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Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Combining study and work

THURSDAY, 18 JUNE 2009

CANBERRA

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Thursday, 18 June 2009

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

Members in attendance: Ms Bird, Ms Collins, Mrs D'Ath, Dr Jensen, Mr Sidebottom, Mr Symon and Mr Zappia

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

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

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

WITNESSES

EDSALL, Ms Sally Maree, Research Officer, New South Wales Teachers Federation 1

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Committee met at 9.41 am**EDSALL, Ms Sally Maree, Research Officer, New South Wales Teachers Federation****IRVING, Mr John Bruce, General Secretary, New South Wales Teachers Federation**

CHAIR (Ms Bird)—Welcome. This is the 11th public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training as part of its inquiry into combining school and work and supporting successful youth transitions. I would like to express our great appreciation of the New South Wales Teachers Federation for appearing for the third time before this inquiry. On the two previous occasions, we explored some of the research and reports that you had done on the topic we are looking at, but we were particularly keen to get a more detailed explanation of the tools that you have developed. That will be very useful to us. So we appreciate your taking the time to appear before the committee today. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Ms Edsall—Yes. I am now the media and communications officer, Teachers Federation.

CHAIR—Thanks, Sally. 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. I also advise you that the proceedings are being broadcast on the internet today. We will attempt to facilitate that by identifying what you are showing us as we ask you questions. I now invite you to make an opening statement before we proceed to your presentation and questions.

Ms Edsall—We do not want to canvass any of the points that we have made before. Dr Jensen asked some questions which we received on notice and we have attempted to bring the answers to those questions to you today. The only other thing that we want to do is walk you through our internet application.

CHAIR—That is great. John, did you want to add anything to that?

Mr Irving—Only that we wanted to make sure that we answered the questions that were asked previously. We have done a little bit of mathematics and a few calculations there, so we hope we have the right answers.

CHAIR—Thanks very much for that. Clearly what we are looking at here are the online tools that you have developed and provide to students. Sally, would you like to walk us through them.

Ms Edsall—This is a separate site to that of the Teachers Federation. It is students@work.org.au.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Ms Edsall—[Students@work.org.au](mailto:students@work.org.au) is the internet site that was developed after the research. We decided that we really wanted to do something based on the findings and to commit some resources to trying to assist each of the stakeholder groups. There are four subsites to students@work.org.au: ‘Students’, ‘Teachers’, ‘Parents and Carers’, and ‘Employers’. Each one

has a slightly different look and feel with its own home page. If you go into the student site, for example, it is kind of a bit funky and young-person oriented—we hope. We asked teachers how they would like to see themselves—and here they are. Look at those enthusiastic teachers. Teachers said, ‘We want materials that are clean, able to be photocopied in black and white and no fancy graphics that require resources that are beyond our school’s needs’—that kind of thing. Some of the materials appear that way. The site for parents and carers has, again, a slightly different feel to it. The employers’ site has different employers on it.

CHAIR—What is ‘The competition is now closed’?

Ms Edsall—We need to take that down. That was a competition that was held in conjunction with the launch of the site itself and it was aimed at young people. It was to get them engaged with and logged onto the site. It was a competition to win iPods and it was launched in various social networking spaces that young people inhabit—for example, Facebook and MySpace and places like that—as pop-up advertisements. It took them to this site. They had to register with this site in order to enter the competition. That was a promo at the very beginning.

Apart from the static information in each category, you can find very comprehensive information on a whole range of topics. If we look, for example, at the students’ site, it goes into a number of categories. The menu runs down the side of the page and lists: ‘Before you look for a job’, ‘Looking for a job’, ‘Assistance with places to start looking’, ‘Applying for a job’, ‘CV’ or ‘resume’. We have built into it a tool, which is a CV builder. I have pre-populated one here. For example, you can go online and construct your own CV, with all your details. You can enter your current job details. For example, I took up a new position in June this year. I started two weeks ago, so it is my current job. I add my job details in the field and then it allows me to add each previous job I have had and lists them on the CV. It asks me for the school I attended and when I completed school. I completed year 12 and I obviously gained a whole lot of skills et cetera. You can put your referees in that field and add as many as you like. Then you hit ‘Create My CV’ and—

CHAIR—Once a student logs on to the site, they can keep all their detail on it?

Ms Edsall—It stores it all for them. They can continuously update it. I am not logged on, that is why it is not doing it.

CHAIR—It will not let you; that is okay. We can go online and have a play with the site ourselves.

Ms Edsall—There are also other fields in which it wants information.

CHAIR—Would it be okay if we create our own log-in and explore this site?

Ms Edsall—Absolutely. No problem. In relation to the CV builder, I think you can do that without registering on the site itself. So you could play around and do that. For the time saver, you need to register on the site, but that is very easy to do and you are welcome to do that. That is one thing. The idea of this is that it is ‘just in time information’. We realise that a lot of the time students are not particularly interested, for example, in paying tax until such time as they need to know about paying tax. There is a wealth of information on the web, as you are aware,

on all kinds of aspects of things, but this is the only site I am aware of that brings it all together. For example, we link to the ATO site. The Australian Taxation Office has really good information about what taxes you pay but you need to know how to find that. We have tried to provide all the links and, hopefully, keep them current about what you should do. It also includes information on getting your first tax file number. Most of you are probably aware that you can do that through your careers adviser at school these days. It explains that, if you are a secondary student, the easiest way to get a tax file number is via your school and applying that way is easy because the school does the identity verification on your behalf.

CHAIR—Sally, have you thought about putting ABN information up there because I am conscious of all the young people, who do pizza delivery and things like that, who have to set up as subcontractors.

Ms Edsall—You are absolutely correct, Sharon. That has been pointed out to us and that is one of the areas that we do need to put up. Also students who work part time as buskers and musicians, that kind of thing, yes, they have to have an ABN apparently. We are thinking of doing that, yes. Then we move on to how to do tax returns. ‘Staying safe at work’ provides occupational health and safety information, if there are any problems. We based it on the advice that WorkCover gives, and that the union itself gives, about the ways you try to go about resolving issues. We are trying to encourage young people to first of all talk with their supervisor, manager or employer and those kinds of clean processes about trying to work through issues—what to do if you are injured; what happens at school if you are injured; and then sections on bullying, discrimination and harassment.

We did not try to reinvent wheels; we tried to send people to places where there is information. We have tried to present examples of what bullying might be but also what it might not be. There is information saying, ‘Sometimes you might be asked to do something by an employer that is a perfectly reasonable thing to do and this doesn’t necessarily constitute bullying behaviour.’ Under ‘Harassment and discrimination’, rather than try and redefine all the complexity of the legal issues, we have said, ‘Look, in New South Wales this is where it is across Australia and really you have got to go to the ADB or to HREOC.’ They are the places to go to for the detailed information.

Dr JENSEN—It seems a very good, comprehensive website. Has there been any discussion with other state federations because it strikes me that they could very easily piggyback on this and put in state specific stuff?

Ms Edsall—Not yet. We have talked informally with our colleagues in other states but there has not been any formal commitment to doing it, although we would be very open to that kind of information. When I get a little bit further into it, your question has even more relevance. Of course there is that—this is New South Wales and then Western Australia—but when we get to things like the Time Tamer calendaring tool it is pre-populated with New South Wales holidays and things like that. That would need to be adapted on a state by state basis because of the different info.

I went through that in a bit of detail to show you the kind of information available. Now what happens is that you can use this tool, which is the student download tool, to get a personalised handbook in booklet form of the information you want at the time you want it. This might

change according to your particular circumstances. Let's say: 'I'm thinking about making some money after school, what do I need to consider? I'd like that in my booklet. I want to know how I get a job. Okay, that's all I need to know at the moment.' We put in the information and here is the handbook to take away, to print off.

CHAIR—Okay.

Ms Edsall—There is some information that we have determined that you get whether you choose it or not. There is the information you need at that point in time if you want a paper copy and, of course, some teachers are using that sort of thing in the classroom. Careers advisers are interested in it.

CHAIR—This is suitable really by the looks of it for TAFE and university students as well, to some extent.

Ms Edsall—Yes, to some extent. Things like that absolutely would be. That is available and accessible to everybody. You do not have to register on the site to be able to download this. When we look at our statistics, we have hits from North America, Canada, Europe—all sorts of people are using it because the internet is there and available. There is a similar capacity for each of the groups so teachers can download a couple of teaching resources from it. Parents can get this same kind of handbook material. Next time you go into it you might be at the point where you have your job, you are more interested in other aspects and you will choose other categories to print off next time.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You have a section on parents and teachers 'Getting off to a good start'.

Ms Edsall—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Is that relevant for the student one as well? I have not seen the other two, but it struck me as being a pretty good piece of advice if I knew what was in it. I am wondering why it was not there.

Ms Edsall—Yes. Some of it crosses over but what we have tried to do is have it written so it speaks directly to the interest group. Where it is talking to students, it is about your rate of pay, it will address the student. For example, Rosters says, 'Encourage your child to look at the school schedule and other commitments.' It is hints that parents are looking for in helping with guiding.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I totally agree, but I notice in the student one you do not have 'Getting off to a good start.'

Ms Edsall—Right.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Sorry, I was not clear. I thought it was a terrific idea but I looked over in the student section and I could not see where it was.

Ms Edsall—I think that is in 'Accepting a job offer.' In 'Questions to ask'—we have 'Rosters' 'Keeping track of hours' and all that kind of thing.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I reckon you have it in far more detail in the parents section.

Ms Edsall—Yes, each item on the menu has submenus within it.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I thought as a heading it is great because it is a reminder about starting well too.

Ms Edsall—Yes.

CHAIR—What is in the employer one then?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—There it is, No. 2.

CHAIR—It is ‘Getting off to a good start’ too.

Ms Edsall—Reminding employers to let people know what the rate of pay is, what the job description is, training, rosters, probation. We encourage employers around consistency and being clear about rosters and starting and finishing times. Simple things like, students might rely on parents and carers for transport and will need to know what their finishing time is and that kind of thing. In both urban and rural areas, transport is a real issue for kids and I am sure that the committee has heard lots about that. That was raised in one of the meetings that I have been to before. We try gentle encouragement. We have a thing here about being a model employer. This was our foray in—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It looks like Turnbull.

Mr ZAPPIA—What are you doing?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—We are trying to be very balanced.

CHAIR—We are very balanced.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Very balanced in all this.

Mr ZAPPIA—Very balanced!

CHAIR—I will just explain to those who may be wondering what our hilarity is, the committee members have decided that the employer photograph looks very much like the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr JENSEN—Very prescient? You mean the next Prime Minister of Australia.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Move on.

Ms Edsall—These people, of course, are models. When websites are constructed you can either pay people enormous amounts of money to pose for photos or your web designer goes and

trawls free sites. This individual is a model who has been paid handsomely in the past in order to provide his visage.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I want to pose, thanks.

CHAIR—Did you want to show us the certificate, Sally?

Ms Edsall—Yes. This was our first attempt at trying to offer something that we thought employers might look towards. It really has not been a major feature of the site and our work so far, but is an area where we are really interested in trying to develop that relationship. I know the committee is interested in that. It has been brought up on a couple of occasions.

CHAIR—Yes. Those that might not have been at the particular hearing, we were talking about looking at recommendations around an employer of choice program for young people in the similar way the federal government runs the Employer of Choice for Women program. That could link into this sort of documentation here.

Ms Edsall—The really exciting thing is this part about balancing study and work. This is where I do need to log on, if I can remember my password. I am absolutely convinced we are all going to end up in nursing homes, spouting random passwords. I do not know about you, but I have so many.

CHAIR—They all want you to change them every two months.

Ms Edsall—That is right, yes. This is a tool and is the most technically sophisticated part of the site. This is something we were really interested in working with teachers to develop even further so that they can integrate this kind of thing into education around IT, spreadsheet type things and also careers advisers. I have pre-populated this program with a whole range of events to save your time today. It is a bit like Microsoft Outlook, for example, a calendaring tool. It has a couple of features that perhaps Microsoft does not have. You will see that this is labelled Public Event, English Advanced Class, category Homework. I have homework and I am planning to do it today between 7 am and 9 am. A 'public event' means that when I choose to share my calendar with somebody else, they will be able to see that item on it. I am perfectly happy for Mum and Dad to see that I am doing homework then.

CHAIR—That is a really good feature. We use Microsoft Outlook as members of parliament and share our diary, and we could use private event type options. Is that going to be a division? Do you mind waiting a few minutes?

Ms Edsall—No, not at all. That is fine.

CHAIR—We will wander down and will be back soon.

Proceedings suspended from 10.06 am to 10.21 am

CHAIR—We will resume the hearing, having had the division. I invite Sally Edsall to continue walking us through the calendar program available for students for planning.

Ms Edsall—You can see here we have a private event: ‘I’m planning on seeing my boyfriend on Friday night—

Mr Irving—Extracurricular activity!

Ms Edsall—Extracurricular activity. ‘We’re going to the movies, but I don’t necessarily need the whole world to know that that’s happening.’

Dr JENSEN—Movies are a lot shorter than five hours!

Ms Edsall—Okay; point taken.

CHAIR—Sally, if I am your employer and you have given me access to this calendar and I have had someone cancel a shift and I want to know if Sally is available tonight, will that show as a blocked-out section to the employer to tell them you already have a commitment tonight?

Ms Edsall—We need to go over here. Under Time Tamer, you can see there is a category called ‘Shared Calendars’ and this explains who can view your calendar and calendars that you can view. I cannot show it to you because I have not set it up myself as a second identity. But, you enter the email address of the person you wish to view it. They will view it as it is written, without the private events.

Dr JENSEN—But it does not show the time blocked out at all?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Does it just have a private blank?

Dr JENSEN—You have set up the hot date with the boyfriend and the employer—

Ms Edsall—That will be blocked out. It will say, ‘Private event,’ or it should say, ‘Private event.’

CHAIR—Right. I am thinking the main use for an employer I would imagine would be that case of where: ‘I need someone for a shift tonight. I’m going to ring Sally. Oh, she’s blocked it out.’ Rather than bother her by ringing, I can go through and find a person who has not got a blocked-out time frame.

Ms Edsall—That is right. That is the intention. Yes, indeed. If I want to initiate a shift swap, here is my calendar. I can send an email to one of my mates who works with me and say: ‘Look, I’ve got a shift on at this time. Can you take my job shift?’ Of course you can change the message. We have a default message there. You can send that to your mate asking, ‘Could you do my shift?’ They can immediately send back a response, ‘No, I can’t,’ or, ‘Yes, I’d be happy to do that.’

CHAIR—If they say yes, does that automatically transfer the appointment into their calendar?

Ms Edsall—No. I think they would then have to set it up in their calendar. That is an interesting point, Sharon.

CHAIR—I am thinking about the dynamics. If there are five of you who work at the particular place and the employer has this program as well, it could automatically—once Sid says, ‘Yes, Sharon, I’ll do your shift’—put it into his diary so the employer could at real time see that she had swapped her shift with Sid.

Ms Edsall—Yes.

Mr Irving—What we have discovered too is that the employer is often another 18-year-old supervisor.

Ms Edsall—Exactly.

Mr Irving—It is not necessarily an employer as such; it is someone who has been delegated the authority to be the supervisor. It is usually another kid who has had a bit of experience and done that job.

Ms Edsall—I will look into that and talk with the tech people about that.

CHAIR—I know in Outlook if I am having an event and I invite all of you, when you accept it automatically updates and goes into your diary as an acceptance. It would be a good little mechanism.

Ms Edsall—It would.

Mr Irving—It would be good if the supervisor were kept in the loop. Often there will be reasons behind the scenes that the supervisor might not want that particular person to be the person relieving.

Ms Edsall—Yes.

CHAIR—That is right.

Mr Irving—That might be for other reasons that people do not know about.

CHAIR—Exactly.

Ms Edsall—This part here, ‘Recording Actual Hours’, is where you keep a record of the actual hours. It calculates automatically based on your calendar, when you click ‘Job’, what the estimated hours are. Then you can go in and put how many hours you actually worked—and I went berserk there—and click the number of shifts that go past 9 pm. Then, for any week, fortnight, month or pay cycle, you can generate a report on the number of hours, number of shifts and what have you. It should not look like that; it did not look like that when I did it the other day—honest!

Dr JENSEN—Are you potentially looking at not the personal information but the actual data? Are you looking at harvesting that? In terms of the collection of data you have here, this is based

on questionnaires where sometimes there may be so much variation they do not know. But this way you could get a very accurate picture of what is going on.

Ms Edsall—We are not looking at harvesting data based on individuals. It is really about the individual monitoring their own work patterns. What is built in behind it is a whole lot of assumptions. For example, we said a child in year 10 probably should not be working more than, I think, 10 hours a week and should not have more than one shift that extends beyond 9 pm in a week. When that is exceeded, a little pop-up will occur saying, ‘Do you realise that you have been working X number of hours a week and so many shifts after nine o’clock? Have you noticed any decline in your school results or anything lately?’

CHAIR—A prompt to consider—

Ms Edsall—It will say, ‘You might like to review this.’ It is not saying you cannot do it. Then, because pop-ups are so annoying that everybody clicks them off—

Dr JENSEN—Pop-up blocker, yes.

Ms Edsall—that is, you put on your pop-off blocker, you get rid of that paper clip on Word as soon as you possibly can—it generates reports on a half-yearly basis and a student can receive a report. You can download it at about the same time you receive your school report and you are encouraged to compare your work patterns and to review how things are going in your life. The philosophy behind it is that balancing philosophy.

CHAIR—It looks good.

Dr JENSEN—With something like that, something that you might think about is this. If you have the school reports done on this as well, you could have indications, ‘The hours that you are working are likely to have an effect on your school results.’ Then you would compare the latest report that you have with the previous one and see where it tracks.

CHAIR—You are talking about encouraging schools to post the reports to the program. It would be interesting to see.

Ms Edsall—That would be interesting.

CHAIR—It is a good conversation, but I am also conscious that this is funded by your organisation. Part of our conversation is considering recommendations we might make about government funding to support something like this.

Ms Edsall—I think that would require a lot more water under several bridges with Bridge Street, in fact.

CHAIR—Yes, exactly. But there is the potential there for it, as part of our new open and transparent processes.

Ms Edsall—Indeed.

CHAIR—The actual hours would be also very useful. I know one of the options was ‘Generate report for’—drop that down, please, Sally.

Ms Edsall—‘Pay cycle’.

CHAIR—Do they set it up by putting in their pay cycle? Adults do it. They get their pay slip and they think, ‘How many hours did I actually work that day?’ Young people are very vulnerable to record-keeping failures and they are not good at record-keeping themselves. It would be tremendously useful for that.

Ms Edsall—The aim is also to help when it comes to taxation period and checking pay slips against realities. One of the things young people told us is that pay slips can be reasonably haphazard. This is another check or balance on that.

CHAIR—It would be useful, too, to have another tick-box category that said, ‘Paid’. Then, once they did the cross-match they could go back and tick and say, ‘Yes, I was paid for that shift,’ and mark them off like that. I am—just conscious of my own boys. One of the papered things was sitting with the pay slip here and the written record of hours and it was about going, ‘Now, that must be that block of hours and that must be that,’ and marking it off. Excellent.

Ms Edsall—I think I have exhausted what I would like to highlight.

CHAIR—Yes, that is great.

Ms Edsall—If you have any more questions I am more than happy to—

CHAIR—I am going to ask the hard one: can you give us a sense of the costing to set this up and run it?

Mr Irving—We just talked about that. This goes back to the comment that you just made. In our own organisation this is very controversial because we had a group of people who did not see this as our core business—our core business is about teachers’ salaries, teachers’ working conditions, class sizes, all that sort of stuff. We made the decision back in 2006 that, hang on, this is our core business. It is about kids: it is about kids when they leave school or are at school and doing work outside at the same time as school. It is our core business, but it was very controversial and Sally and I, a number of times, were nearly rolled on this. It cost us a bit less than half a million dollars of our money to set it up, so you can see why it was controversial. We also knew that this would not get off the ground, that it would have been \$400,000 wasted, if we did not make sure that it was balanced, that everyone had an opportunity to have some input into this. We are very happy with it and we are going to keep pushing it.

I think the question you asked before about other governments or other states is important as well. While you were out of the room we were talking about how in New South Wales we were very, very close to having a joint promotion with the then minister for education who was also Minister for Industrial Relations, John Della Bosca. Then other events occurred! We have not been to the new minister for education, who has now been in place for probably 12 months, and she is not also the minister for industrial relations, so that makes it a bit harder, but we probably

intend to do that. If that happened, then I think it would be easier for the other states to take it on board as well.

CHAIR—The realistic side of it, I think we should acknowledge, is that any student is going to be able to go on and use this tool, so the 30-odd per cent, or whatever it is these days, of students outside the public school system are also getting advantages, quite rightly, but at the moment funded by your organisation.

Ms Edsall—That is right, absolutely. We were totally conscious of that; in fact, there were deliberate discussions about that being the reality when we set it up. We are really keen to be able to reopen that conversation with the state government. We were about half an hour away from a signed letter, and it was going to be a joint promotion.

CHAIR—That is something we could look at in terms of our recommendations, because I think committee members from other states would be really keen to see it available in their states as well. It is such a practical, sensible approach to what is clearly an issue we are getting feedback on.

Ms Edsall—Having set it up, it is absolutely cheap as chips.

Mr Irving—Once you get it up and running it is fine.

Ms Edsall—The server hosting costs are negligible.

CHAIR—How do you manage the updating stuff? You were talking about links that might need to be updated or bits of information.

Ms Edsall—The company that we paid to do all the coding, the design, have personnel there that I or someone else liaise with in order to do those. I am an administrator. I need to go to a training session about doing the typing. I am able to make anybody an administrator, so as long as we have got the personnel in place either we can do it ourselves or we can pay the company to get somebody to do that. With the more complicated technical aspects where you need special expertise, obviously we go back to the company that designed it, Freestyle Media. They do a whole range of different websites. I think they designed the Qantas's website and Sanitarium's, so they are well known and reputable.

CHAIR—I think they have done a fantastic job for you on this. It is really good.

Mr Irving—We went through a process of tenders and we went to three or four different organisations and they were the ones that came out.

CHAIR—They obviously track hits. Is it possible for you to track—it is probably not—who is hitting in terms of young people, employers, parents?

Ms Edsall—We get a report which includes the address where things are coming from. We get reports that include: so many were referred from Google, so many came from this site or that place. But we also get, at the bottom, the web addresses of the most frequent hits. We read it. I have not done anything with it because I think that would be subject to privacy requirements.

CHAIR—You could not reliably assume that that was an employer because of the web address or that that was a parent or anything like that?

Ms Edsall—No, you could not, but you can tell if it is a high school with a standard web address.

CHAIR—Yes. I am wondering if you have done some review about the actual utilisation of the calendar facility. Does it give you some idea of how many people are using it?

Ms Edsall—No, I have not. That is a good question to ask and in our next phase we need to follow up around that—the actual, specific component parts of the site and which are being used the most.

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Edsall—It is good that you asked me that because I was intending to have that precise discussion with the web people.

CHAIR—As much as you can, within privacy considerations, it would be really useful for the committee, if we are going to mount an argument around something like this being taken up further, to have some feedback on the number of students utilising the calendar facility and so forth—some of that general statistical stuff, if you get that.

Ms Edsall—I will try to drill down. I will take that on notice.

CHAIR—I am conscious of asking for so much of your time. When are we hoping to be drafting?

Secretary—We have started drafting work.

CHAIR—Sorry!

Secretary—I think we are looking at having it finalised in October.

CHAIR—So there are a couple of months. It would be great to be able to add into that report the utilisation of the website.

Ms Edsall—Yes, we could do that.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Can I just say that I think you are providing a remarkable service to everyone involved there and to the general public. I would like to congratulate you on that. You really are doing what governments and departments should be doing. I think it is a terrific model. It is fantastic. It is very enlightening.

Ms Edsall—Thank you.

CHAIR—I think I can say on behalf of all the committee members that, in terms of a solution and assistance on the issues we are investigating, we will probably see it as one of the most valuable things we have come across. That is why I really appreciate that you took the time to come and talk to us about this specifically, because I think we needed to be walked through it and to get an understanding of what it is that you were hoping to achieve and are achieving through it.

Ms Edsall—Thank you.

CHAIR—We will no doubt all go away and have a play with it and register ourselves.

Ms Edsall—I will see! You will all have aph.gov.au.

CHAIR—That is right. Your next report will say: there's a few here from—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I might not use that one.

CHAIR—I will certainly be going home to my student son and encouraging him to sign up to it as well. Even though he is at TAFE, I think he could really get a lot of use out of this. Thanks so much for coming down and showing us that.

Ms Edsall—Do you want to go on to Dr Jensen's questions, because we have not got them in written form? We were going to do an exposition—

Dr JENSEN—Yes.

CHAIR—We might move on to that. Dr Jensen asked some questions at the Port Kembla hearing for further information. John, you have a response to those with you.

Mr Irving—I have done a little bit of mathematics on this. The first question you asked was about what percentage of males and females in each year group undertook work. The whole thing was done based on the Bureau of Statistics numbers. We went back to the enrolments and then we worked out the percentages in those enrolments. We could only go back and say that in year 10 it was 51.2 per cent male and 48.8 per cent female and then by the time you get to year 12 it had gone around the other way: it was 46.8 per cent male and 53.2 per cent female.

Ms Edsall—This is because of the way that the quantitative survey was structured as an internet survey. They had screening questions. The parameters were set up such that we took the 2006 ABS statistical profile of male and female in New South Wales government schools. When you go to do an internet survey, it asks you demographic questions at the beginning: are you a public school student? Are you male or female? If you answer that yes, that you are female, and it has already reached the quota of year-10 females, then you are screened out and you do not get to proceed with the survey. So it precisely reflected the proportions in the ABS.

Mr Irving—The second question was about the higher proportion of females. In some sections of the report that had been done for us it really says that girls get caught up in the work more, are more motivated and are better able to manage or juggle the school/work stuff than the boys.

Ms Edsall—This came from the qualitative section of the research, the affinity groups. We also found that girls more often mentioned that they found it harder to turn down shifts.

Mr Irving—Yes. It was harder to say no to the shifts.

CHAIR—I have just read through the couple of hundred survey responses from our survey. It very clearly comes across that they are much less likely to say no and much more likely to be asked—which is the chicken and the egg there, but it is certainly a characteristic.

Mr Irving—The third question was why there were more in year 12, I think, doing more than 16 hours a week. I know this is not very technical, but we looked at a graph in terms of year 10. There is a peak in year 10 and then a lot of the kids drop out of work. Then it comes down and peaks up again into year 12. I think we mentioned, too, that some of the year 12 ones then become the supervisors of the year 11 and year 10 employees. As we said before, it is not necessarily the employer; they become the supervisors. So there is a peak there as well. Also, there is cost. They are more independent by the time they get to year 12. They are looking at buying a car or whatever. So there is a bit more incentive by the time they get to year 12 than year 10.

Ms Edsall—We reckon that if you paid kids properly then that might be an incentive not to work so much.

CHAIR—In my surveys that I read there were a lot of comments like, ‘I’d do less hours if I were paid better,’ and, ‘I’d do more homework if teachers were more organised about it.’ They were the two outstanding comments from both perspectives of their lives.

Ms Edsall—We have been to the ACTU congress, where there was a resolution around junior rates of pay. It is not our brief in this process to do that, but it is interesting that within the discussion groups students did say that.

CHAIR—Absolutely.

Ms Edsall—Whether that would translate into reality or whether they would even have more money would remain to be seen.

CHAIR—Yes. I read it thinking, ‘Yes, if we paid you more you would also be more attracted to doing more hours.’

Ms Edsall—Yes.

Mr Irving—That is right.

CHAIR—There is a dilemma there.

Ms Edsall—Yes, there is.

Mr Irving—There is the other side of it as well.

CHAIR—That is right, yes.

Ms Edsall—That is certainly what they talked about.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—This is more of a statistical question. Is the demographic gender balance between years 10, 11 and 12 in public schools and 10, 11 and 12 in private schools—non-government, whatever you want to call it—the same? Is the distribution of males and females the same?

Ms Edsall—That is interesting because I have that exact stat. It is in my email.

CHAIR—If you could give us a rough recollection and perhaps follow up to the secretary.

Ms Edsall—We can follow it up, yes.

Mr Irving—We went to our librarian and she got the information for us, so that is in Sally's email. We have it. We can get it for you.

CHAIR—Sally, do you have a general recollection?

Ms Edsall—We can do that, or the parliamentary library would.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I just thought you might have had it.

Ms Edsall—I did, but I was focusing on one particular set of stats and I did not do that comparison. It is clearly evident that in public schools in both years 11 and 12 there is a higher percentage of girls than boys. We did work that one out.

Mr Irving—In year 10, females are 48.8, and then in year 11 females are 51.9, and by the time they get to year 12 they are 53.2.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is a general distribution?

Mr Irving—In public schools.

Ms Edsall—Yes.

Mr Irving—That is based on the enrolments in 2006.

CHAIR—It is interesting. There is a bit of a presumption in some of the evidence presented to us that having a part-time job might discourage you from completing year 12, when in reality girls, who are much more likely to have part-time jobs and more hours are still completing at a higher rate.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—And more of them are doing it.

CHAIR—Yes. I am conscious that we have to wind up. Thanks very much again.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Yes. Fantastic.

CHAIR—I promise you that you may just submit that further information in writing; we will not ask you to traipse down here again. We really do appreciate the time you have given the inquiry. I need to thank you for your attendance and ask if the additional information you are providing can be sent to the secretary. There may be some follow-up questions. The secretariat will forward them to you as well.

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

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

Committee adjourned at 10.47 am