to be done, or on Thursday nights when everyone gets paid and they all swamp in.

CHAIR—How do you find it when you have got a 12 o'clock shift? Do you notice that you are a bit more tired the next day? You would not want to do it every night?

Brett—Yes, I am pretty thrashed the next day, so I just hope that I have a couple of frees the next day.

CHAIR—The big thing we are hearing is the impact that anything past 10 o'clock has on you the next day.

Brett—If you have homework to do for that night, it gets kind of hard.

CHAIR—But that would be a more unusual circumstance. You are not regularly working—

Brett—Yes.

CHAIR—It is interesting that, other than hospitality and tourism, you are all in retail, because one of the things we have heard is that the retail industry seems to be a bit better than the fast food industry. Maybe that is the hours they are open. Do you have friends who work in the fast food industry who do those long-haul shifts? Do any of you know people doing that? Melissa, you are nodding your head.

Melissa—Yes. A couple of my friends work after school and then after the shops close at 11 they have to then clean for a couple of hours. So they are not getting home until one o'clock. They also live out of town, so they can be pretty stuffed the next day. Some of them also have to open the next day at six o'clock.

CHAIR—They do openings in the morning as well?

Melissa—Yes. I do not think that is very good. It is not helping them at all.

CHAIR—When you say that they have to stay back and clean, do you know if they are paid for those hours?

Melissa—I am pretty sure they would be.

CHAIR—It is interesting that you say that because this is about those unregulated hours. I have not heard before about opening up in the mornings. So they are on that supervisor level we were talking about earlier?

Melissa—Yes.

CHAIR—It is a big ask. I do not know that I would be getting up at six o'clock in the morning! They are doing well. Generally speaking, I am getting from you guys the fact that the school here is pretty good. In some of the evidence we have heard students have said to us, 'In years 11 and 12 we get a message from the school that we shouldn't be working, that we are not really committed to our studies if we have jobs.' But that is not something you pick up here, is it? Luke, did you want to make a comment on that?

Luke—I do not think that is the case, generally. I think the majority of the teachers here understand that, as well as having an education, there are other parts of your life—for instance, sport or whatever else you do out of school—that is just as important in life development as education. I think they see work as a part of that. I think most of the ones I have experienced are more than happy to accommodate you—for example, if there are one or two days when you are not able to get something in on time.

Jessica—I think ultimately whether we are at a college or a polytechnic the later outcome we want is to be in the workforce. Administration obviously recognises that we are not completely focused on schooling, getting assignments in on time and the structure of the school because this is the path that we follow to get into the workforce. To have the responsibilities that are involved in the workforce, as long as, as you said, it is at an appropriate level, is certainly a benefit. That is our responsibility. If we feel as though we are not being treated correctly in the workplace or if we are getting too many hours I think that is when, especially at our age—perhaps not at 15 but when you are 17 and 18—we then have to take on the role because after college we are aiming to be able to say, 'No, I cannot cope with this,' or 'I cannot do this.' I do not think we can let other people say that, if changes come in or employers take over, because in the end after we finish college that is what we want to do and that is what we will be doing for the rest of our lives. We need to be able to take on that responsibility and learn when to say no.

CHAIR—That is an important part of it, I think. You would have heard the earlier conversation. One of the things that concerns us is that often people are not in a position to make a sensible assessment of themselves until something goes wrong and then they look back and say, 'What was I thinking? I was mad. I was trying to manage too much.' We learn in life when we do something and it goes wrong. But if that then means that someone has failed at school or they have missed out, lost a job, been sacked or whatever, that is on their resume. There can be quite negative outcomes for young people if this stuff is not managed particularly well. Have any of you talked to friends or family who have found it very difficult to approach employers and negotiate things or who have had very bad experiences? Or, generally speaking, do you think in this area they are pretty good, as Alan was saying to us earlier?

Jessica—I have close friends who work in supermarkets—not such as Woolworths but more like IGA—and, like we said before, finding someone to replace your hours can be a problem. I

have friends who have panic because they have had something to do, like schoolwork, and so they have said, 'Sorry, I cannot work,' but then that pressure is put on them again to find someone to replace them. They want to focus on school but they can't, because so much pressure is put on them to find someone. I do not think that is very good. Also, with hours, if they have other commitments and they say, for example, 'Sorry, I can't do my Sunday shift', that can also be a problem. That has happened to a close friend of mine. That shift is gone, and yet the next week they will ring them up because they have not found a replacement, asking them to come in. Especially when you are 15 or 16 you are not quite prepared. Either you don't recognise that this is not how it should be and this is not right, or you are not prepared to say to them that it is not right.

CHAIR—Are saying to us that even though they have put down on the shift roster that they are not available on Sundays, they will still get called week by week: 'Someone can't come in. Can you come in anyway?' And they find it really difficult to say, 'No, I've told you, I can't work.'

Jessica—Yes, especially in the smaller supermarkets. Where Brett works, for example, Woolworths, they usually have a broad spectrum of staff and they can usually call somebody in. But with the more locally-owned supermarkets that do not have so many staff, when one person is off then the pressure is put on them to find someone. If they have not come in, whether it be for sport or school, for two Sundays in a row, that shift is then taken off them. But if the employer does not find someone to fill it, and they have called that person again then it is an uncomfortable situation to say, 'No,' even though you realise that this is not right.

CHAIR—Have you had the experience where young people worry that, if they say no, they will not get shifts? In fact we have had evidence that if you say no, you do not get shifts. You are nodding. Have people had direct experience of that?

Jessica—Yes, that is certainly the case, I think in a lot of situations, especially at our age. It is not all employers, of course, and this does not concern the small family-run businesses, such as the newsagency, but when you have the larger corporations—not in every case, of course—they tend to take advantage over the younger people because they know that they are not aware of the way things should be happening. They know that there are ways they can say something to them, whether it be concerning their shift or their pay going down, they know how to approach them to make it seem as though it is okay. With the larger places, such as Woolworths and bigger chains, I think that is where the problem is when students, especially when they are young, cannot say no, because half the time they probably do not recognise the problem because of the way they have been approached.

CHAIR—Melissa, were you nodding to that as well—the issue about people not saying no, because they are worried about work?

Melissa—Yes. I have said no before, like when they have rung me to ask if I can cover someone's shift and I have said no, and then I have not been on the roster a few times, just because I said no. But they were not my hours anyway. If you say no, you are obviously saying no for a reason, not just because you cannot be bothered. You have always got a reason as to why you say no, and they need to understand that—that you cannot always be available to go to work.

CHAIR—One of the things the big employers said is that their procedures are supposed to be a protective thing. They say to students, ‘Show us on the roster when you are available and when you are not available’, up front. So you fill that out and then they roster around that. The argument they put to us is that that protects students. They can block their time in—‘This is going to be my homework time’, ‘I have got sport on this day’. They block that in. But the evidence we hear is that that just does not play out, because people still get called for those other rosters. They do not like to say no, or, if they say no, they lose other shifts. Heath, you were nodding as well. Have you had that experience?

Heath—Yes. I gave my availability when I started and I have updated it all the time. And I have been given shifts that do not fit that. Usually I call up and say, ‘Can you fix this?’ or ‘Can you change this?’ and when they say no, they will always try to call other people and then—

CHAIR—So you have actually been rostered into the times when you said you were not available. It is not a call-up; you have actually got a roster for the fortnight or whatever.

Heath—The roster can change. You do not know what hours you are going to get the next week. Often I have been rostered onto days I cannot work, and I just call in and say, ‘I can’t work’. The first week I was there, I handed in availability at my training, and then my first actual shift was one of my unavailability days. I got really scared going in there, because it was my first shift. But they were understanding and then it didn’t happen again for a while. So from that point of view it was really good.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Given the fact that you are reflective of many students with part-time or casual work, how does the college formally recognise that you are doing part-time or casual work? If it is as widespread as we understand it is, what happens in terms of your home groups—I do not know what you have nowadays. Do you actually have opportunities to be able to discuss this in a group and is there any formal information given to you about rights and responsibilities in the workplace and things like this given that it is part and parcel of your lives and as important to you as formal education, sport and recreation. How does the college recognise and know that you are doing part-time or casual employment and what structures exist to support you in learning more about that?

Lauren—At the college we have a system that is called support group and it usually runs for about an hour and a half a week. In this time we are split up into small groups and one of our teachers from any of our subjects leads a group of probably about 10 to 12 students. At the start of the year we can discuss our commitments such as who plays sport and what part-time work we are involved in. Then the teachers are aware of that and it is actually kept on record. I do not think I have seen any specific work relationships or rights information handed to me, but I am sure if we asked that time in support group would be when we could get any support that we need from our teachers. They are very aware of what is going on in our lives.

CHAIR—Students will come in and raise issues about relationships and all those other social aspects of managing life but they so rarely think to say: ‘What are my rights at work? What is okay; what is not okay?’ Why do you think it is that, until a conversation is started up, students do not think, ‘I should find out about this; I should know about this.’

Lauren—In my experience when you first go out into the workforce, it is a lot of independence, you earn money, and you think you should work through it yourself and be able to handle the responsibility placed on you by workplaces. It is all part of growing up and you are going to need it for later years. I suppose I would be less likely to ask for help because I think it is something that I need to learn to deal with myself just for experience for later on in life.

CHAIR—Does anybody else want to comment on that?

Brett—We do get all the support we need in support group. We get a fair bit of time to discuss anything that has gone on with our lives and any concerns we might have about getting the schoolwork done, getting our rights at work and that sort of thing. I think the way we have it is a fairly good system.

Ms COLLINS—Who does know their rights and responsibilities in the workplace?

Brett—I think I know my rights. I know if I was asked to do something that I thought was wrong I would be able to say no and ask why they wanted me to do it. I would ask whether I could do it in a different way or ask for someone else to do it. At Woolies in our break room we have even got a booklet of all our rights, all set out.

Ms COLLINS—Okay, so it is available in the workplace?

Brett—Yes.

CHAIR—And there are no problems with looking at it. It is not hidden away in the cupboard and you have to ask for it or anything like that.

Brett—It is right in the middle of the table. I do not think anyone has read it yet!

CHAIR—What do you think, Lauren?

Lauren—I think that I do know my rights, but I have been pressured into working when maybe I did not want to or should not have. Even though I do realise that it is my right to say no, I do feel pressure from the workplace to work when I am not available.

Jessica—I think I know my rights, possibly not formally to be able to reel them all off, but I would know when I can say no.

Luke—I am fairly sure I know my rights, as Lauren said, but I think it comes down to they may push the boundaries a bit sometimes. As people have said, they ask you to do things that you know are probably not right and they know they are about to overstep the line, but you want to go along with it anyway.

Heath—I am like Luke. I think I know my rights, but it is the employer who sometimes pushes it a little making you step over that and go against it—that sort of thing—making you work some shifts when you know you should not.

CHAIR—Keith, what do you think?

Keith—I agree with Heath. We think we know them, but sometimes they go a bit far and try to make us do stuff.

CHAIR—Try it on?

Keith—Yes.

Melissa—When I started work, we had like an information thing. We got a copy of our rights. You can have them at home, and they are also at work and are available. I think that sometimes employers need to remind themselves of our rights, just so they know when to stop and they know that when we are unavailable, we are unavailable. It is not because we cannot be bothered; we actually do have something else on. They need to understand if we are sick, we are actually sick; we are not just saying it.

CHAIR—Interestingly, most of you have discussed your rights through what sounds to me like experience. Only two of you have referred to actual documents being provided. One of our concerns is that you learn your rights from experience—that is about relationship management. How many of you know what you are employed under—whether you are employed under an individual contract, an award or an enterprise agreement? Put your hands up, so I can get a quick count if you know what your employment agreement is. No hands were raised. Luke, do you want to make a comment on that?

Luke—I am a casual employee. When I started, I signed some sort of an agreement to say that I would do this, this and this. But it was not a legal document. My mother and father were quite apprehensive when I said that I had signed this, this and this. They said, ‘What’s this? We should have seen that.’ That is another aspect. Some of our colleagues who have been asked to go part time or full time have signed a contract or a roster saying they will do these hours, but they were still under age and their parents did not know.

CHAIR—This is really important to us, because you are not alone in this. In our job, we see adults who have had a dispute with an employer. We ring them, and ask, ‘What were you employed under?’ They say, ‘I don’t know.’ It is not just you guys. But it is particularly important for you guys because you cannot legally sign a contract until you are 18. And, as you said, Luke, people are signing off on things and making commitments that they are not able to.

Jessica—As Brett said before, in a lot of the businesses where we work, nobody has actually touched the book of rights on the table. Realistically, even if you provide us with a booklet of our rights at work, how many people are going to go through and read what their rights are? Everything, especially at this age, comes from experience. Even if you do provide the documents, even if you do have pamphlets handed out in support groups, a select few will read it, but generally it will be another one of these informative pamphlets that we are not going to sit down and look into.

CHAIR—The other side of it, Jessica, is that you may know your rights but enforcing them is also another issue. But, from your perspective, an employer has a different range of responsibilities when employing an adult compared to employing someone under 18, including ensuring that your rights are protected and not expecting you to have to advocate on your own behalf all the time. Our concern is that if you do not know them—I suspect that employers as an

organisation may know them—and if your supervisor is 12 months older than you and they do not know them then a whole lot of breakdowns can occur, not through bad will but just through bad practice. That is what we are trying to get an understanding of, which is why your evidence is so useful to us.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—There is a great example you just gave there, Jessica, of having a book of rules and everything coming through experience. It reminds me of learning to drive a car. Of course, you have to have experience. If you do not know the road rules you can get into even more trouble, no matter how well you physically drive. Thanks for providing an answer about how you have support groups, in groups of 12, and how you can discuss issues you want to. It is a very valuable tool. Outside your support group, does the college formally recognise in documentation that you are provided with, and which you have to fill in, either that you are part time or you have casual work as a system? For instance, it would be interesting to do a survey in this school of how many hours people work and how many do it. Is it formally recognised and, if it is not, do you think it should be in order to, again, better provide a system to allow you to go about your lives, both with respect to formal education and outside, or do you think it is not really needed at all and you should just do it perhaps on a one-to-one basis with your teachers?

CHAIR—Can we clarify first: are you asked at any point by the school if you have a part-time job and how many hours you are working?

Brett—I think we have been asked that; I certainly have. When I first went in to see the support group teacher, I just got a whole heap of questions: ‘How many hours do you work?’ ‘Where do you work?’ ‘Are you finding it manageable?’ and all that sort of stuff.

CHAIR—And so it is documented at that point. The rest of you are nodding—you remember that happening.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Where does that go? Do you know? Is it just the support teacher?

Jessica—That survey was done for statistics for this topic. I think that was the survey that we are discussing.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Okay.

CHAIR—It is interesting, because the school we were at in Adelaide had also done a survey before we turned up, and the staff said to us, ‘You know, it shocked us.’

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—They had no idea.

CHAIR—They had never really stopped and thought about it. Most of you are talking about doing around 15 hours a week on average. That is up—if you went back 15 years, it would have been eight; that was the average. The concern for us is that it is gradually creeping up. So we are trying to get a sense of what is manageable and reasonable for young people while they are studying, as a number of hours, because, as I said, we have met young people who are doing 30-hour weeks on top of studying.

Ms COLLINS—Can I ask everybody: exactly what do you think is a manageable number of part-time or casual hours?

CHAIR—Yes—the number of hours where you reckon, ‘If I was doing that every week, that would be a real problem.’ Can you put a number on it? Melissa, what do you reckon?

Melissa—I do seven and I think that is fine. I think that is enough for me.

CHAIR—Where do you reckon you would really go, ‘No, this is not manageable for me’?

Melissa—Probably 20, because that is a fair bit of your free time that you are spending at work, and you cannot actually do anything else while you are at work.

CHAIR—So you are not getting any balance?

Melissa—Yes.

CHAIR—Keith, what do you reckon?

Keith—I would say about 12.

CHAIR—So that is the point at which it starts to have a negative impact. Heath, what do you think?

Heath—Probably around 15. I think that once you get over 15 it is really too much with everything else you have got, because most people our age have got things other than school and work they need to do, and they need to fit that in as well.

CHAIR—To have a rounded life—yes. Luke, what do you reckon?

Luke—Fifteen hours works for me. Some weeks it has just appeared on the roster, and I have ended up working 20 or 22. Because it has only happened now and again I have managed to work everything else around it, but if it happened on a regular basis it would be too much for me.

CHAIR—Jessica, what you think?

Jessica—I think 15 is okay.

CHAIR—Lauren, what do you think?

Lauren—I think it depends on the individual. It depends on what you are actually doing at school. I think that pretertiary subjects particularly take up a lot more homework time. So if you were at the point where you were just aiming for some of the non-point subjects, there would be less homework and it would be a lot easier to handle work commitments. And because you would probably be working to go out into the workforce anyway, you would probably be able to handle more. I think that, for me, somewhere between 10 and 15 hours a week would be enough.

CHAIR—Brett, what you think?

Brett—As Lauren said, it does get a little harder if you are doing more pretertiary subjects. I am doing four pretertiaries. I am doing roughly 15 hours a week, and I think that if I did more than 20 I would really not manage. I have done 22 hours in one week, and it got really hard—I did not really have enough time for sleep or to go out and hang out with friends or anything like that.

CHAIR—So it is not just the number of hours, you are saying, Brett, but also when you do the hours.

Brett—Yes. If you, say, worked all weekend, and you had two or three pretertiary assignments due, as you regularly do in pretertiary subjects, then it could be hard—even with, say, five hours a day or something on the weekend. You also have friends who want to hang out; you have parents that might want to spend time with you.

CHAIR—It is always worth keeping in mind that we have the concept that a reasonable working week for an adult is 35 to 40 hours, and we as a society have set those hours because we understand that that actually creates healthy, well-rounded people, not workaholics driving themselves into the ground. So why would we expect you guys to do more than that? From what you are saying, 15 hours is a good balance. You are generally at school for seven hours, five days a week—35 hours. That is, 50 hours all up in a week. What you are saying is an interesting comparison with what has been a practice over time—that is, the 35- to 40-hour a week for adults. That was tremendous. We will have to stop there. We could chat away forever. We appreciate your time.

Thank you all for your attendance here today. If you have been asked to provide additional material, would you please forward it to the secretary. A copy of the transcript of the evidence you have given will be sent to the school and will be published on the committee's website. Once again, thank you very much for your evidence today; it is very useful to us. If you know other young people who have had experiences they want to tell us about, there is a form they can fill out on the website. We really appreciate the information.

Proceedings suspended from 10.51 am to 12.05 pm

BEDDOWS, Mr Jeffrey William, Careers Adviser/Teacher, Hellyer Campus, Tasmanian Academy

BRIGGS, Dr Mark James, Board Research Officer/Teacher, Hellyer Campus, Tasmanian Academy

CAMERON, Mrs Kathleen Louise (Kathy), Principal, Hellyer Campus, Tasmanian Academy

CHAIR—I now welcome representatives from the Tasmanian Academy to today's hearing. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. You have provided the committee with some additional material. Is it the wish of the committee that the submission entitled *Senior secondary students and part-time paid employment: report of a survey of students on the Hellyer Campus of the Tasmanian Academy and Tasmanian Polytechnic 2009* be accepted as evidence? There being no objection, it is so ordered. Would you like to make some opening comments on the situation here and on the recent work you did in that survey?

Dr Briggs—Yes. We thought that it might be nice to do a survey of the part-time work of the students here. We thought of that before your online survey. We would have difficulty getting a large number of students to do your online survey whereas we had a very good take-up with the paper survey that I ran—about 40 per cent or so of the total student enrolment, a very big group of students with slightly more academy students than polytechnic students. It was done through support groups and it was done on the same day, basically. It gave us the opportunity to survey some hundreds of students rather than just the very small sample we would have got if we had done the online one.

I am not sure how it fits with the online survey because I had not seen it. We were interested in seeing which students were in part-time work, how much time they spent working, the reasons for working and also issues about employers—were employers flexible and so forth in providing hours. We found that there is a much higher percentage of students in the academy engaged in paid part-time work than in the polytechnic. Not only is there a much higher proportion of students but also the amount of hours they work is much higher as well. I do not want to seem too blunt about it, but that is because you have a group of essentially academic students in the academy who have really high skill levels and tend to be the ones employers seek.

Many of the polytechnic students would not be in the polytechnic if they could get work. They would be out in the workforce in paid work if they had the option. The difference is that the polytechnic students are all doing vocational certificates. The idea is to build them up to go into paid work. In theory, at least, the academy students are on a university pathway, although not all the students will go to university. Indeed some of them are really there because they are not sure what they want to do or they did not like the offerings in the polytechnic, so they are there almost by default. But that is where it comes from.

We found the group who worked 11-12 hours was the standard amount of time they spent. Interestingly, most of them did not say that work was a big problem for them in terms of combining that with their schoolwork and most of them said that their employers were sensitive to their educational needs. But I am not sure that all their teachers would be so willing to say that it did not interfere with their schoolwork, but the students themselves felt that. You asked my group of students earlier why they did it. Of course they do it for money, mostly for discretionary spending. Interestingly, a proportion of them do it to live—in other words, they are basically independent students. The percentage of independent students is higher in the polytechnic than in the academy, perhaps as you would expect. There is a higher proportion of students in the polytechnic working because they need to pay the rent and food bills and so forth.

Most academy students are doing it mostly for discretionary stuff. They are putting the money away for a long-term purchase—a car or something like that. Some are putting it away for university. That is what we have found. If you had asked us three weeks ago, we would have said that is true, but the data does support that sort of stuff.

CHAIR—Kathy, would you like to make some opening comments?

Mrs Cameron—I would like to commend Mark on conducting this research, because it is data that we will now actively use to make decisions about how we run the academy. I would like to also make a comment on the point Mark made about whether participation in part-time work affects educational performance. It is quite clear, from teachers, that that is the case. Teachers are often working with students here about how much part-time work is too much and where you cross the line around it affecting your studies. We take it very seriously in a support role here. We consider very carefully those students who are participating in part-time work and need additional support with their learning. Those are some opening comments. Mark has summed up the findings very well.

Dr Briggs—Interestingly, the proportion of students who say it is not a problem is higher in year 11 than in year 12. These students are, of course, at the beginning of the year so they have not yet been through examinations and all that sort of pressure yet.

Mrs Cameron—That is right. I suggest we follow up with some data around what teachers think about students' participation in part-time work, because I think we would get a different picture around that. Anecdotally, we hear that it definitely affects them.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—In the formal enrolment of a student in the polytechnic and the academy, is there a space on the form to ask them about employment alternatives—part-time or full-time—and to give an estimate of how much time they would be expecting to work?

Mr Beddows—I think I can probably answer that best. The formal enrolment form that is requested by the polytechnic and the academy does not have space for that. The actual subject enrolment form that we use does have space for that.

Mrs Cameron—So we are collecting that data.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I see—you collect that for your system to understand, not just for support group knowledge. It is for all teachers.

Mrs Cameron—Yes. Jeff is saying that we are not formally required to collect that data, but we collect it in a tool we are using to gain more information about the student's in order to put in place timetables and a whole range of other organisational structures.

Ms COLLINS—Prior to this survey being done, how much of this information would you have been aware of anecdotally? Would it be fair to say that most teachers know which of their students work?

Mrs Cameron—I would say they definitely do. We have a very strong support system here where every teacher, including me, is the support teacher for a small group of students. That means they have to take a special interest in that group of students and know a lot about what happens outside of school as well as at school. So I would be disappointed if I heard that teachers were not aware of the activities of students around work outside school.

Mr Beddows—Given the size of the community, I cannot see how you would not know, because you keep running into them.

Mrs Cameron—That is right—you tend to know.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—And that goes for the polytechnic as well? You have the same support structures for all students?

Mrs Cameron—Yes. But there are a lot of polytechnic students who would like part-time work and would see that as a pathway into full-time work. But they miss out on a lot of the jobs that are taken by academy students. We have been aware of that anecdotally for some time.

CHAIR—You have touched on the other issue that the Australian National Schools Network have raised with us in their evidence: if we are going to say that up to about 10 or 12 hours a week is a positive benefit that makes students perform even better in study because of the independence and the positive flow-ons they get beyond the money, is there a social equity issue? Access to this work tends to be at the higher social levels for the reasons that Mark has quite rightly identified—that is, they are a more attractive prospect as an employee in terms of grooming, presentation, confidence and all those things. Yet the people who could most benefit from the work—the more struggling groups in society—are finding it really difficult to get that work.

Dr Briggs—Can I add as well that employers are aware, of course, that the academic students are going to leave at the end of year 12 and they can start again with another group in that age group. They know that they do not have to fire them because they will all go off to university and it will not be an issue for them.

Mrs Cameron—And students from families from a higher socioeconomic level are better able to make the decision to withdraw from part-time work in order to focus on their studies. I noticed that, in the group you spoke to this morning, there was one young person who had given up work—and that is reasonably common. Students generally pick up work from year 9 onwards—it is not only year 11 and year 12—so they have generally had two years work experience before they come to the academy. So, during year 11 or year 12, they can make the decision to withdraw from part-time work—if they can afford to. I have known of students here

who have participated in part-time work in order to fund their university education—because their parents have not supported their decision to move away from the coast to go to Launceston or Hobart to gain a tertiary qualification.

CHAIR—The challenge for us, I think, is that, to some extent, it is almost like it is set up to be ‘school versus work’ rather than a complementary relationship. Ms Collins spoke about teachers knowing that their students were working. My background is English teaching. I do not think I would know. Unless it was my roll group, whom I had the responsibility of engaging with like that, I would not know whether they were working or not. Students will say: ‘I don’t raise it with my teacher, because I think it’s my problem. If I’m struggling I’ve got to fix it, I’ve got to sort it out.’ But the other side of it is that, in terms of delivering curriculum and the conversations you have in the classroom, it occurs to me that it would be really useful to know their life experience in terms of their work. But it is not something that we are trained to do as teachers. Having gone to TAFE and having had to go through adult learning, I suddenly got the concept that life experiences are important to the curriculum. I am interested in what you are doing, Kathy, which seems quite different here—and it may be a state difference. I think was saying to you, Mark, that in New South Wales you do not go to a separate high school for year 11 and year 12. But quite clearly, even if you are discussing a Shakespearean play and relationships, drawing on the things that happen in the students’ workplaces and in their experiences would be important—and it is important to see them as beneficial to each other. I am interested to know how teachers translate that really engaged information into the curriculum.

Dr Briggs—Kathy and I both teach, or have taught, sociology. One of the units in the sociology curriculum is about work; it is actually about changes in the workforce and the structure of the workforce and all those sorts of things. So it has provided us with an excellent forum to discuss these things with students. But I would say that it is an issue in some of the other areas, because they are more concerned with the academic stuff. Teachers talk about how packed the curriculum is and how much they have to do. Sid is nodding his head, so he knows exactly what I mean. So I think it probably is an issue elsewhere.

CHAIR—We will move on to the issue of recognising paid work at graduation. But some of the concerns I have is that it is not actually about work; it is about your life and your life experiences. So when we ask students to analyse a poem about loneliness in relation to an experience they have had in their life or whatever, there is plenty of opportunity to engage the paid work they are doing in that story. But if you do not know about it, if you are not aware of it or the nature of it, it is much less likely that you will integrate it generally into the curriculum in your classroom. It is encouraging that you are on top of this sort of information. We go a lot places where we immediately get this, and the school will say they had no idea about it.

Mrs Cameron—I am very proud of the fact that teachers know a lot about their students here. It is about relating to them first and teaching them second. It would not just be the support teacher who would know this information. Teachers have to be supportive of some students and the amount of work they are doing outside of school by giving them an extra day to do an assignment—and those sorts of arrangements. They are often in consultation with them around their work commitments.

Dr Briggs—The survey says sixty per cent of academy students work. As you have seen, the vast majority of students in my class are in work. Every class in the academy is going to have a majority of students who are doing some degree of paid work around their schoolwork.

Mrs Cameron—And that was a random class that we showed you.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—This was a very interesting survey—and I am going to ask you something specifically on reasons for working. But, in terms of the college's philosophy, as a staff approach—and no doubt the staff have seen this survey—

Mrs Cameron—They are about to see it tonight.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Indeed, the whole service is probably concentrating a bit on: 'These are the facts folks. Are we aware of all this as a collective, and what can we do in terms of supporting students?' Chris Smith spoke about the issue of not seeing contracts—knowing and understanding contracts under age. He feels that is something he can contribute his knowledge in and something he can service coming out of this and that debate. Maybe you would like to comment on that. Secondly, I found really interesting the students' reasons for working. For the record: something like 12 per cent said it was to support themselves and meet living costs; 35 per cent said it was to have money to spend on discretionary items; and another 35 per cent it would said it was to save money for a major purchase—for example, a car. But what I found real interesting was that just over 20 per cent said they were saving money for further education. I found that quite a remarkable percentage—and there were slightly more year 11s than year 12s saying that. Is that something to do with the fact that they may have to travel?

Dr Briggs—I had a student today ask me about HECS costs. She said she had not thought about going to university before because she thought it was too expensive. I was speaking to her about deferring payment until she reached a certain amount—I do not know what the figure was—and she said she might seriously consider going to university. She is from Queenstown, on the west coast. She is living away from home now, but she will obviously have to live away from home to go to university, so there will be living costs.

CHAIR—This is interesting and I am concerned that it is widespread: students think HECS has to be upfront. They think it is an upfront payment each year at uni.

Dr Briggs—There is no doubt that students see it as an expensive process that they cannot afford.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—For them or their parents.

Dr Briggs—For them or their parents.

Mr Beddows—A significant proportion think that HECS has to come upfront.

Mrs Cameron—It is also to do with Sid's comment about the north-west coast and having to move away from home to access university. These students have been living at home. There is a hidden cost for their parents in keeping them. They might want to move to Launceston or Hobart, and the fact that they have ask their parents for an allowance when they have largely

been providing for their own pocket money is not something they like to do. So the north-west campus of the university here, located just across the road from us, has had a significant impact on our retention from year 12 to university. We have seen an enormous improvement in retention, simply because they can mostly begin a course here before having to travel to Launceston or Hobart. And there are now some degrees they can fully complete at this campus, and they are actually choosing those degrees for that reason.

Dr Briggs—These are isolated students. This college has a body of students who are local but also a large number of students who come from remote areas. They come from the far north-west, from Circular Head, from King Island and from the west coast. At least from here, with the exception of King Island, it is possible to get back home at the weekend. You can go back to Smithton—it is a couple of hours—but Hobart is a long way away. It is a five-hour drive to get from Hobart to Smithton, compared to maybe an hour and a half from here to Smithton.

CHAIR—I am assuming then that students are saving. Are they presuming that they will go straight on, because a lot of evidence we have had has been about the gap issue—that a lot of students are taking the gap year not because it is sensible to have a year off and see the world but because you become independent by working? I think it is 14 or 15 months that you have to work under the independence rule. Jeff, you were nodding. Do you hear this a lot?

Mr Beddows—It is 18 months.

CHAIR—Eighteen months.

Mr Beddows—And they have to earn \$18,900 or so. They then qualify for independence. Lots of students do that. I would say that probably about 15 to 18 per cent of students would take the gap year.

Ms COLLINS—Is that specifically to be eligible for—

Mr Beddows—It is specifically to be eligible for independent loans. A lot of parents are saying, ‘Look, we cannot afford to set up another household in another city because it just takes too much out of our income.’

Mrs Cameron—Again, it would be really good to do some research on that particular thing as well, because often students will say to us that they do not know what to do and they are going to have a gap year. They will present it as, ‘I am not sure what I want to do,’ whereas really it could quite clearly be about finance.

CHAIR—With the economic circumstances having changed, it may not be such a problem, but one of the issues of concern was that they defer with the intention of going back when they have got enough money but that there is so much money to be made out there, even unskilled, that they are not going back. So you are seeing young people not engaging.

Mr Beddows—Tasmania implemented a program to try and address that, where it was suggested that they come and do their first year and then they are offered \$1,500 or \$3,000 scholarships for them to take a gap year after their first year of study. Once they have started their first year of study, they are much more likely to come back than if they go out and work.

CHAIR—Who is offering that, Jeff?

Mr Beddows—It is the University of Tasmania.

CHAIR—The university itself is offering that?

Mr Beddows—Yes. I have just been over to Deakin as well, and Deakin are looking at trying to do something similar to overcome that gap year issue of retention after a gap year.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—There have been attempts in the parliament to look at the issue of, for students who are in regional and isolated areas who must travel—and you can document it and certify it—there being some form of allowance paid, even if it is based on accommodation, to support that family to support that student to go on and continue their education rather than take that gap year, where the worry is that they will not continue their education until much later. It is not getting a lot of traction, but I do not know whether parents and students raise this with you and ask: ‘Should we lobby for this type of thing?’

Mr Beddows—I know I raised it with you, Senator, before the last election.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Yes. It was a rhetorical question! Indeed, it has certainly been raised.

Dr Briggs—Both Kathy and Jeff have got children at university. My son is only in prep, but I have a nephew who is in his fourth year of veterinary science at the University of Queensland. In a course such as veterinary science, regardless of the HECS costs, there is \$10,000 upfront charge that they have to pay.

CHAIR—For materials and equipment?

Dr Briggs—This is the university saying, ‘We are going to charge above what the government requirement is’. Then they are paying \$14,000 a year for accommodation. They have four children, three of whom will go to university. One is year 12 and another one is in year 10.

CHAIR—Before we get to that problem level, in terms of the school stage of it, one of the challenges for us is that employers come in and give evidence—and I believe it is quite genuine—that they think that they have good practices and policies in place. But the reality, when you talk to students, is in stark contrast. It is very, very different. As you would appreciate, dealing with young people, unless you go directly to the source, they do what we call ‘siloing’ their lives. They will silo parents and tell them only what they want them to know and silo the school. One of the concerns that we have in talking directly with the students is that they are also not yet in the best position to judge. You are quite right, Mark. They will say, ‘Yes, I am managing it fine’. And, as we raised with the students in your class, sometimes you do not know that you are not managing it fine. You can have a severe bout of glandular fever and you are knocked off your feet for six months or—

Mrs Cameron—Or fail an exam.

CHAIR—Exactly.

Mrs Cameron—Or just get lower results than you would otherwise have got.

CHAIR—That is right—and you look back and say, ‘Maybe that wasn’t as good as I’d thought it was,’ and have that conversation. I would be interested in your observations on what you think. There is the extreme measure of governments legislating—out in Queensland, with the office of children’s commissioner, they have just put legislation through setting a cap on how many hours students can work, so you have that sort of extreme intervention—through to more light-touch interventions. I would be interested in what you think, from your experience, might be the best ways to intervene and continue having it as a positive experience rather than a negative one for students.

Mr Beddows—It is really interesting. I think a lot of employers start with good intentions, but eventually it comes back to when I need someone to work for me. It is then, ‘I need you to work now,’ so it then starts to have more of an impact as time goes on. I know a number of students, for example, who started at McDonald’s. They will have the opportunity to work the hours that they can, and then there will be an imposition—‘No, I need you to work now’—so they will not be able to get here for a class because they have to work.

CHAIR—It is interesting that you raise that example. The other observation we were making this morning is that most of our experience, as we are generally of a certain age, was in the retail sector. The retail sector was the big employer of students. It was straight award, and most of you were signed up to a union the minute you signed your first form; it was that sort of structure of employment. The big problem area we are hearing about is the fast food industry, which is a much newer industry—probably only 10 years old. It was interesting that the students who were in here earlier were nearly all in retail. They did not have an ideal situation, but they were much more likely to have seen the book on the lunch table about their rights and to have known what they had signed and had parents observe it and so forth.

Ms COLLINS—They were more likely to say no to extra shifts.

CHAIR—Yes, and more likely to have a supervisor who is an adult, probably with kids themselves, and who, if a kid says, ‘No, I can’t do a shift,’ is okay about it and so forth.

Mr Beddows—It is amazing how many of our year 12 students, particularly in supermarkets, are now supervisors, particularly on the weekend.

CHAIR—Yes, we had that in the class we were talking to before. I do not know if employers have really thought through the OH&S implications, let alone anything else, of having a 17-year-old supervising 15- and 16-year-olds in a formal, paid way like that. The other thing that is an issue for us, obviously, is that what the Australian National Schools Network talks about is actual communities. They, as I understand it, go in and hold community meetings with schools and employers, and parents come along and have a conversation about this. One of the problems about it is that it has grown up ad hoc and without intervention at any point, so everybody has a little bit of an area of responsibility, and students will be sitting in the middle of all that trying to block all of you out from interfering in every aspect of their life they do not want you interfering in. Sometimes as communities we need to have these conversations. What do you think would be the view of local employers and parents on having these conversations about the students?

Dr Briggs—I suspect that a lot of employers would be very worried that you might change the law, because they depend on these students. A lot of businesses here depend on essentially cheap and flexible labour that they can use, and they would be in deep trouble if they did not have it.

Ms COLLINS—If the hours were capped, surely that would mean that they could employ more people.

CHAIR—Spread the load.

Ms COLLINS—Spread the load, yes.

Mr Beddows—They would get to the stage where people they do not want to employ would be the ones they would then have to start looking at.

Dr Briggs—Yes, that is right.

CHAIR—I think it is very specific. You may be interested to know that we actually have one of the most casualised workforces in the world. Most other countries are horrified at the number of students who work in Australia; they think it is a really unprecedented and problematic issue. It comes out of the fact that we do not have an unskilled migrant workforce crossing the border, such as—pardon me in the current circumstances—mass waves of Mexicans who come across the southern border or people from the southern states of Europe crossing the Adriatic and so forth, that fill those types of positions in general. So we have relied on child employment, basically—young adult employment—to fill in that gap. We certainly would not want to give the message, Mark, that we do not understand how important it is to local economies and to family economies in many circumstances.

Dr Briggs—I think Kathy is pointing out that these students are still getting through but they may well be getting results that are lower than they have the potential to get if they were not working 15 hours a week or 20 hours a week. I think that is probably very accurate.

Mrs Cameron—Yes.

Dr Briggs—And we as teachers need to be very flexible and sensitive to that because students will come along and say, ‘I just can’t get my assignment in because I have to work.’ We have students who leave college early. We do not finish until four in the afternoon, usually. Often they start work before that so they need to leave 15 minutes or half an hour early in order to get home and get changed to get down to work. I just think we have to wear that. That is the reality for these kids. We do not want to make their lives any more difficult than they already are.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mrs Cameron—When we were Hellyer College and ran a more comprehensive school we had lots of discussions with employers around these issues, and generally they were very supportive of education. They want these young people to do well at school but they do not understand that leaving class early or keeping them on a shift till 10 o’clock at night is going to affect their performance in the classroom the next day. That is where we have had a barrier in developing closer relationships with them. I would say generally their needs are different.

CHAIR—As Jeff said, there are good intentions, but when the day comes and the shift has to be filled those pressures are underway. I think at that point they forget ‘well, I’m actually paying less and using flexibility, and the price of that is I have got to use a young person that I have a greater responsibility for than if I was using an adult worker.’

The other thing that is not uncommon is a very strong message to young people, particularly those who are looking at graduating and going on to university, of ‘you should be giving all your priority and attention to your studies; you shouldn’t be working’ and so forth. I have not picked up any sense of that here, to be honest with you, but it is not an uncommon situation.

Mr Beddows—With the number of university students who have to work to help maintain that lifestyle, I think some part-time work prior to that point in time is actually quite beneficial for the student.

CHAIR—It is good preparation. That is a great point, actually.

Mrs Cameron—We are quite aware of that. In the curriculum we want to offer in the academy we want to make sure that the course that they do here is not just tailored towards university but that it is more holistic in nature and that it has a lot of opportunities for enrichment courses, such as cafe and bar, so that they can gain skills in order to gain part-time employment whilst they continue their tertiary education.

Dr Briggs—It creates a particular tension when you have students who want to go off to universities, particularly universities or courses where very high entrance scores are required. Then you have a real tension because they know that they need to get 90-odd points to get into Sydney or Brisbane or Melbourne to do medicine or whatever it might be, and it is a really difficult situation.

I was talking about my nephew. He did not work around school. I think there were five universities offering veterinary science courses and he got into all of them. He got the top results on the coast in his particular year group, and yet I do not know whether that was partly because he did not work. He is obvious a very able boy but maybe he would not have been there if he had been working 10 or 12 hours a week.

CHAIR—And that is the difficulty of the work issue. There are students in strong academic streams who are still very materialistic in this generation and will just say, ‘I have to work because I like to go out. I like to buy these things and I am not going to sacrifice that’, and then there are students who, quite amazingly, can juggle. They are very skilled and resilient and can juggle a whole lot, and yet there are others for whom that slightest extra feather on the load is really difficult.

Dr Briggs—There is a group of students that put themselves under a lot of pressure because, as you say, they like the material things. The discretionary spending is really nice. But they also want to go off and do medicine or law or physiotherapy or whatever it might be and they know they have to get really good scores, and it is a really difficult tension. It is a difficult place for those kids to be.

CHAIR—Just briefly, I would also like to touch on the issue about actually providing some formal recognition of the paid part-time work when they graduate. Clearly, we do the work experience components of VET in Schools and we have built a valuing of work experience into a whole lot of areas, yet we do not do anything about the fact that they may be spending 12 to 15 hours of every week while they are here doing a paid job. I am interested to know what you think about ways we could have that built in.

Mr Beddows—We have talked to students about being accredited with at least certificate I in retail for work if they are working in the retail industry somewhere and using their paid employment to provide the evidence for that.

CHAIR—That would actually be a component of their study hours then.

Mr Beddows—No, on top of their study hours, so you actually use their work as the evidence for that.

Ms COLLINS—Were the employers happy to do that?

Mr Beddows—Yes, they were. The teachers went out and talked to the employers about what they were doing and sort of gave them the accreditation on the basis of that. I am not sure that in the academy this year we are actually able to do that as we are no longer a registered training organisation. The polytechnic is now the registered training organisation and that causes some of the difficulties that have actually occurred here now

CHAIR—The other thing that schools that have done that sort of thing raised with us was the resourcing of it. As governments we tend to have bright ideas and introduce them and by the time they roll out to you guys there are not a lot of resources behind them. Here is your chance. If you can lobby for any sorts of changes, when we are looking at combining work and school and recognising work skills where do you think some good money could be spent or support provided?

Mr Beddows—I think that the employers have been quite willing. It would be nice to have some resources to support staff travelling and talking to employers. In the past we have covered that ourselves, probably with additional time requirements on the staff particularly one of APs.

Mrs Cameron—A good example would be the school based apprenticeship program. We have struggled to get numbers in that, and that is exactly what we are talking about—a combination of school and work which is recognised. We do not get any resources, or very few, to manage those students who are taking that pathway.

CHAIR—In terms of staff hours for the completion of the roles—is that what you are talking about, Kathy?

Mrs Cameron—Somebody who is there to support the student, to be a liaison person between school and work, and to support the young person through that process. Often there have to be discussions because when the employer wants the student so do we, and there has to be some negotiation around that for the employer to understand the learning needs of the student and for

us to understand the business needs. We do not any longer have a strong resource to do that work.

CHAIR—One of the pieces of feedback particularly with school based apprenticeships is that the trade-off is often the study side of it. People are so desperate to get someone to sign up to take on one the apprentices that all the flexibility is one way. Just in my own area I know a hospitality apprentice who was working five nights a week and supposedly turning up to do HSC equivalent subjects—

Mr Beddows—That is interesting, seeing that it is 15 hours of employment a week in a school based apprenticeship.

CHAIR—I can understand employers saying: 'I want an apprentice. These are the shifts. They need to learn these things. These are the shifts when those things are happening.' You can understand that side of it. But whether it is not just better to take on an apprentice—

Mr Beddows—I think there are some situations where it can work really well particularly some of the longer term apprenticeships. For example, we have got one student this year doing jewellery making. She is here for three subjects, which for her will take half of the week. For the other half of the week she is with the jeweller. Her training is in Victoria so she will travel at times to Victoria and we will need to take that into account. She is actually doing three pre-tertiaries with it. Because it takes five years for a part-time apprentice to get the qualification, the jeweller is encouraging her, when she finishes year 12, to go to university part time to do a fine arts degree.

CHAIR—When you say she is doing the TCE, is that part time over a longer period of time, or is she still just doing it—

Mr Beddows—No, it will still be two years, because the employment actually counts as part of the hours she is required to do to meet the TCE requirements.

CHAIR—One of the other big things that has been raised with us is that unlike university, TAFE or anywhere else where you can choose to enrol part time and take an extended period if you need it to complete something, we do not have many matriculating certificates from high school that actually allow you to do that. I think in some of the states they are now—and South Australia is going into it big time, I think—saying you can enrol and then pick things from different places and add them on. You can go off to TAFE and do a course that is recognised and add that on.

Mr Beddows—TCE now works the way. You can gradually accumulate it over time. It might take you five years, but once you meet the requirements you can then be accredited with a Tasmanian certificate of education.

CHAIR—Okay. So students can do that. The only other problem with that, of course, is for those students on Youth Allowance and so forth, who have to be doing a minimum. Do you know what the minimum for Youth Allowance is?

Mr Beddows—It is 600 hours.

CHAIR—Yes. So those who could perhaps most benefit from the more flexible options are probably going to be least able to access it.

Mrs Cameron—To go back to the case study that Jeff was referring to, that is particularly important for a rural and regional educational institution such as ours, where we cannot offer the range of courses, such as jewellery making, at our polytechnic. So it allows them to access courses that are not offered here on site. It is the way of the future that we really need to understand that when students come from year 10, they have a whole wealth of pathways that they are working towards. That is often our difficulty in trying to meet their demands or their needs.

CHAIR—Yes. Finding better ways to do that rather than trying to be all things to all people in a particular place.

Mrs Cameron—That is right. We need to look at more partnerships and better ways to do that. I would like go back to one final thing. It is around Sid's comment about their reason for working being about saving money for further education. That is a significant factor for the work of the academy. We want to see higher retention rates to university, and that is what the creation of the academy is all about. Here in our region financial reasons are a significant barrier to accessing further education. That is a point that I would strongly make.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I would be very interested in drilling down into the gap year or between year 12 and the future to find out the real reasons.

Mrs Cameron—That is right.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—As you were alluding to, some people say, 'Oh, I just want to earn some money because I want to get a car,' when really they feel that their parents are under pressure and they do not want to put it on them.

Mrs Cameron—That is right, and it is about their parents not supporting or valuing education past year 12—thinking that year 12 is enough to get a job. There is this attitude, when we all know that for them to maintain a job at the level that they may want they may need further education.

Dr Briggs—There is no doubt that there are a group of students who are under pressure from their parents to leave education as soon as possible to get a job. And the more outlying the area the more likely that pressure will increase.

Mrs Cameron—We see it here very strongly.

Dr Briggs—We see it very strongly.

CHAIR—Another aspect of great interest that you have raised that just would never have occurred to me is HECS. I did not pay HECS for either of my boys; they have got debts. It was a case of, 'That is your call; you go, you get a debt, you pay it back when you can'. People who do not understand that the system works in that way and are assuming that they are going to have to come up with upfront money are therefore probably putting more pressure on and saying, 'It is

not going to be an option; we are not going to be able to afford it,' before you even get through the uni gates to find out that you can defer it and pay when you are earning and so forth.

Mrs Cameron—Our enrolment numbers this year are higher in the academy than in the polytechnic, which is very interesting data. There must be a large number of people who might be considering university when they come into year 11, but by the end of year 12 we would see only 30 per cent of those people accessing university. That, to us, is a real concern, given that we have got 50 per cent of the enrolment in year 11—

CHAIR—There are a lot of students who are now discovering the diplomas and the associate diplomas at TAFE that give you advanced standing at uni and—

Mrs Cameron—Which is another pathway.

CHAIR—which knock off how many years you take to do your degree—and you do not have a HECS debt. So they are getting quite canny at working around it.

Mr Beddows—There are a number of year 11 students who are preparing that way. They are doing some subjects at the academy this year so that they can do their Diploma in Business next year and then go in with a year of advanced standing in the degree.

Mrs Cameron—That is one of the advantages of having our academy and the polytechnic close by.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—An interesting thing to finish on is that, of the 70 per cent who are not pursuing the tertiary education career path the next year—so some of those could well do it again—you track where they do go, don't you? And it is not 70 per cent into unemployment.

Dr Briggs—Oh, no.

Mrs Cameron—Definitely not.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—People tend to think that because they are not going on to university they have therefore all failed.

Dr Briggs—No.

Mrs Cameron—That is definitely not an assumption.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is exactly right.

Mr Beddows—With conditions that have been so good, particularly on the north-west coast, with the mining industry close by, the bulk of our leavers have actually gone into the mining industry and into supporting industries around that: a lot of the engineering firms, construction—all of those sorts of avenues.

CHAIR—You probably have similar issues to my area in that our teen unemployment is over 40 per cent.

Mr Beddows—It is much lower here.

CHAIR—It looks terrible, but by the time they are 20- to 24-year-olds it is significantly down. What seems to happen is that young people leave, thinking that they want to get a job, and the manufacturing and mining industries say, ‘We are not taking you on until you are 18’. That may not happen either, but my understanding is that they will not take workers until they are 18. So what you are getting is that 15- to 18-year-old period where—

Mr Beddows—In the early to mid-nineties, in that sort of 16- to 20-year-old age group, it was probably at around 40 per cent. Over the last few years, I would say it is probably down at around 11 to 12 per cent.

CHAIR—Is that due to better retention rates, do you think?

Mr Beddows—No. It has been purely due to the impact of the economy.

Dr Briggs—There would be a relatively small group of students leaving here mid-way through the year or before completing year 12 who are actually looking for work. A lot of them would actually have jobs.

CHAIR—And leave because they have signed up. Okay. Thank you all for your attendance here today. If you have been asked to provide additional material, would you 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. Thank you very much for your evidence and your hospitality as well today.

Mrs Cameron—We have very much enjoyed having you here. Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 12.53 pm to 1.37 pm

JAGO, Ms Jennifer, Pathways Planning Officer, Latrobe High School

Anna, Student, Grade 10, Latrobe High School

Jacob, Student, Grade 10, Latrobe High School

Sam, Student, Grade 10, Latrobe High School

HARDING, Ms Andrea, Teacher, Penguin High School

Georgie, Student, Grade 10, Penguin High School

Jeremy, Student, Grade 10, Penguin High School

Megan, Student, Grade 10, Penguin High School

WILSON, Mr Timothy Mark, Grade 10 Coordinator, Reece High School

Belinda, Student, Grade 10, Reece High School

Carlie, Student, Grade 10, Reece High School

Trent, Student, Grade 10, Reece High School

CHAIR—I welcome all students in attendance to today's hearing. We will conduct a few formalities and then have a bit of a conversation with you. 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 that you might have about how to improve the situation for students 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—about 2½ thousand students have replied to that. While many students are telling us they are coping fine and their employers and teachers understand their needs, others are telling us that they are doing it tough, working late hours and on weeknights, and that they do not feel comfortable about asking for time off. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. Perhaps each student could give their name, the year they are studying in and a brief indication of their part-time work commitments.

Georgie—I am in grade 10 at Penguin High and I work at Woolworths in Upper Burnie.

CHAIR—So you are in year 10 and working at Woolworths—how many hours a week?

Georgie—It depends. In the holidays I did 36 hours. I have not worked in school hours yet, but I worked yesterday, and I do a fair few hours of a weekend as well.

Megan—I am in year 10 at Penguin High and I also work at Mount Street Woolworths. I probably work between 15 and 25 hours a week.

Jeremy—I go to Penguin High School and I am in grade 10. I work at the Penguin poultry farm. I do not work very much, only on Saturday mornings for four hours.

CHAIR—That is four hours a week.

Jeremy—Yes.

Ms Harding—I am the grade 10 teacher at Penguin High School.

Jacob—I am in grade 10 at Latrobe High. I work at the Shearwater IGA. I do not do much work until the holidays, but I do work on a Sunday sometimes.

CHAIR—A full Sunday or a half day?

Jacob—About six hours.

Anna—I am in year 10 at Latrobe High School. I work at an aquarium in Latrobe. I probably work just weekends, usually about eight to 15 hours of a weekend.

CHAIR—Is that on one or two days?

Anna—Both days, between about four and eight hours.

Sam—I am in grade 10 at Latrobe High. I work at Banjo's Bakery in Latrobe and I do between 25 and 30 hours a week.

CHAIR—Every week?

Sam—Yes.

Ms Jago—I am the Pathway planning officer at Latrobe High School.

CHAIR—Thank you. We might just indicate to you what we are interested in hearing. The issue, obviously, is that a lot more students have part-time jobs now while they are completing high school. About 15 years ago the ABS showed it was about 38 per cent of students, but it is now up to 52 or 53 per cent of students. Most school surveys show that around 60 per cent of students have part-time work. The other bit of evidence is that it is a really positive thing up to about 12 hours a week, and not just financial side of it. I am sure all of you do it for the love of it but you would not do it if you were not being paid. So the financial side is really important to young people, but also the skills that you develop, the independence and all the other things that it allows you to have are really positive.

But there is a point at which it becomes a negative and people start trading off either schoolwork or a balanced life—they might stop playing sport, they might stop socialising with

friends or they might stop sleeping, which is a worry. So we are interested to hear from you about how you manage it, how you balance up the competing demands and whether your employers are good—if you have something that suddenly comes up are they okay with you not being able to make it in? That is the sort of information we would like, so we will again go to each of you in turn. We will exempt Andrea and Jenny from having to participate in this, but they might want to make some comments at the end. We will start with Georgie. Can you give us an idea about how you manage it, how your employer is, the school, your parents—how it all works together.

Georgie—I find it pretty easy because I do not do many hours after school—not yet, because I have only just started there.

CHAIR—How long have you been there?

Georgie—Only three weeks, but I had another job before that, for about a year and a half.

CHAIR—What was that?

Georgie—In a take-away shop.

CHAIR—How many hours were you doing at that?

Georgie—I was probably only doing 15 a week, including weekends. Up at Woolworths, it is probably harder to spend time with friends on the weekend too, but after school that is all right. I am not missing out on any schoolwork or anything like that.

CHAIR—So there has been no clash between them at the moment. Are you concerned that when you go into years 11 and 12 it might be a bit harder to manage that work?

Georgie—I am not too sure.

CHAIR—Just see how it goes at the time?

Georgie—Yes.

CHAIR—How is your shift work: do you get a fortnightly roster and set hours? Can you tell them when you are not available? How does that work?

Georgie—Our rosters come out a week before and we find out our hours. I work in the deli and my manager does not care if I ask for time off. I have had to ask for time off because I am going away soon and he was fine with it.

CHAIR—As long as you have given notice.

Georgie—Yes.

CHAIR—You check the roster each week and make sure you can—

Georgie—Yes.

CHAIR—And if there is a shift you cannot do, you let them know.

Georgie—I could just swap with somebody.

CHAIR—Do you have to organise the swap or can you just tell them, ‘I can’t make that shift,’ and they look after it, or what happens?

Georgie—Yes, I could say that I cannot do it or I could just ask to swap with somebody else.

CHAIR—Okay. Thanks, Georgie. Megan, how do the hours work for you?

Megan—I find it probably a bit more difficult than Georgie because I play netball and I run. Sometimes it is hard to fit in the time because netball training is straight after school and then I work at four, so I go from netball training straight to work. Then I am usually on till close, so I do not get home till quarter to 11 and by the time I have had a shower and had tea it is 12. It gets a bit hard sometimes.

CHAIR—How many nights a week was that?

Megan—It varies. It is between 15 and 25 hours.

CHAIR—That is three nights a week on average?

Megan—Probably.

CHAIR—How do you find you are the next day—do you notice that you are tired as a result of that?

Megan—Yes. I get sick a lot more. I used to work at KFC and that was horrible.

CHAIR—Why—tell us what the problem was there?

Megan—They get so annoyed if you say you cannot work certain days. They would ring you up and say, ‘Can you work at four o’clock?’—and it would be 10 to four, so you could not get in. It was not very good conditions.

CHAIR—Unreasonable expectations on you.

Megan—Yes, pretty much.

CHAIR—You say you get sick. Do you think your immune system gets a bit run down from fatigue?

Megan—Yes, I get colds a lot more.

CHAIR—It is interesting you say that because we were saying to some other students this morning that some of the common teenage illnesses like glandular fever are often connected to issues like fatigue. We have students from Reece High School here now too so we will get them to introduce themselves and tell us what their part-time work commitments are before we continue with our chat.

Trent—I am in grade 10 at Reece High School. I have two part-time jobs. One is 22 hours a week regularly and the other is every Friday or Saturday night as a waiter, which is for about five hours a week. So altogether it is about 27 hours a week. I also play soccer, for two teams, and tennis.

CHAIR—I am exhausted just listening to that!

Trent—And school, of course.

Belinda—I am in grade 10 this year at Reece High. I work at the cinema for about five to 10 hours a week.

CHAIR—Mostly weekends or evenings?

Belinda—It varies, and it is usually on the weekends unless it is school holidays.

Carlie—I am in grade 10 at Reece High School. I do maintenance work with my father for about 10 hours a week on weekdays. I do babysitting on the weekends for about five hours each. I also do tae kwon do for four hours a week.

CHAIR—The babysitting is two nights a week?

Carlie—Yes.

CHAIR—We are having a chat about how you manage your hours and balance things up, whether you can set your availability, whether the employer sticks by that or they pressure you to work additional hours and whether that creates problems at school, with family and other commitments in your life. We were up to Jeremy.

Jeremy—I have not really found it that much trouble to work because it is only on a Saturday morning. The trouble I have is getting up! I am in a band as well, but I probably have enough time to practise after work because the work only goes until one o'clock.

CHAIR—So what are your Saturday hours?

Jeremy—Nine until one.

CHAIR—So that is set? They do not ring you to work other days or times?

Jeremy—They do sometimes, yes, if they need me, if someone else cannot work.

CHAIR—Is it okay to say no?

Jeremy—Yes.

CHAIR—Okay. Thanks, Jeremy. Jacob, how does yours work?

Jacob—Mine is all right. It is mainly sport for me at the moment. When I was in grades 5, 6 and 7, between those three years I worked in the family business. We used to own a shop and through that time I did not play any sport—I just went to school, came home, worked, went to school, came home, worked. Then after that, through grades 8, 9 and 10, soccer took over. I play for two teams on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. I do get time to work on the Sunday—I like to have two days off in the week just to chill out. So on the Sunday, if they do call me or if I need to work, I go in for about six hours or whatever. It's good.

CHAIR—So if they call you to do additional work there is no problem if you say, 'No, I can't do it'?

Jacob—If it is on a night, say, a Wednesday or a Friday, I will go in for about four hours or whatever. But if I say no, I can't work, she will accept that.

CHAIR—That's good. Anna, how do you manage?

Anna—I work only on weekends, usually on both days for between four and eight hours. I find it easier to try to get my schoolwork done through the week. I do play a little bit of sport. I do judo and I play basketball and soccer as well. I do not find it too much of a struggle at the moment but when schoolwork starts to build up maybe I might need to play less sport or ask for fewer hours at work.

CHAIR—What do you think it will be? If the acid were on and you had to pick, which one do you think you would be likely to cut back on?

Anna—Some of my basketball, because the season has not started up yet. We only train after school on a Tuesday so I still have time. But on Monday nights we can play a late game, say, a 9 o'clock game, around at the stadium and sometimes I might just have to say that I cannot play because I have homework to do.

CHAIR—Thanks, Anna. Sam, how does your balancing go?

Sam—Good. I work four to five days a week, but that is my choice. My boss does not pressure me. They are happy to give me time off if I need it. I used to play a lot of sport but I have had to cut back a little bit so I can balance my schoolwork and my social life with that. I still find time to do things and I am happy at my job.

CHAIR—Just remind me, Sam, is it four to five nights a week—how many hours?

Sam—I go in from 3.30 until 6.30, after school, and then I usually do about nine-hour shifts on a weekend.

CHAIR—But you are home by about seven o'clock of an evening.

Sam—I am usually home by 6.30 pm because we get to leave a bit earlier. We still get paid for it so that is good. All I have had to do is get myself organised a bit more so I can juggle everything.

CHAIR—So you are getting home and having dinner and then you have got plenty of time to do homework and things like that afterwards?

Sam—Yes, I have got plenty of time for that.

CHAIR—Thanks, Sam. Trent, how about you? How do you balance it all up and manage it?

Trent—I finish school at 10 to three and then I get on a bus straight after school—I have to run to catch the bus. I get to work at three o'clock and get changed—

CHAIR—So you get out of school at 10 to three and you start work at three?

Trent—I get changed at work at three o'clock and start at 10 past three. Then I work until seven o'clock or 7.30. That is usually on a Monday, a Wednesday and a Friday night. Then on Saturday mornings I have soccer from 9.30 until about 1.30. Then I start work at two o'clock until seven o'clock. On a Sunday I do eight or nine hours as well.

CHAIR—So you do a full day on Sunday as well? What sort of industry is that, Trent? Is it retail, hospitality, fast food—

Trent—Hospitality. Last year it was not such a hassle for me because I did not have such high expectations at school, but this year the workload has started to build up a little bit. There is more pressure, and more expectations are put on you. Being a prefect as well you are put in charge of a lot of things.

CHAIR—Do you think as you go into year 11 next year you are going to have to reassess how many hours you work?

Trent—Definitely. I know that classes sometimes start in the morning and finish in the afternoon or start in the afternoon or whatever. I will just have to work around that.

CHAIR—How do you think the employer will be with you?

Trent—It is actually a family member. Two other juniors work out there as well. There are about eight full-time workers, so my boss does not mind me swapping with the other two. They are in the same boat as me. They play sport, so we try to help each other out.

CHAIR—Thanks, Trent. Belinda, how do you balance it all up?

Belinda—My boss is really very good with things like that. Usually school and things like sport come first for her, so if I have netball in the morning she will definitely let me take that day off because our house usually comes first. I usually work only about five hours a week during a

school week. It will usually be on the weekends, so I have plenty of time after school to do my homework and everything else and catch up with friends if I need to. I have one day of the weekend left as well.

CHAIR—Good. Thank you. Carlie, how do you manage and balance it all?

Carlie—Fairly well. Dad is pretty flexible, so you just pick up on the work as soon as you need to again and go back to homework if you need to.

CHAIR—Are you conscious that you make a judgment yourself? Can you say, ‘Look, I can’t do that. I really need to knuckle down and get this done.’

Carlie—Yes. If something is due within a week or so you have to get it done, get it out of the way, and then you can get back to work with dad, do some maintenance.

CHAIR—How do you balance that out? Do you tend to say in advance, ‘I’ve got these assignments due. I’m going to have to set this time aside’ or do you wait until it all gets to the last minute?

Carlie—No, I normally have a schedule for it.

CHAIR—That is one of the things we hear that is really good about having a part-time job—learning to organise your time and be a bit more scheduled and responsible in terms of those things. I would not mind hearing what you think the positives are now. Why do you want the money? Are you saving for a car? Are you saving to go to uni? Do you just like to buy things? What are the reasons and what other benefits do you think you might get from this part-time work that should be recognised and valued? Georgie, do you want to start us off?

Georgie—It is good because the money is good up there and I am saving. I am trying to save for a car as well plus other stuff that I need. I just put a certain amount away each week.

CHAIR—Are you like that because it gives you some independence so you do not have to ask your parents for that? What is the driver?

Georgie—In the other job I had I did not get anywhere near as much money as I do now, and Mum likes that I get paid heaps. She still gives me money and I save the rest. If I ask for money she will still give it to me.

CHAIR—But she will be glad she does not have to pool her car, perhaps, at the end of it all?

Georgie—Yes.

CHAIR—And what other positive things do you think there are? Is there anything else you get from work, besides the money, that you think is valuable and worth while?

Georgie—Yes, I am learning new skills.

CHAIR—Any particular skills? Customer service? Handling money? What sorts of things?

Georgie—I do not handle money in this job. I serve meat. I did not like it to start off with but I do now. Over the holidays it got a bit annoying because I worked heaps of hours.

CHAIR—When you do a lot of hours, do you find that you get a bit more frustrated with the customers?

Georgie—Yes.

CHAIR—Megan, what about you?

Megan—The money and the friendships, the people you meet—and the experience, I suppose. Compared to KFC, working at Woolworths is way easy. It is pretty good.

CHAIR—Are you saving for something in particular or is it just spending money?

Megan—No, I usually put half to three-quarters in my bank for a car and everything else and either spend the rest or just keep it.

CHAIR—And it gives you some financial independence?

Megan—Yes. If I want, say, something really expensive like a new pair of shoes, Mum and Dad usually pay half and then I only have to pay the other half.

CHAIR—And there are friendships beyond your school groups and there is interacting with adults and that sort of thing. Do you enjoy that?

Megan—Yes.

CHAIR—What about you, Jeremy?

Jeremy—I like the money, just to have it. I do not have to borrow off my Mum. I probably do not save well enough. There are school trips and everything. It is still good to have the money. I work in customer service and stuff. I like talking to the customers and getting to know the different people.

CHAIR—It makes you much more independent and confident?

Jeremy—Yes.

CHAIR—That is one of the really valuable things. Even sitting here having to talk to us is pretty daunting but you are all pretty confident with it, so it is good for that. That is great. Andrea, do you want to make some comments from a teacher's perspective on what you see as the positives for students and on the differences that you see?

Ms Harding—Definitely their confidence, which is what they were saying. There is their tolerance in being able to understand that there are time frames for different things and they understand that there are lots of different people in the world. Often I hear comments if

somebody does something to another student: ‘Oh, that’s nothing compared to what happened at work the other day. We had this lady come in and she was so rude.’ So they understand about customer service and they have to deal with that sort of thing. With time frames they are some of the positives, plus their work ethic. You hear them talking about how this will be good on their resume and they would like to take it further.

CHAIR—Real life experience and all that stuff.

Ms Harding—Yes. So they are some of the positives.

CHAIR—Thank you, Andrea. Jacob, what about you? Financially, what are you planning to do with the money?

Jacob—The money I make I do not really spend unless I have to. I just keep it. It is just there if I need it or whatever.

CHAIR—So you are not saving for anything in particular.

Jacob—No, it is whatever comes up pretty much.

CHAIR—What would be the most common thing?

Jacob—A car, obviously. I would like to buy my own car soon. That would be good.

CHAIR—What about the other side of the job? Are there other things that you value from it?

Jacob—People skills, to be able to talk to people face to face and have actual conversations with them and things, and friends—people that go to other schools and other casual workers.

CHAIR—So you make friends outside your normal school group as well.

Jacob—Yes.

CHAIR—That is great. Thanks, Jacob. Anna, how about you?

Anna—I am saving for a car at the moment.

CHAIR—That is a common story here. Are buses not really good around here? Is that it?

Anna—I just bought myself a laptop, which has helped a lot with my school work. I have made a lot of really good friends from where I work at the moment.

CHAIR—That is from beyond your own school? They are people that you would not have met otherwise?

Anna—People that go to different schools. I have found some more people that I can use as resources. My employers used to be science teachers, so they have actually helped me with my homework.

CHAIR—There you go. That is an added bonus, isn't it?

Anna—I have learnt a lot of skills in customer service and in learning how to talk to people and deal with people that usually you would not bother interacting with but you are kind of forced to in a way.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—And you dress up in costumes?

Anna—Yes.

CHAIR—Sam, how about you?

Sam—The money side of it is good, obviously. I am not really saving for anything in particular. I am just saving. I have met a lot of great people through my work. There are about five or six others of my age there and they go to different schools. Through them I have got to know other people. It has improved my communication skills in talking to adults. It is good.

CHAIR—Okay. That is great. Trent, what are you up to?

Trent—The same as pretty much everyone else—the car I have got, and a ski trip and a trip to Bali as well to save for. There are the things that I have gained from it. I work with a fair few people older than me. They are about 50. There is one lady who is about 60 years old. She has been working in the same place for 30 years. She has had such a positive impact on my life and been a great mentor. When I started working, I did not think that I could meet someone 30, 40 or 50 years older than me who could teach me so much about myself. It is just being able to talk to people freely, and people come in all the time.

CHAIR—So beyond your normal circle?

Trent—Yes, people who come in all the time, the regular customers. You create a bond with them.

CHAIR—Okay. That is great. Thanks, Trent. Belinda, what about you?

Belinda—I like the satisfaction of earning my own money and as well I work with a lot of adults and it is nice to be treated like an adult when they talk to me. It is having the confidence to speak to strangers and everything like that. Also, I am saving up my money. I have got a trip to Vietnam and a car also. It is little things like that and really not having to ask for money, because I know Mum is a bit tough with that.

CHAIR—So it is the first stage of independence in having money and being able to manage it.

Belinda—Yes.

CHAIR—It is not even about the asking; it is about being able to decide what you spend it on. Okay. Thanks, Belinda.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Do you get to see some good films?

Belinda—I do not really. I do not have the time.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So you don't have the time—so I'd better move on!

CHAIR—Carlie, what about your situation?

Carlie—The guys I work with are really nice. They treat me like an equal. They help me out. Along the way if you do not know anything they will teach you. I am mainly in it just for the cash, to save up for a trip to London and a car, like everyone else.

CHAIR—So it is a car and a trip?

Carlie—Yes.

CHAIR—They seem to be the most common things that people are saving for. I might see if my colleagues have some questions that they would like to ask of you. Julie, did you have anything that you wanted to ask?

Ms COLLINS—I thought that we might go back to the question which I asked before of the other students. Say we were to talk about how many working hours, while you are still at school, is a good thing. We have had some evidence that after 10 to 12 hours it becomes too much and instead of being a positive thing it can actually become a negative thing, so I would be after some comments on that from you. Also, can you tell us what you think ideally a reasonable amount of hours to be working in year 10 would be. Georgie?

Georgie—I actually do not know if I have any comments about it.

Ms COLLINS—So working while studying has been nothing but a positive experience for you today?

Georgie—I do not think it is bad.

Ms COLLINS—Megan?

Megan—Probably about 15.

Ms COLLINS—That is a reasonable amount?

Megan—Yes.

Ms COLLINS—Have you had any negative experience of the amount of hours that you are working?

Megan—Not actually at work. After it I tend to get tired and sick, like I said. As the day goes on at work I seem to get happier towards the end because I know I am going home.

CHAIR—We are all like that.

Megan—It is just really fun. You do not think it is work and that you have to do this. There are heaps of people around and you are always talking.

Ms COLLINS—Thanks, Megan. Jeremy?

Jeremy—I do not mind doing the hours that I do. I would prefer to do more for the money and stuff like that.

CHAIR—Where would you draw the line?

Jeremy—I would like to do more than 10 hours, maybe 15 to 20.

Ms COLLINS—Andrea, I am wondering if you can tell us this. Do you notice any impact on the school work of the students that do work more than 15 hours a week?

Ms Harding—Not this year; I haven't. I did last year. We had a student that used to work every night till between 10 and 11 because he would stay back after the shop had closed. The sad thing was that it was his family's choice for him to do that. It became a really big issue for him last year around his studies at school. This year I haven't as much. First up of a morning sometimes I get the comment: 'Oh, God, we don't have to do this, do we? I worked till 10 last night so it was late by the time I got home.' But they soon get over that.

Ms COLLINS—What do you think is a reasonable amount of hours for a school student to be working?

Ms Harding—I had not really thought about it. I personally believe working till 10 o'clock is too late for them, because a lot of them go straight after school. As they have said, they go home to have their dinner and shower and it is late by that stage. If I can use Megan as an example, she is absolutely spot on when she says she gets rundown from her work—and she does—and then she suffers at school, although she is a really good student and catches up and takes her work home when she is away. Personally, I think 10 o'clock is a little bit late. Maybe if they only had to do that once a week, but some of them are doing that three and four times a week.

CHAIR—So it is a balance between the total hours and the shifts that they are working?

Ms Harding—Yes. Lots of students seem to do the graveyard shift, that 10 o'clock shift.

CHAIR—The last group gave us evidence of somebody who was doing the shifts until 10.30 or 11 and then turning up at six o'clock to open the store in the morning.

Ms COLLINS—Jacob, how about your experiences?

Jacob—I think it depends on what else they do. If it is someone who does not do any sport outside of school and just has nothing else to do, then work would be fine for them—not too late, but reasonable hours.

Ms COLLINS—What you think reasonable hours would be?

Jacob—Like Sam does—he finishes at about 6.30. But for someone who does do sport it is harder to juggle that and work. I think it is good for me just to have one day on the weekend, on the Sunday. It suits me because I have sport as well.

CHAIR—So it is good to have that whole day to yourself that is not work or school, when you can do your sport and have rest and recreation?

Jacob—Yes, it is good.

Ms COLLINS—Anna, how about you?

Anna—I agree with Jacob about sport. If you do not play any sport then you might be available to work more hours. I think it also depends on the type of work that you do. My job is not very stressful—it is just a job—and I really enjoy it and I do not feel tired or anything after work. But someone who did maybe more repetitive work or something not as exciting—

CHAIR—Lots of rude customers, for instance.

Anna—Yes, something like that—might find that working longer hours, or later or earlier of a morning would really impact on how tired they would get. I would say a reasonable number of hours would be from 12 to 20 hours—depending on what shifts you were working and what other things you were doing as well.

Ms COLLINS—Thanks. Sam, what about you?

Sam—I like to keep busy, so extra hours is good for me. It is also good because I never leave work later than 6.30, so that does not affect my sleeping or my recreational time or anything. I reckon that next year I will have to cut back a bit when I go to the Don, just with more intense studying and stuff. But you have to find the time to juggle sport and all the other commitments.

Ms COLLINS—So at the moment do you think the number of hours you are working is okay and that most people could manage that?

Sam—Not necessarily everyone could. But I do not find that I get tired or stressed too much from it. So, yes, I am happy with mine.

Ms COLLINS—Okay. Trent?

Trent—Yes, I think it completely comes down to the individual. Like she said, it does not bother her but she does not reckon that other people could do the same thing. It just depends on the individual. I also agree with Jacob about sporting commitments and stuff like that—extracurricular activities—and just making sure you have time for yourself. That is important.

Ms COLLINS—Do you think you will maintain your current working hours when you get to year 11?

Trent—No. If my classes are in the afternoon then I might work in the morning, but maybe not the same number of hours. It just depends on my class times and stuff like that.

Ms COLLINS—Okay. Belinda?

Belinda—I agree with everyone else. My workload and school and sport and everything like that are very well-balanced. I do not get too tired or anything. There is a little bit of stress but that is mainly caused from work being overdue.

Ms COLLINS—So do you think that there is a limit on how many hours work you can do while you are at school?

Belinda—I am pretty happy with the hours I have got now. If I needed to, I could work a few more hours; it would not bother me too much.

CHAIR—So up to 10 or 12 hours a week you think would be okay?

Belinda—Yes.

Ms COLLINS—Carlie?

Carlie—I agree with Trent and Jacob—it just comes down to the individual. I get a break in the middle of the week, so it is fine—I just catch up on schoolwork then.

Ms COLLINS—Do you think that there needs to be a limit on how many hours you do and, if so, what do you think that should be?

Carlie—No, just as long as you take a sensible approach to work instead of saying, ‘Oh, yeah, I can work 30 hours a week,’ or something like that.

CHAIR—Speaking of that, what do you think might be some of the signs to look out for? Do you think young people are clear enough on what sorts of signs they should watch for which would tell them that they are actually not managing as well as they think they are? Trent?

Trent—At our school, we have a thing called the hit list. It sounds really daunting—and it is daunting! They have it in grade 10. I guess it is in place so that you can tell whether you are slipping behind in comparison with everyone else. If you do not get a piece of work in on time, you go up on a list and it goes on a bulletin and then, if you are on that, you get privileges taken away from you—like, you cannot go on the ski trip, or, at the end of the year, to the leavers’ dinner. If schools adopted that sort of thing, people would know when they were falling behind in their schoolwork.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It is a public list, is it?

Trent—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Interesting—it is a hit list.

CHAIR—Thank heavens they don't have one of those for us, Sid!

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—They do, actually—you haven't seen it yet!

CHAIR—So one clear strategy is actually for the school to have something in place that allows people to identify, 'Hang on a sec, this isn't just once that I've got something overdue. I've actually got a real problem because it is a consistent pattern.' It is something that actually alerts you to that?

Trent—Yes.

CHAIR—What other things are there? Year 12 students have appeared before this committee doing 25 to 30 hours a week work and trying to matriculate to uni at the same time. As adults, we say that a 40-hour working week is the appropriate amount for mental and physical wellbeing. If you are at school for 30 hours a week and you are working for 30 hours, there are 60 hours. They all say that they are managing fine, but then they will say that they did not get the results they wanted: 'When I look back now, I realise that I was not really balancing things.' Or, 'I was suddenly really sick. I had a breakdown. I kept crying all the time and could not work out what was the matter. Then I realised.' We do not want to get to the point where you do not get the results you want or you have had a breakdown or you are physically not well.

What other things do you think we might be able to do to help you, your school and your employers manage this better? Let us take your employers to begin with—do they discuss this with you? Do you talk about this with them? Are there things up at work to tell you how to watch out after yourself or anything like that? I am a bit worried that nobody is saying, 'Yes, there is.' Megan, what do you think? What about at workplaces and employers? Are they well trained on how to help you out, do you think?

Megan—They do not really talk about how you are managing stuff. They are more like friends. They just talk to you as if you are their best friend. They do not act as if they are your mother or anything like that. They do not say, 'How are you coping with this? How is school going?' Blah, blah, blah.

CHAIR—What about your parents? Do they do that with you?

Megan—No, not really. They just sort of run me around.

Ms COLLINS—Would any of you actually tell your parents if you didn't think you were coping?

Anna—Yes.

CHAIR—Some yeses, some noes. One of the other things that you hear a lot is that as young people becoming adults they tend 'silo' their life: there is school, there is work, there are friends and activities and you do not tend to let them crossover very much. So you say to parents: 'No, I'm fine at work. Don't you interfere. Everything is okay.' 'I'm fine at school, you don't need to

interfere.’ Sometimes at the end of the day you are stuck by yourself in the middle of all those things, trying to balance all the demands. You talk about baby-sitting and family responsibilities—cleaning, those sorts of things—and you are trying to balance them all, but there is no talking going across them. Do you think we could do that better? Could schools do that better? Do you reckon your school knows about your work and how many hours you do? Do you write that down anywhere? Trent?

Trent—We don’t write it down. Teachers know that we work, but I don’t think they know how much we work and how demanding some things are. We got given assignments to do over the Easter holidays. I look forward to the holidays because I know that I do not have anything to do, apart from work and sport

CHAIR—And that is when they decide to give you the extra assignments!

Trent—But the schoolwork follows me home over the holidays. I think school holidays are holidays away from school. We shouldn’t be followed home with homework and come back and have assignments due on the second day back.

CHAIR—Okay. Jake, do you have a comment there about whether schools can do things better in helping you balance it?

Jake—It is not so much school. I used to do guitar lessons as well. It got too much and I had a talk to mum about it and she said I could drop that so I could have a break during the week from this sport and this school.

CHAIR—Because on the other side parents are saying, ‘If you start something, you have got to finish it.’

Jake—Yes. I had a talk to her about it and she is like, ‘We can drop that for now but once the soccer season finishes and things you can pick it back up again.’ It is good that my mum listens and I can talk to her about things like that. She understands. But our school does not really have some sort of thing that we do much about part-time work.

CHAIR—One of the issues for schools that we have been looking at is the fact that you may not be coping it yet but once you get into years 11 and 12, if there is a clash—like you are saying Trent—with a whole lot of assignments due at a particular time, the students get told, ‘Where are your priorities? You should be focused on your schoolwork. If you can’t manage the work then you shouldn’t be doing the work.’ Our concern is that a lot of students, if they are put in that position, will sacrifice the schoolwork. They won’t say that openly. You will not say, ‘I’m sacrificing the schoolwork,’ but you do not want to give up paid work and you are not going to miss out on the money. So you will balance it off by not doing as well with the schoolwork as you want. Trent, you nodded there. What observation would you make about how unrealistic are we being?

Trent—I am agreeing with what you said about how so many expectations are put on us.

CHAIR—And the fact that earning that income is not just a nice added extra; it is something that is important to you?

Trent—Like you said, no-one here is going to admit that we would give up schoolwork for paid work. But I know there is a girl at our school who stopped doing school because she wants to work. I think your life is not going to go anywhere further unless you have your TCE, HSC or whatever it is called. She has given up just to go get paid instead of going to school.

CHAIR—If the acid is really put on, there are people who will say, ‘Well, I will give up the school then.’?

Trent—Yes.

CHAIR—Sid, did you have some questions you wanted to ask?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I was just going to explore the reasons why you work. You have given your reasons why. You are in grade 10 and as you look to the future, if you are doing years 11 and 12, clearly the demands of the school starts to affect the hours you can do at work. So you have already followed that area and it is a matter of how we manage that. For instance, we were taking earlier about the conditions you work under and whether you were aware of. For example, did you sign anything when you went into the workplace?

CHAIR—Just put your hand up if you remember signing something to start your work? There are three.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—We were asking then if you three, how many of your parents saw that document?

CHAIR—Georgia, you had your hand up, did you? The document you signed when you started work, did your parents have to co-sign that or see it?

Georgie—No, I kind of just read one line to mum when I got the job. You get an email when you get a job there. When you go to your induction you sign that piece of paper that you get in the email.

CHAIR—Are you telling your employer you have shown it to your parents, or they do not ask?

Megan—No, in your induction you are just in a big room with all of the other people who are about to get a job there as well and you fill out all this paperwork.

CHAIR—You do realise that it is illegal under 18 to sign contracts without your parents seeing them? This is what gives us a little bit of concern about it. Belinda, did you say that you had signed something? Do you remember what that was?

Belinda—I do not really remember it. It was just basically saying that you understand what is happening and you understand what goes with the job. Mum saw it and everything. My employer told me to go through it with mum and everything as well, but it was only for me to sign.

CHAIR—That is one good example.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Without specifying your employer necessarily, do you have any comments to make as to whether you think employers could make things better and easier for you as an employee and also what you know about your workplace, conditions, what you are going to be paid and why and also whether they are well aware of the pressures you have also on you at school and in your other pressures in life as well? Most of you seem satisfied, but are there were any comments you would like to make about that?

CHAIR—On that, could you indicate whether you have to attend training or meetings for work that are unpaid. Has anybody been asked to do that? Three of you have put your hands up. It is a common thing. Are you aware of whether that is appropriate? Have you had any information on whether that is an appropriate thing to ask you to do—whether it is in your agreement that you signed or anything like that?

Anna—I did not sign anything when I started work.

CHAIR—Anna, in your job, where would you get the information if you were asked to do something and you did not think it was right?

Anna—I would probably talk to someone at school, either the Pathways planning officer or maybe one of the teachers who might know something about the kind of work that I do.

CHAIR—So it would rely on you saying, ‘I don’t think this is right.’ The other big thing with long work hours or late and early hours is occupational health and safety. There are actually laws around how many hours you can work straight and what sorts of shifts you can work. There are fatigue factors and things like that. Have any of you had occupational health and safety information at work? Two of you have put your hands up. Sam, what was the nature of your example?

Sam—Because it is a bakery there are a few pieces of big machinery around. Obviously we are told ‘Don’t play with it.’ There are ovens too. We are taught how to use them and we are shown how to handle them and stuff so that we know how to work them without hurting ourselves.

Georgie—We were shown stuff about the whole store. Even if you are not working in a certain department, you are still taught about it. In the deli you go through a book—other people do not have to—and you have to be marked off on what you know how to use. There are slicers and all that kind of stuff to slice meat. You have to be 16 to use them. I am 16 but I have not been shown yet.

CHAIR—So you are conscious of the limits and protections around those sorts of things. That is good to know. It is interesting that it is the two workplaces where there are physical dangers like slicers, ovens and things like that. Clearly, more broadly, things around how you assess your fatigue levels and things like that are not common.

Ms COLLINS—Perhaps we could see a show of hands again, as we did with the other groups, on how many people actually know what they are employed under—whether you are employed under an award, an agreement—

CHAIR—Do you know if you are on an award, an individual contract or an enterprise agreement? If you wanted to find the conditions of your employment, do you know where to go? Hands up if you do. Let the record show: nobody. If you were asked to, say, work on a public holiday and you were thinking, ‘Aren’t I supposed to be paid more for working on a public holiday?’ how would you get that information?

Megan—We just get told at the start when we get our payslip. When we are notified about getting the job, we get, say, \$10 or whatever an hour, and on public holidays we get double that and a half, and then on a Sunday we get half of that again.

CHAIR—How do you know? Are you just told? It shows on your payslips?

Megan—Yes.

CHAIR—So once you have worked it, you will see it and someone will say, ‘You got extra because it is time and a half on Sunday.’

Georgie—And my mum.

CHAIR—So a bit of parental information about that as well. How do you know what you are supposed to be paid? How do you know that you have been paid the correct hourly rate? If you found out that you had been paid the wrong rate—they were underpaying you—how many of you would do something about it? Trent, what would you do about it? If you got the information and said ‘At my age for this job I’m actually supposed to be paid this much an hour,’ what would you do?

Trent—I would say to my boss, ‘Why for the last two years have I not been getting paid the right amount?’ Because he is like family, I am pretty sure that would not happen. If it did, I know you can ring people. I saw it on TV one time. The only reason any of us work is for money. Everyone in this room works for money. If we were paid extra, then maybe we would not work as much. I am paid considerably less than other people at my workplace who are over 18 and I do exactly the same amount of work as they do. I have more work because of school and stuff like that.

CHAIR—Some other hands went up then. You are all saying that you would do something about it. Are there any other options, other than speaking directly to the employer?

Megan—I used to work at KFC. I got paid \$7 but they used to take a uniform out of it so I was only getting \$4.50 per hour. I quit.

CHAIR—There you go. You did do something about it.

Megan—We went to the union because the minimum you are allowed to be paid is about \$6. We used to work eight-hour shifts and we did not even get a break. You would be constantly working. We went to the union and I think they got a warning or something. I did not like it at all so I got a job at Woolworths.

CHAIR—So that is another option—quit. Does anybody have any other options? The reason we ask is that a lot of students have also said to us that they do not speak up even when they find out something is wrong because they know they will not get any more shifts. By and large you are not permanent and you do not have any guaranteed work. If you do open your mouth to complain or raise an issue you know you will not get any more shifts. So people put up with things. Are you familiar with that? Perhaps not you personally, but are there people you know of who just put up with things because if they raise them they will lose work?

Sam—My job before the one I have now was at a cafe in Latrobe. I really did not like it there. The hours and the pay were poor. Another girl was not getting paid for some hours. She spoke up and the boss cut back her hours.

CHAIR—So it does happen.

Sam—Yes. I got out of there pretty quickly. So, yes, I have seen it happen.

Georgie—I used to work in that take-away shop and I was on low money. There were four people the same age as me working there. One of them was on \$8, another one was on \$7.50 then there was one on \$6—and stuff like that. The oldest one of all of us—his birthday was before any of us—said something and they said that they would not put his wage up—he was on the lowest—because he did not do enough work. They put your wage up 50c every birthday—it was ridiculous. It was very close; I could just walk there. It was only five houses away from my house. It was easy and it was a good job. I do not say it was bad; I liked it there. I worked with one of my best friends and my cousin.

CHAIR—It was just that the pay was not fair.

Georgie—Then Mum said she would get me a job up at Woolworths and she did.

CHAIR—Jenny, did you want to make any comment on that?

Ms Jago—I have had a number of people over the last few years make comment that if you knock back a shift, particularly if you do it a number of times, you will miss out on shifts. I had a case just the other day. It was someone I know. She is not actually a student. She had two days off sick and she only got one shift this week. So, yes, it does have an impact. Young people in particular who want those jobs see that as a major problem so they will not often, depending on the circumstances of the job, say that they do not want to work until 10 o'clock at night. That is a big issue.

You mentioned the issue of safety in some workplaces. A few years ago I knew a young guy who was 15 and he had to shut the shop up at 9 o'clock at night and take the money home with him. I find that a huge issue. That used to happen four or five times a week. So there are a lot of issues around safety with young people.

CHAIR—Particularly in the fast-food area where shops are open late. What is the latest they can open here?

Ms Jago—All night.

CHAIR—It is not such a problem in Perth; one thing they are pretty good at in WA is refusing to progress with some of the times. That can have its benefits. The shops there, even the fast-food ones, have to shut at 10 o'clock. So it is not as big a problem. But young people become supervisors. There can be people 17 or 18 and still at school but they become supervisors and their job is to close the stores up at night. That is a big issue. You are supervising people who are only 12 months younger than you and the dynamics, as we heard from some of the students, gets really bitchy and nasty in workplaces because there is no adult there providing proper supervision and support for young workers. Trent, you are nodding your head. Have you seen this sort of thing happen—perhaps not personally but you might have heard of it from others?

Trent—Yes.

CHAIR—What is your example? Was it in the fast food area?

Trent—A friend of mine who is the same age as me works at Subway. She works seven days a week religiously, over and over again. She is a supervisor. She trains other people. I do not think she is qualified in health and safety and she trains people who have to work there.

CHAIR—She is under 18. There are also the legal aspects of giving responsibility to someone under 18 when there are legal liability issues at play as well. But there is also just the general thing of student relationships. Somebody was saying earlier that it is nice that you can work with all your friends and you become mates with everyone but if you have to replace yourself when you cannot make a shift then it can really strain friendships. You ring someone else who is your mate and say, 'Look, I can't make it into work this arvo; can you do my shift?' They might say, 'Well, okay,' but it creates a whole lot of dynamics that make it difficult. Do most of you find that you have to replace yourself if you are not available? Do any of you have that situation? Belinda, you are nodding. If you cannot go into work do you have to find someone to replace you? How do you normally manage that?

Belinda—It is our responsibility. Once I had to give up the shift because I could not make it in. I talked with my boss and found out who would be able to take my shift. We worked it out together. It was my job to contact her and ask her if she would be able to come in.

CHAIR—We have a real problem with this because it is not actually your responsibility to replace yourself. This is an issue. If you say to your boss, 'I think so and so might be available' then that is fine. Has anyone else had a similar thing?

Jeremy—Yes. I do not really have that much trouble because I have two other friends at work—I used to have three. We help each other out. If they can't do it one week then I can do it and then if I can't do it the following week they can do it for me.

CHAIR—So between the three of you, you manage to find something that works fairly well?

Jeremy—Yes.

CHAIR—What if somebody had a shift at 12 o'clock on a Saturday and they cannot get in. If it is 10 o'clock and the car has broken down, the family cannot get you there and you are stuck. What are you supposed to do? Are you supposed to ring your supervisor first or do you ring

around other people to find somebody and then ring the supervisor and say that you have replaced yourself?

Jeremy—My friend lives close to work—a couple of houses away so if I need to get someone else I can call him. I usually call the supervisor first.

CHAIR—What if your friend says he cannot do it.

Jeremy—Then I just have to talk to the boss and say I cannot do it. Then he will try to sort something out with someone else.

CHAIR—Would you feel pressured by that and guilty that you were not getting in there?

Jeremy—Yes, it happened last week.

CHAIR—So how did you end up resolving that circumstance?

Jeremy—I told the boss that three other friends had the same problem because it was a birthday. So he had to get an outworker or someone who does not usually work there. He just calls them in.

CHAIR—We will move to wrap up the hearing. We are getting a bit close to time. We get very engaged in hearing about your circumstances. It is very useful to us. Thank you all for your attendance here today. If you have been asked to provide additional material, would you please forward it to the secretary. A copy of the transcript of your evidence will be sent to your schools and will also be published on the committee's web site. Hansard will transcribe everything we have said today and it will become part of the evidence for the inquiry.

Finally, thank you very much for your evidence today. It has been really useful. The issues do change from years 10, 11 to 12, as pressures get greater and things start to add up. So it is very useful to hear from you what the situation was when you would have started work in years 9 and 10. The situation is obviously easier than the situation for some of the year 12 students whom we hear from, but there are still some pretty serious issues that we need to look at. Your contribution has been tremendous. It is really valued and we appreciate your honesty in giving us that information. Best wishes.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms Collins**):

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 2.41 pm