



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Combining study and work

THURSDAY, 25 JUNE 2009

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Thursday, 25 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, Dr Jensen, Mr Oakeshott, Mr Sidebottom, Mr Symon,

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

CALVERT, Ms Gillian, Commissioner, NSW Commission for Children and Young People 2

Committee met at 9.44 am

CHAIR (Ms Bird)—I declare open the 13th 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 welcome the New South Wales Commissioner for Children and Young People to today's hearing.

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

[9.46 am]

CALVERT, Ms Gillian, Commissioner, NSW Commission for Children and Young People

CHAIR—Welcome. We greatly appreciate your taking time to see us today. For members who were not at the Port Kembla meeting when Ms Calvert gave evidence I will say that it was really useful evidence. The NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People indicated to us that they had done a lot of research and were anticipating putting these two reports out in June and so we were quite keen to follow up on that evidence.

Gillian, the evidence we have received from you already has been very useful to the committee, but I would like to invite you to give us an update on the surveys and reports that you presented to us at Port Kembla.

Ms Calvert—I thank you for the opportunity to come and talk about these two new research documents that we are publicly releasing today. Let me start by saying, I think both of the documents that we are releasing reinforce the central point I made last time I appeared before the committee which is that it is really important for us not to see work and school as being in conflict but to see them as complementary, and that our role as adult policymakers—and people who are responsible for supporting children and young people—is smoothing the pathways between those two things. That really has been reinforced by the research that we are releasing today.

I will talk about the two pieces of research separately. The *Children at work* research is a follow-up study to some research we did in 2003. This 2007 research is a survey of 1,600 students in years 7 to 10 from the NSW Department of Education and Training schools. What we found was that two-thirds of the sample had worked in the previous 12 months, again reinforcing what we found in our 2003 survey. What really emerged from this 2007 research is the transition process that occurs into formal work. It is very clear from looking at the experiences of the children that they started their work experience within family settings and then gradually moved out from neighbours to the community and into more formal work.

About 90 per cent of 12-year-olds worked for families; by the time children were 16 it had dropped to 30 per cent, so you see the transition from family based work, or informal work, to more formalised work settings. The critical point where that change occurs appears to be at about age 14. So you can start to see some of the implications for how education may play a role in supporting children beginning to form work habits and in making the most of learning opportunities that children are experiencing in these work environments.

On the whole we have found, again, in our 2007 survey, that children enjoy work. They work because they want to, not because they have to, and that is quite important information. They enjoy work because it provides another platform on which they can learn and in which they can develop competencies and develop mastery. They can experience increasing levels of independence and increasing levels of interdependence. These things—when you hear me talking about what work is providing for kids, which is why they like it—are, of course, completely consistent with our national goals for schooling. That is why we are really

reinforcing that we need to see schools and work as complementary, because they are really just different platforms to achieve what it is that we want our kids to achieve by the time they are 17 and 18.

We also found that how work relates to school depends on many things: what else is going on in the child's life, what their interests and motivations are and the nature of the school itself. The other thing that is relevant about what we found is that children experience or understand work a bit differently to how adults experience work. They do not compartmentalise in quite the same way that we do. So for them—and this is consistent with that notion of transition from family to formal work—there is not a lot of distinction between work and school, family life and a whole lot of other activities that they do. They do not 'go to work' in quite the same way that we as adults 'go to work'. They also have a much greater need for flexibility in their work arrangements, so one-off jobs, casual jobs, a range of different jobs simultaneously or one after each other is their experience of work. While for adults that may be problematic, because we need security and predictability, for kids it is an advantage. So for them that sort of work is a good thing. I am talking about under-16-year-olds here, but I think some of this probably goes over into the 17- and 18-year-olds.

There are a couple of things that we think merit further research. One is that we found that remote areas had higher levels of employment than urban areas, and that is a bit counterintuitive, and that is controlling for all factors. So we think that probably requires a bit more information. We also found that children living in areas with relatively high levels of youth employment were more likely to work than those in areas with lower levels of youth employment. So there seems to be a relationship between levels of youth employment and ability to find work.

Dr JENSEN—By 'youth employment', are you referring to young people in full-time work or are you talking about the part-timers, so that there is a peer interaction and a notion of going to work with your mates?

Ms Calvert—All forms of work; we are not restricting it to full-time permanent work. Where there are low levels of youth employment—all types of employment—then it is difficult to find work even though you want to.

Mr OAKESHOTT—To clarify, are you defining this as the 14 to 18 window?

Ms Calvert—Employment for under-18s. Again, why is this the case? We are just a bit interested in that. We did find some things that were characteristic of kids who were working. Kids in two-parent households were more likely to work than kids in sole-parent households. Again, we are not quite sure what that is. Is it because we see mum and dad, or our parents, going to work and so we go to work? So modelling is a factor. Or is it that the house is empty because mum and dad are at work and so we might as well work too? Again, we are not quite clear what is behind that, but we do note that association.

We also found that children from families who were culturally and linguistically diverse, CALD, were less likely to work than non-CALD families—again, just interesting characteristics, if you like, about who is working and who is not. The reason I am talking about this is that the other thing that emerged from the research was that children who wanted to work were not always able to work. That was because they did not know how to find work, they did not know

what it was they wanted to do or, more worryingly, there were structural barriers such as access to transport; they may have been able to find work but could not get to that work because of the public transport issues. So again, I think, in trying to understand and make the most of children's interest in work—because of its learning and development potential—it is a bit worrying that our public transport systems are getting in the way of children being able to do that. It also, I think, has implications when we start to really explore greater flexibility between work and school for, say, 16-, 17- and 18-year olds that some kids may be denied learning opportunities, or ways to mix and match whatever it is they want to do, because of public transport issues.

In summary what I am saying is that there is a transition that occurs between the ages of 12 and 16 years from informal to formal work settings and that work is largely a positive activity; we know a little bit about who are the kids who want to work and who are able to find work and what gets in the way of them being able to take that up. We also found that kids' notion of work is a bit different to ours in the way in which the jobs they are interested in are much more casualised and in a sense more flexible than the jobs that we are used to and that probably would suit a lot of adults.

We also found some interesting things about conducting research with kids about work too, which I just raise with you now because in looking at other people's work it can appear as if the research is quite straightforward. Our experience is that it is not. If you just look at the notion of work, when we asked kids about work in our survey we thought we knew what we were asking them. We piloted it and we still felt we knew what we were asking them. When we got the results back we realised that what we were asking was not necessarily what they thought we were asking. The example we have used in the report is that if you ask, 'Who do you work for—business, family or other?' then kids would say 'other', and when we asked them to describe what 'other' was they would talk about businesses. Again, we raise that as a way of offering some caution about our own and other people's research and whether what we have asked is really what kids have always heard. It is just something we need to keep an eye on.

The other piece of research that we are releasing today is about children being at school, which is the other half of what I think you are interested in. We conducted some research in 2005 and we went back to those interviews and looked at them in much more detail about school and what being at school means. What I guess we would say about what being at school meant for kids is that school is something that kids really value—they recognise that it is really a critical part of their lives—and that a lot of kids find school really fantastic but there are some kids for whom school is not so good, and there are various times when kids can like school or not like school or have a positive time at school. I will not go into that in as great detail because I think that that is probably less relevant in some ways than the work research but it is still really important to the work research. The goal of school can be achieved through work as well as through school.

There are some critical things that we probably need to do to schools to make it a more enjoyable place for kids. One is to increase their capacity for participation in school decisions. Kids clearly want to be involved in decisions about their school and they are feeling there are not enough opportunities for that to occur. Critical to their engagement with learning are the supportive relationships with their teachers and their friends. The thing that really emerged from the latest research is how critical their friendships are and how schools have to start taking an active role in setting up, developing and maintaining supportive friendship networks.

It is really important for kids, if they are to be engaged in school, to have opportunities to learn and succeed and be recognised, and to be accepted for who they are and what they want to be. They also talked a lot about feeling too pressured by schoolwork. We found that homework was almost universally resented by children as something that they fail to see the point of and that they experienced as really undermining their quality of life in a way, and often leading to fights with parents and creating conflict with parents.

Where school becomes important in relation to your terms of reference is that a lot of kids who disengage from school often want to go to work and see work as a way of dealing with the disengagement in school. That is probably a positive thing, because it means that they are constructively seeking pathways. We should be encouraging and facilitating that, rather than in a sense criticising that and putting barriers in the way.

CHAIR—Thanks. There is quite a lot there for us to look at. I will just indicate to the people listening that the deputy chair has rejoined us. I am particularly interested in your last comments on the report on children's experience of school. We have all been reading through our own online surveys that have come in and I nodded furiously with your comment about homework because, almost without exception, the written commentary and the reports I am reading from schools in my area is that there is a real resentment of homework, and it is a significant resentment amongst young people. They view homework as a failure by the school to cover what has to be covered in school hours. You rarely see a comment such as, 'This was valuable. I learnt more from it.' It is not seen that way. It is seen as a punishment in some way and that it is in fact quite disruptive to them organising their lives.

Having said that, one of the other comments they make is, 'I could live with that and I could manage it if it's consistent.' The major resentment is where homework is set on the day for the next day. So this view that you go to a class and the teacher says, 'All right, now you've got to do this tonight for homework for tomorrow,' because that really interferes with their capacity to manage their lives. I am interested in your perspective, because I think that is a real challenge to the culture of education in this country. A lot of young people will say they approach their teachers and the teachers just say, 'Well, you've got to give priority to your schoolwork,' and so they stop engaging. To be fair, some of them say you do find good teachers who are really understanding and that they are able to work through with them the mechanisms for managing that. I would like your observation on that. It is a big cultural challenge.

Ms Calvert—That is exactly what it is. It is a cultural challenge because, as I understand it, the evidence is ambivalent about the benefit of homework to academic achievement, and certainly, kids see it as interfering with their life outside school.

I think the cultural shift that we probably need to try and effect is for teachers to understand that there are other ways for children to achieve the objectives of the national goals of schooling. School is not the only platform—or academic work; probably that is the issue rather than school. There are other pathways to achieving the national goals of schooling. I think the challenge for teachers is to help kids to use those pathways, and the challenge for us is to help teachers to understand and to make much more explicit how they can help kids to use those pathways and to smooth the pathways for the teachers.

I think what we are all wanting is the same outcome—competent, creative, confident learners and citizens. Of course, as a teacher, you have had it drilled into you that academic pursuit is the way to get there. What we, along with a whole lot of other people, are finding is that there are many pathways to that outcome. And those pathways can occur within a school setting and can be facilitated by the school.

CHAIR—One of the most consistent arguments I hear in defence of homework is that it teaches children to be organised and to manage and so forth, when in fact it may be having quite the opposite effect. They are learning those management organisational skills through other things that they do, outside that formal—

Ms Calvert—outside of school. And I would suggest that work probably does that much more effectively than homework does. If you think about work, it is about getting there on time. It is about being a team player. It is about undertaking certain tasks and being responsible. And it is done with the support, hopefully, of the employer and colleagues and the family, whereas homework requires a certain level of self-direction. Often, when kids don't have this, their parents try and help them but it inevitably ends up in conflict.

Dr JENSEN—The irony is that often, with the homework, if you are trying to teach kids some sort of organisational structure, the lesson is the reverse. This is because what they see is teachers that do not know how to coordinate with each other, and so the kids get hit with homework that is all due at the same time.

Ms Calvert—That is exactly right. The other thing is that we leave children to do the homework and sort it out themselves, but often kids do not know how to organise themselves around their homework, or how to study around their homework. If we are serious about homework being those things, then we probably should be much more proactive about helping kids to do homework in a way that achieves those objectives. I think it is by chance that it happens now.

CHAIR—I think the interesting thing is that young people can very effectively articulate what they get out of work. They will say, 'I am learning to work with people', 'I am learning to interact with adults', 'I am getting team-work skills'. They really can blurt out an impressive list of what they get from work. If you were to ask them what they got from homework, I think they would not articulate any of those things that we claim homework is giving them. Maybe it means going back to basics and having a conversation with young people about what it is and, I think Dr Jensen said, 'modelling'.

Ms Calvert—I think the other thing, too, is that when I talk with teachers about why they set homework, they will often say to me, 'I wish we didn't have to do that but parents demand it of us.' So everybody is passing the buck about who is really creating the demand for homework. I think the other cultural change we probably need to make is the cultural change of parents—to help parents understand that there are other ways for their children to achieve, other than through academic performance and homework. So it is not just teachers who need the cultural change; I think, really importantly, parents need the cultural change as well.

CHAIR—Last week we had evidence from the NSW Teachers Federation about the worksite they have developed for young people and the online diary and so forth. I just wondered if you

had some observations about that. We are interested in looking at that as a national support program that could be rolled out.

Ms Calvert—We have had discussions about whether there is an appropriate number of hours that children should work. We have come to the conclusion that we do not want to say what the appropriate number of hours is, because it depends on things like what the child's interests are, what other things are going on in that child's life, what their school arrangements are, and what age and stage of development they are at. Those sorts of things all go into the mix of deciding what is an appropriate number of hours that a child should work. We need to be trying to develop tools that assist parents and kids and teachers and employers to work out, in that individual circumstance, what is an appropriate number of hours. The tool, as I understand it, that the teachers federation has developed is potentially one of those tools that you could use.

Rather than saying, 'Don't do anything more than this,' we are much better off trying to give people the tools to make that decision themselves. The reason we have come to that conclusion—and this is preliminary, so we are not saying it is finished and conclusive—is that we are doing some work to try and look at the kids who work and there appear to be some patterns emerging about kids who are doing the work. One of the patterns is that kids who already have quite busy lives are the ones who tend to be doing the work. It is that statement, 'If you want a job done, get a busy person to do it.' It appears that some kids just have or have developed that capacity to live quite busy, full, complex lives and to thrive on that, whereas, for another kid, that would just overwhelm them and really be very unhelpful to their sense of self and their path through life.

We are continuing to look at those patterns and trying to identify them. But if that is the case then, again, you cannot really say that there is a set number of hours, because, for that child, they will be able to and be wanting to work more hours than a child who is not that type.

Dr JENSEN—We were discussing this a little bit before, and one thing that concerns me is that perhaps there needs to be a cap beyond which kids in full-time school cannot work. The chair was pointing out that in certain cases you have kids in work who cannot say no when they are asked to do extra work, and that negatively affects schoolwork. The other thing is that kids came in who had been doing over 30 hours a week while also doing full-time schoolwork. Obviously, that has to be a negative as far as schooling is concerned. There might be some argument about whether kids can cope with 15 or 20 hours, but I think there needs to be a cap. Would you comment on that?

Ms Calvert—Yes, I think an outer cap has possibilities. Again, it would need to be defined in relation to full-time school, because over the school holidays kids may want to work 30 hours a week, and for them that is appropriate. I think it also depends whether the 30 hours a week forms part of the school curriculum or not. So there are a number of caveats that you would need to put on it. But, yes, the scenario of a full-time school student doing academic schoolwork and doing 30 hours of paid formal work is probably too much, and you would start to see children's satisfaction—

CHAIR—This would be the sharp end and small-percentage numbers, but we did meet a young person in South Australia who said to us: 'I did think I was managing. I thought I was super. I was balancing all these things,' and they had a nervous breakdown at the end of all that.

We are conscious that anxiety and depression is a growing problem amongst that age group. So to some extent their capacity as developing adults to assess for themselves how well they really are balancing is the concern for us in terms of what we recommend.

Think about that as an adult. What is school—25 hours a week on average? You are already committed to 25 hours full time. For adults, we say the maximum working week should be about 40 hours to retain sanity and wellbeing. For me, that says for a young person who is at school only 15 hours are available, so we do not legislate at the adult level. But we do have some fairly well established industrial views and precedents about what are reasonable working hours in a week.

Ms Calvert—It does raise the question about how you would effect that capping, if you like, and I think that we would need to explore the unintended consequences of the options available for how we did that and what was likely to be most affected. If in fact it is an extremely rare event for that to occur, if you were to introduce a regulation then you may end up creating more harm than good because you then have to have a capacity to know when a kid is doing more than 30 hours. That can start to get into record keeping, particularly when you think about the informal, flexible—from our point of view, chaotic—nature of work for these kids, because they are not always in the same job all the time; they are often doing a whole range of things.

CHAIR—Which employer does the responsibility fall on?

Ms Calvert—That is exactly right. You then get into a whole lot of costs around policing, et cetera. So it may be that the benefit to those few children does not warrant that way of affecting the cap. It may be that we are better off investing that time and effort into an information and advisory service that is well publicised and that parents, kids and employers can use; an education mechanism, and various things—you know: education, rules or codes of practice, or awards and things.

Dr JENSEN—I think my view, if you will, is that more important than the actual enforcement regime is the message—

Ms Calvert—Yes, I agree.

Dr JENSEN—to the kids that they can actually say ‘no; no more than this’ and it is also a message to employers—

Ms Calvert—Yes.

Dr JENSEN—that they cannot drive this further.

Ms Calvert—Yes, and I think that is essential because the problem is that when you start to get into some of the schemes it is the scheme that becomes the message—not what you want the message to be, which is, ‘Kids, you can say no.’

CHAIR—We are a bit interested as well in following some of the models that have been put in place over recent decades for the employment of women. For example, there are national awards for employers of choice for women. I would like your observations on perhaps

developing a national scheme around codes of practice, awards and so forth for employers of choice for young people.

Ms Calvert—I think that would have merit. I certainly think codes of practice have benefit. Awards can be things that employers would appreciate. I think what I hear from kids about their work is that they need information and advice, and someone who can help them when they want to know something. Certainly, there are incentives for employers to do the right thing. It would be perhaps more effective for those businesses whose business model is based on employing young people. But I think you could overcome that and still work out ways of being inclusive of small business and infrequent formal employers of young people.

The other side of it is: how do we help young people know what a good employer of choice is? Deputy Chair, you talked about kids being able to say no. I think last time I spoke about their experience when they are at school and when they are with their families. You think about this transition from informal to formal, and their experience of working with their family is that they are with people who love them, who look out for them and who put the child's best interests first. Similarly, with school you have duty of care and teachers often love their kids and want to put their needs first. They go into a different model in formal work, which is, 'No, you're not first, the business is first.' The expectation that kids have is that the adults will look after them. We need to be explicitly telling them, 'That model no longer exists,' or, 'In this setting it doesn't exist. So here's how we can help you.'

There is a role for schools in that. There is also a role for employers in that. But there also needs to be an independent information and advisory service that can help kids make the transition from a world where their best interests come first to a circumstance where the business's interests come first. I am not being critical of businesses here; it is just the reality of how business is done.

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Calvert—We need to look at ways we can help kids make that transition. As I said, schools have a role, but we are really pushing for an information and advisory service where you can have the conversation with somebody, you can follow up and they can give you resources. Parents can get that information as well, because kids will turn to their parents for help and parents often do not know how to manage that.

CHAIR—I think we are ideally positioned, in that we are rolling out laptops for all students in schools. You have a national program that gets loaded on that is your diary and it has flag alerts. We are going to be well positioned to give kids direct links to that sort of advisory service. My concern always is that we create a lot of resources out there and people have no idea where they are. In my own area we did a survey on youth unemployment, which is very high, and it was amazing how many services are out there, but they are not connecting with the young people.

Ms Calvert—Absolutely.

CHAIR—We are well positioned to do something like that.

Dr JENSEN—You talking about the issue of high youth unemployment in your area brings me to another question that I have. If you know *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, I do not want to hear '42'! The issue of entrenchment of social disadvantage is, in effect, a theme that actually underlines a lot of this. The fact is that, if you are in an area where there is low youth employment, you get comparatively few people doing work at school. Where you have only one or no parents in the workforce, that adds to it further. They are more likely to be areas where access to transportation is not as good as in some of the areas of higher socioeconomic status. Indeed, my wife is a teacher and the school she teaches at has a mixed demographic. Quite frankly, you get parents that just expect the schools to do the bringing up of the kids. The parents do not give a damn about education. How do we break some of this nexus?

CHAIR—We will narrow it down to 'How can work be part of the breaking of the nexus?'

Dr JENSEN—Yes.

Ms Calvert—Work can be a part of it because it is a platform on which to develop competencies. Work combined with school can be a significant part of it—I think it is the combining of school and work that probably will be the more effective solution. These kids often disengage from school early. If we can keep them in a school environment but linked with work then we are still continuing the learning frame, if you like, and that learning notion. The problem is that there is less work available for young people in these areas and disadvantage begets further disadvantage. I do not know how you break that. That is really what the current government is absolutely trying to look at through a lot of its current activity.

Dr JENSEN—Also, how do you get some of the information across? Clearly, information is a huge part of it. Once again, where you have relatively advantaged kids, their parents tend to be more engaged, have better networks and are more au fait with how you go about getting information. Obviously, once again, you have kids in disadvantaged families where that does not always occur. How do we actually help those kids as far as getting access to information is concerned?

Ms Calvert—I think one of the things that can advantage disadvantaged kids is if we are serious about recognising the value of non-academic achievement. I think that if we value those things in the same way that we value academic achievement then that starts to broaden the arena in which kids can feel as if they are achieving things. One of the things that came out of our school study is that it is important for kids to be recognised, to be accepted for who they are and who they want to be. At the moment I think we have an over emphasis, appropriately, on academic achievement but that means non-academic kids are missing out. That is probably one thing we could do.

CHAIR—I think a good example is that often young people in such family circumstances have huge carer responsibilities, for either adults or other children in the family.

Ms Calvert—Yes.

CHAIR—Yet we do not really link that to study at school. There is the capacity to put study in place and there are national modules around caring, caring skills, knowledge and things like that.

Ms Calvert—Maybe the reason that children of sole parent families do not work as frequently is that they have much higher family responsibilities. That is why we think we need to understand this a bit better and that there needs to be further research on it. I know it is frustrating when the answer is, ‘We don’t know enough,’ but I do not think that we do know enough about this. I also do not think we know enough about the labour market for the under-18s; how that labour market operates, what things influence the labour market, and also what the relationship is between the labour market and peer networks and entry to it. Regardless of what policy action, we try now I do think we need to increase our understanding and become more sophisticated in our understanding.

CHAIR—We have had this conversation many times. Australia has if not the highest then, I think, one of the highest per capita figures for the employment of young people in the developed world. Probably all of us—even our grandparents—remember having the milk run or something similar. It is part of our culture but we have never actually come to terms with it in a significant way, or understood what it means and how we integrate it. It is probably a bit sad but very timely that we get, as you say, a more profound understanding of what it is and start valuing what it is.

Ms Calvert—Yes, valuing for the economy and, importantly, I think, valuing for the children. The big thing for us to learn is the benefit to children of this sort of working experience.

Dr JENSEN—You talked about recognition of things other than academic achievement and I completely agree with that. I think it is very important for people to be recognised for what is real. What concerns me with some of the awarding of merit certificates and all sorts of other things is that essentially these awards are meaningless because kids know every kid is going to get one. I recall having met someone who said: ‘I was never really that good at sport. Most of the academic stuff I wasn’t good at.’ I cannot remember what area this person was good at, but he said he had been recognised for it and the fact that it was not given to everyone else meant that he recognised in himself that he was good at it. I think something that is probably very important to recognise and also to act on is recognising people for what is real. I think that this is very important for some of the kids from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Obviously, it is something that teachers need to do.

CHAIR—Broader society needs to do so also.

Ms Calvert—There are various ways in which you can recognise people. You can recognise with awards, like a certificate or something, but you can also recognise through everyday interaction with children. Parents do that. I do that with children I may see on the street or in my everyday life. I think it is important that we are honest about our acknowledgment of children’s achievement. There is a quote from one of the children in the research where they talk about how they were not good at academic stuff, they were not good at sport, but they were good at dancing. That was enough for that child to feel competent because they felt that they had been recognised for their dancing skills. All of us like to be recognised and all of us like to have experiences of being competent in our lives. Children are no different. In fact, I think it is probably far more critical for children, because it is shaping who they are.

The other thing that came out of our research about who they are is that, for children, these working experiences, transitions and pathways were really them embarking on one of the great journeys of childhood to adulthood, which is: who am I, and what am I going to be when I get

older? The ad hoc, one-off, casualised, trying-things-out nature of work is part of them undertaking that journey to decide who they are and what they want to do. And there are probably things that we can do to help them with that journey that we are not doing at the moment: the way in which we do careers counselling and the role of the careers counsellor. When we talk about work as adults we might be asking, 'What do you want your big career to be?' However, for the kid the issue might be, 'I actually just need to know what I want to do in my next one-off job.'

So there are some changes that we could make. That is, again, an example of how schools are smoothing the pathway to kids' growing up and schools, rather than fighting with work and seeing it as in conflict, are actually taking the benefits that work offers them to get kids to be the confident, capable learners that we want them to be.

CHAIR—Thanks so much for coming along. This has been very valuable for us and will give a broader perspective as we work through, as you described, identifying key points where we can make connections and put in place policies to address where the problems might be, without coming in and stomping all over something that is actually flourishing and very positive. If there are any follow-up questions once other committee members have a chance to look at the evidence we might just forward them to you, if that is okay.

Ms Calvert—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you.

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 10.34 am