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SENATE

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EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFERENCES
COMMITTEE

Reference: Regional employment and unemployment

TUESDAY, 28 APRIL 1998

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SENATE

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 28 April 1998

Members: Senator Crowley (*Chair*), Senator Tierney (*Deputy Chair*), Senators George Campbell, Carr, Denman, Ferris, Stott Despoja and Synon.

Substitute member: Senators Allison, Carr and Mackay.

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Allison, Bolkus, Brown, Carr, Colston, Forshaw, Mackay and Margetts.

Senators in attendance: Senators George Campbell, Carr, Crowley, Ferris and Mackay.

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

- (1) An assessment of the factors that contribute to the disparity in employment levels between different regions and also between regions and capital cities, as well as the continuing high levels of regional unemployment, with particular reference to:
 - (a) the impact on job opportunities as a consequence of increases or decreases in the level of federal, state and local government funding and services;
 - (b) the direct and indirect loss of income to regional communities;
 - (c) its impact on the level of private sector investment and activity in regional communities;
 - (d) the effectiveness of labour market programs and vocational education and training on job creation in regional areas; and
 - (e) assessment of the effectiveness of current and previous governments' funding and program delivery in promoting regional job creation.
- (2) an examination of remedial strategies that have or can contribute to reducing regional unemployment, including any overseas experiences.

WITNESSES

BEUMER, Mrs Wendy Jean, Chairperson, South East Education and Training Association (Target Team of South East Economic Development Board, SA), PO Box 1445, Mount Gambier, South Australia 5290 48

HALES, Mr Brian, General Manager-Economic Services, City of Onkaparinga, PO Box 1, Noarlunga Centre, South Australia 5168 31

PUPLETT, Mr Richard, Executive Officer, South Central Area Consultative Committee, 175 Bains Road, Woodcroft Town Centre, South Australia 5162 1

SCHNEYDER, Mrs Elizabeth Marie, Deputy Principal, Willunga High School, Main Road, Willunga, South Australia 5172	17
TATE, Mr Jeffrey, City Manager, City of Onkaparinga, PO Box 1, Noarlunga Centre, South Australia 5168	31
THREADGOLD, Mr Martin Bernard, Economic Development Officer (Employment), City of Onkaparinga, PO Box 1, South Australia 5168	31

Committee met at 8.42 a.m.

PUPLETT, Mr Richard, Executive Officer, South Central Area Consultative Committee, 175 Bains Road, Woodcroft Town Centre, South Australia 5162

CHAIR—Welcome. I declare open this public hearing of the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee. Today's hearing in Noarlunga is part of the committee's inquiry into regional employment and unemployment. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but you may at any time request that your evidence, part of your evidence, or answers to specific questions be given in camera and the committee will consider such a request. I have to point out, however, that evidence taken in camera over recent years has subsequently been made public by order of the Senate—which is a euphemism for how some of those things got onto the public record. The committee has before it submission No. 32 dated 21 April 1998, which has been published in a separate document. Are there any alterations or additions you wish to make to the submission at this stage?

Mr Puplett—No.

CHAIR—Before I invite you to make an opening statement, I would like to place on the record the committee's appreciation of the Onkaparinga Council for providing the chance for us to meet in their chamber room. It is always a bit of a challenge to find appropriate places to meet and the committee very much appreciates the council's assistance and cooperation. Please make your statement, Mr Puplett.

Mr Puplett—Thank you for this opportunity. The information provided in my submission is, in general, to advise the committee of initiatives that have been implemented in the region and have produced job creation results. If asked how, I would simply say by providing leadership and a strategic vision through the region, by communication and sharing information, and by good regional cooperation and coordination of available resources.

In my statement to you I would like to take the opportunity to emphasise some of the areas in that submission. In section 1, after discussion of high unemployment in this state, I highlighted the use of the government's regional assistance labour market program and the way the area consultative committee's targeted application of these funds and their use will create employment opportunities for the region in the future.

In this section I have also attempted to show the diverse nature, problems and opportunities of the region and also, later, cover the vocational education and training initiatives that have been implemented to assist in addressing the issue of youth unemployment. In section 2, my submission refers to an extract of my action plan report, which I hope provides details of activities against identified high priorities from the area consultative committee's regional employment strategy document.

My opening is brief, but just to summarise: the South Central Area Consultative Committee has focused attention and activities on employment, education and training issues in a strategic and collaborative manner within the region. The issue of unemployment is a difficult one. The ACCs, through the application of the new three-year strategic regional plan

and associated employment focused business plans, are a large step in a positive direction to address that issue. My business plan will be a blueprint for job creation and skills formation in the region. I look forward to applying that blueprint from 1 July. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. Colleagues, are there any questions for our first witness?

Senator MACKAY—I am curious as to how you perceive ACCs and their role in regard to the new employment services market. Your submission has alluded a number of times to the role that ACCs will be playing. How do you envisage that? You have talked about networking possibilities and so on. There is also, I think, a reference here to a sort of supervisory or overall, overarching type role. How do you see that operating?

Mr Puplett—What I have established in the region in the past 12, 15 or 18 months is quite a good network of what I call ‘key players’ within the labour market, and that is throughout the region. We have employment, education and training committees on Kangaroo Island, in the Murraylands and also in the Fleurieu Peninsula, and they are made up of key players within the region.

The transition to the Job Network and the new employment services market is one that is of concern to the government. Part of the area consultative’s new role from 1 May will be to monitor in a qualitative fashion how that market affects the labour market and also to bring together these new Job Network people and providers.

Through the relationships with the people through the employment, education and training committees, I would hope to identify any problems within the labour market. They could be problems of underservicing and overservicing of clients, unemployed people, business, industry and the community.

Senator MACKAY—What do you mean by ‘qualitative’? You say that there is going to be a qualitative measurement or outcome orientation. What do you mean by that?

Mr Puplett—What is important is to ensure that, with the vacancies within the south central region of the labour market, the right people are there for the right job. It is important to ensure that business and industry get the right people. If they do not, then there will be problems within the labour market and that will be highlighted.

Senator MACKAY—What role do you see in terms of the service delivery aspect of the new employment services market towards client groups?

Mr Puplett—On the service delivery aspect, the ACCs will be bringing together all the Job Network providers in a provider club. We also hope to be able to speak to the community and consult with the community on issues that come up.

CHAIR—How do you do that, Mr Puplett?

Mr Puplett—The South Australian area consultative committees will soon be marketing themselves through the state in South Australia and they can make the community and

business industry aware of what the area consultative committee is all about. That will commence fairly soon.

CHAIR—How much do you suppose it is going to cost to market what you have just said?

Mr Puplett—At this stage, we are looking at in the vicinity of \$20,000.

CHAIR—Out of a budget of what?

Mr Puplett—We are not sure yet because this will be out of next year's financial budget.

CHAIR—What was it this year?

Mr Puplett—Ten thousand dollars for each area consultative committee.

CHAIR—I am not understanding you, or perhaps our questions have got muddled. I cannot understand how \$10,000 a year allows you to spend \$20,000 on a market program.

Mr Puplett—It is a state marketing program and all five area consultative committees in this state will be involved in that.

CHAIR—So out of \$50,000 from last year's budget, you are spending \$20,000 on advertising yourselves?

Mr Puplett—On advertising the new role of the area consultative committee. We will also be looking at increased funding from DEETYA in regard to that new role. That \$10,000 per ACC was given last year in a different environment.

CHAIR—There are five ACCs?

Mr Puplett—Yes, five ACCs in this state.

Senator MACKAY—What is the money that is coming from DEETYA in terms of resourcing ACCs for the new role within the employment services market? The thing starts on Friday. What indications have you got from DEETYA?

Mr Puplett—I fly out to Canberra this morning. There is a chairs conference tomorrow with the minister in Canberra. From that conference and that forum, we hope to have an indication of the funds that will be available for the next three years.

Senator MACKAY—So you have not had any indication yet? Have DEETYA provided you with an indication of what they believe your role should be under the new employment services market?

Mr Puplett—Yes.

Senator MACKAY—Broadly, what have they said to you?

Mr Puplett—Broadly, we have an ACC charter of operations that builds on the current charter, which I supplied in my submission. It does say that the ACCs will be putting together job provider clubs and also that the ACCs will be charged with liaison with employers, business and industry to make sure they are receiving quality people.

Senator MACKAY—So it has not got a charter with regard to determining how effective the employment services market is for the client group? That is what I am getting at.

Mr Puplett—Not from the area consultative committee. We do not have that formal role as such.

Senator MACKAY—Right. You are yet to get an indication from DEETYA as to funding allocation for this increased role?

Mr Puplett—That is right.

CHAIR—Are you a bit confused about the number of subplots that has spawned in this area? I have read your submissions and there are so many acronyms that I had to keep going back to the front to find out what all of these acronyms mean. It seems to me that there are lots of bits and pieces. Your role I presume is, amongst other things, to bring those bits and pieces together.

Mr Puplett—It is.

CHAIR—Would you like to see fewer bits and pieces?

Mr Puplett—I think we will be seeing fewer bits and pieces at this stage. We do have local, state and Commonwealth government players. We do have community, business, industry and schools involved. In the strategic sense—and I have tried to highlight this in my submission—the area consultancy committee very simply shares information and communicates through the broader community. I do see myself as an expert in the labour market in that area. I try to share that information as broadly as I can through the region.

CHAIR—That is really what the marketing program is about?

Mr Puplett—It will be highlighting the regional employment strategy or the strategic regional planning of the area consultative committees and our new role in the new employment services market.

CHAIR—How long have you been doing this now?

Mr Puplett—I am an ex-Commonwealth officer. I was with the Commonwealth for 26 years. Out of those 26 years, I spent the last 12 years with the Commonwealth Employment Service, nine of those as a CES manager in various parts of the state. I have been in this role

with the area consultative committee for approximately 15 months. I have also worked for the Local Government Association as an outposted Commonwealth officer for 12 months.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Can you put a figure on the net number of jobs that have increased in this region as a result of the operation of the ACC since it has been functioning?

Mr Puplett—These have not been all created as yet, but over the next 12 months to two years I can claim that I will have created probably close to 700 employment opportunities for people through the broader region—this is, Murraylands, Kangaroo Island and the Fleurieu Peninsula area.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Are those actual jobs or potential jobs?

Mr Puplett—To date, probably about 160 jobs have been created and the rest are potential.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Can you give us a description of the types of jobs that have been created?

Mr Puplett—Through our regional employment strategy, we have a focus on a transition from school to work, so we have a focus on unemployed youth and trying to make employment happen. In the context of Noarlunga, we have a project down at Beach Road at Christies Beach, where we hope to extend retail and small business in that area and create 100 jobs over the next 12 months.

CHAIR—Can you just briefly tell us about the Beach Road, Mr Puplett? What do you mean by creating more jobs?

Mr Puplett—Beach Road is the street that runs from the Noarlunga Centre here down towards the beach. West from here there is predominantly small business and it is small business that is holding its head up high and wanting to expand. With the support of local and state government, they are extending that area to encourage more small business down there, particularly in the hospitality and training area.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—What is the sort of skill level involved in the jobs that have been or will be created? Are they low skilled jobs, medium skilled jobs or high skilled jobs?

Mr Puplett—What we are looking at in the first place is predominantly traineeships. We are trying to pull together linkages—and Senator Crowley mentioned this before—between school, business and industry. The Beach Road project is an example of that, because people from local schools will move into the retail and hospitality industry within the Beach Road.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Are the jobs that are created through this process purely training jobs, or is there potential for long-term employment?

Mr Puplett—We are focused on sustainable employment opportunities through the new apprenticeship system.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Do you believe these jobs that are created out of this process will be sustainable?

Mr Puplett—We believe so, yes.

Senator CARR—Mr Puplett, can I ask you a more basic question? What, in the opinion of the ACC, is the cause of such high levels of unemployment in the region?

Mr Puplett—That is a very difficult question. I have tried to address that in the first section of my submission to the committee. It is a very difficult question. There are so many reforms and downsizing. As I said, I used to be a Commonwealth officer myself, and there are a lot of changes happening within the labour market at this stage and which have occurred in the past two to five years as well. There is a lot of downsizing and reforms happening at the moment, particularly in the public sector.

Senator CARR—Are you saying that governments are actually directly creating or increasing the numbers of unemployed?

Mr Puplett—I would say at this stage that I do not have any evidence of this happening, but it is indicating that a lot of people are moving out of the public sector area.

Senator CARR—So you see the decrease in the levels of employment in the public sector as a major cause of unemployment?

Mr Puplett—Indications are that it is a problem. The South Australian government had 200 new traineeship positions created which has been, I think, wonderful and it has showed leadership within their state. I would like to see that continued.

Senator CARR—I will just come back to the basic proposition. You are in the business of getting people into work. I would have thought the fundamental issue of why people are out of work would be something that would have been addressed more fully than what I have heard from you. Can you correct me? Is it the case that you are not clear on why there are so many people unemployed?

Mr Puplett—As I said before, it is a very difficult question, but a lot of people are being put out of work at the moment through the restructuring that is taking place in the public sector. It may also be true to say that there are a lot of small businesses that are not surviving. But there are areas of opportunity through the region that we need to capitalise on.

Senator CARR—Is it something in particular about this region? Is it something unique? Is there a structural difficulty in this particular region that you think contributes to low levels of economic activity? You say that small business is not doing well.

Mr Puplett—I think it is general through the Adelaide metropolitan area.

Senator CARR—So it is to do with Adelaide as a metropolitan district?

Mr Puplett—I think that is where the problem is.

Senator CARR—Is that structural? Is it something to do with the geography?

Mr Puplett—I do not know the answer to that question, I am sorry.

Senator CARR—What do you think governments can do to increase the levels of employment?

Mr Puplett—Within this state, what the state government is doing through the initiatives with the traineeships is wonderful, as I said before. I do not know what the answer is to that. Maybe we are looking at governments outsourcing services too much. Maybe that is a problem that could be addressed.

Senator CARR—I have difficulty with this issue because it seems to me the fundamental cause of unemployment is that there are not enough jobs. Is that too simplistic a view?

Mr Puplett—I think that is an accurate statement: there are not enough jobs to go around for everybody.

Senator CARR—So if the government employs more people in traineeships, how does that necessarily create more jobs?

Mr Puplett—I would like to probably focus on some of the initiatives that we have implemented within the south central region that do create jobs. For example, the expansion of the Beach Road project, the future growth in the Murraylands region, the diversifying industry within Kangaroo Island or the Fleurieu Peninsula and the growth in viticulture. There are areas of growth in the areas of unemployment, and I think that is where the balance is and this is where the area consultative committee and its employment, education and training network can assist the most. I do not think there is a lot I can do about the structural reforms that are happening at the moment.

Senator CARR—I will just make one final point. To what extent do you think the private sector, the owners of capital, have a responsibility for these issues of high levels of unemployment?

Mr Puplett—Within this region, Mitsubishi is a major employer within the automotive industry itself. There are a lot of small businesses that rely on that industry and they have shown leadership in employing a great deal of people within this region. I think they accept that responsibility extremely well and so do a lot of the other industries. Small business, though, is a very difficult area for employment growth.

Senator MACKAY—Following on from what Senator Carr was referring to, I noticed in your submission you talked about an increase in RAP funding to, I think, \$1 million for your region. How would that money be spent?

Mr Puplett—If I can just refer to my notes again, what I was alluding to in that statement was the projects which are in people's minds at the moment or in a first development stage that can be progressed. If more funding was available—and I do not see the regional assistance program funding as the only source of funding, because we do work quite closely with state and local government—we could bring those other job creation projects to fruition.

Senator MACKAY—What sorts of projects are we talking about? You must have done some preliminary costings if you have got to a million dollars. Have you got a list or how have you determined the dollar figure?

Mr Puplett—I can provide a list to the committee if that is okay.

Senator MACKAY—That would be good.

Mr Puplett—We are looking at those issues now through the development of the three-year strategic regional plan for the ACCs and our business plans. We will be identifying what projects we can put on the ground within 12 months and within three years, and we will have costings on each of those. I am happy to make that available.

Senator MACKAY—What is the current level of RAP funding?

Mr Puplett—In my region, it is approximately \$180,000.

Senator MACKAY—So you are talking about a fivefold increase in funds?

Mr Puplett—Yes. RAP funding also pays for business incubators, which are an expensive initiative, and we are looking at a business incubator within this region, within this council area, for next year. That will probably take \$300,000 of that money straightaway.

Senator MACKAY—Just finally, you said current funding levels were \$10,000 per ACC. Is that right?

Mr Puplett—For marketing.

Senator MACKAY—What is the aggregate funding? Does it vary from ACC to ACC?

Mr Puplett—It varies depending on whether you are in a regional area and you do have a lot of travel. In that case, you get more administration funds. But on an average, it is about \$120,000 per annum. That is for administration and operation.

Senator MACKAY—Has that diminished over the years?

Mr Puplett—No, it has not. If anything, it increased last year because we upgraded our technology. We also were recognised as having an emphasis in regional centres so there was a lot of travel involved, so it was increased to reflect that.

Senator MACKAY—Just to get it clear in my mind, we are talking about an average of \$125,000 per ACC in terms of funding.

Mr Puplett—Yes.

Senator MACKAY—You are looking at additional funding being provided by DEETYA for this increased role for the employment services market, which is unspecified to date.

Mr Puplett—Yes. My chairman will be in Canberra tomorrow. He will be advocating for that increase in funds.

Senator MACKAY—Will you provide us with a list with regard to the projects for the increased RAP funding?

Mr Puplett—Yes.

Senator FERRIS—I notice at page 6 of your submission you talk about a total labour force in the south central region of 173,000 of which 9.4 per cent are unemployed. What percentage of that 9.4 per cent would be long-term unemployed? How much of a problem or a difficulty is structural unemployment on a long-term basis for you in this area?

Mr Puplett—Long-term unemployment—and I covered it in section 1 of my submission—is growing. Again, it is probably very hard to put a figure on it but it is growing, and it has been growing for quite a while. I quoted some passages from the *Adelaide Advertiser* with regard to long-term unemployment and also youth unemployment.

CHAIR—Was that on page 7?

Mr Puplett—Page 7, yes.

Senator FERRIS—I am trying to get a picture of the effectiveness of labour market programs over, say, five years in dealing with unemployment in this area. Would you have a view or a comment to make looking back into your perspective as an employment officer within the Public Service? Could you give us a perspective on those labour market programs and how they have addressed the issue.

Mr Puplett—There were many labour market programs around at that stage whose task was to address the long-term unemployed and job compact eligible clients. In my submission I gave examples of where, in some instances, that did work and there are obviously some instances where some of those programs did not work, and did not work very well. I used an example of a project on Kangaroo Island of a sports and social community club that, under new work opportunities, had five or six people working for them. I believe—and I will provide the information once I can get hold of the person—that four people gained employment on the island from that program, which is a good result, but there are also stories of performance being not very good at all. I do not have any official figures on that.

Senator FERRIS—Page 8 under section (b) of your submission relating to the direct and indirect loss of income to regional communities says:

Programs such as Work for the Dole and SA's Community at Work Program need to have a stronger Regional focus and provide some relief and activity for regional communities.

Are you suggesting an expansion of work for the dole?

Mr Puplett—What I am alluding to there is not an expansion of work for the dole but linkages into what else is happening within the community. I think at this stage, work for the dole is a program that is sitting out on its own. Maybe there are other programs that can be brought together through a network of collaboration to ensure that people who are participating in work for the dole get something out of it in the long term and that there is a pathway or linkages in place. I would like to see that happen.

Senator FERRIS—Would you like to see, for example, a program like work for the dole targeted with specific numbers to a specific area? Is that what you are saying?

Mr Puplett—I would like to see it targeted from the community, not from government. If the community recognises that it would have a project that is worthwhile and the community wants to do it, I would like to see that happen.

Senator FERRIS—This committee in a previous hearing heard some very interesting evidence about links between a particular high school in the northern suburbs of Adelaide and a nearby employer, quite a large employer. The principal of the school spoke to us about the interaction between the large employer and the school. I notice that a number of times in your submission you talk about, for example, under 'Key outcomes', encouraging the relationship of schools and training institutions with a business community. How do you plan to do that? Are you doing it now? Has it been done effectively, say, in the past? How do you see that working more effectively to target particular large employers and some of the senior students in the local schools?

Mr Puplett—With vocational education and training, it is a fairly new program and reforms to the education system. I have a project officer—that is, a regional assistance funded program person—working for me to assist in that process because it is a fairly large task to address the issues of the VET reforms within this state. The role of the project officer is to remove some of those barriers between linkages between school, career pathways and to business and industry and bring business and industry closer to schools; whereas, within the school system and the reforms within a school system, it is to bring schools closer to business and industry. So we are addressing the problem from a different angle.

Senator FERRIS—When you talk about bringing them closer together, I guess I was thinking perhaps of some elective subjects in the senior classes that would effectively equip the students for the particular work areas required by the large employer in the district. Salisbury High School—and the chair of this committee was also present when the evidence was given—has established very close links with British Aerospace and all sorts of areas within the school structure not just for the highly professional area but also for other administrative positions within that company.

There is a very strong and clear link between the subjects required and the skills required by the students who want to move into British Aerospace. Mitsubishi, for example, would be

a target as a very large employer in your region. Is there a very strong link now between the schools and that employer group? Is that the sort of thing you are thinking of?

Mr Puplett—No, there are very strong links already. There is a coordinator working within Mitsubishi itself to establish linkages, and better linkages, within that industry. Schools are delivering business accredited competencies within the schools. I note that Liz Schneyder, the deputy principal of Willunga High School, is probably in a better position to address more of those issues, if that is okay with the committee.

Senator FERRIS—Yes. I am interested though, because you mention it several times in your submission. You say on page 4, for example:

Develop measures to encourage and promote employment and training opportunities for youth.

That is a fine objective, but I want to know, given the long-term structural unemployment in this area, what has been done in the past? It is surely not a new innovation to target young people.

Mr Puplett—It is not a new innovation. It has been going on for a while and it will continue. What I am trying to do from the area consultative committee is bring some collaboration and strategic vision within the region to continue to make that happen and to make it happen with very few hurdles, problems and barriers in its way.

Senator FERRIS—It is quite well known that this area, like so many regional areas, has lost a lot of its young people as they have gone to other areas looking for work. Clearly, this measure that you are talking about here as being part of your strategy framework would be targeted to try to keep young people in the area in which they grew up.

Mr Puplett—It is, particularly in the regional parts of the state too. For example, we are looking at expanding the abattoirs and some of the other industries in the Murraylands. They are not an attractive industry for young people to want to move into, yet they pay quite well, and that is an employment opportunity. It is a matter of bringing the schools and business closer together in one form or another. I am not saying that we have the answers, but we will try to work through the problems and remove those barriers for employment.

Senator FERRIS—Given your long experience in this area of work, do you have any comment to make on the existing training and skills programs that are offered by the tertiary institutions such as TAFE or the programs that take young people into work through job pathways programs? Do you feel that they have been effective in the training and skills they have offered? Would you have any comments to make on the ways they could have been improved?

Mr Puplett—The only comment I think I am able to make is that the focus needed to be more on employment rather than on skills formation; to have an employment focus in a specific region and, again, to have business and industry owning the training that is required. It is then able to be delivered for an outcome.

Senator CARR—Mr Puplett, can I just pick you up on that last point you made. The relationship between industry and the education system is one that you draw attention to considerably. In your assessment, given your role in bringing together various aspects of the community here—employers, workers, presumably unions, and education authorities—do you ever get any sense that there is a conflict between the needs for the individual in terms of lifelong learning and the skill formation, as you say, that actually equips people for life at large in society and the specific needs of an enterprise and their demand for labour at any particular time? Do you see any conflict there between those two objectives?

Mr Puplett—What I am focusing on—and what we are trying to focus on in the region—is looking at linkages to specific industry, specific employers, and building on those linkages by addressing, in the first stage, those relationships and therefore bringing industry and schools closer together. We are trying to address some of the more fundamental issues, but it is a very difficult question and not one that can be answered easily.

Senator CARR—In my experience I am very close to people in the meat industry, and I am just wondering whether or not the local school can effectively equip a person to be a slaughterman and, at the same time, equip people in the same class to perform all the other functions that one expects in society, and whether or not one should be equipping people specifically to be slaughtermen in the local abattoir or equipping them to perform other functions in society at large as well. Both at an individual level and at a collective level, what is the responsibility of the education system to that local abattoir?

Mr Puplett—I do not think I can comment on what the responsibility of the education system is, but the education system can deliver core competencies that suit many industries, and also the education system can provide a broad range of opportunities for individuals. It is then up to the families, the community and the students themselves to make a choice. It is all about giving opportunities to youth and understanding what the meatworks do.

What is at Lonsdale Mitsubishi? They do not make cars at Lonsdale Mitsubishi; it is a foundry. It is those issues of changing the culture within schools and changing the culture within business and industry and the community and equipping young people to understand what real work life is all about. It is not just bringing industry into schools, by the way; it is also taking schools into industry, and those people can be on six-week work placements within a specific industry.

Senator CARR—You are not saying that the schools should be the recruitment ground particularly for industries, the employment offices or the personnel offices for the local enterprise, are you?

Mr Puplett—I am not saying that, but there is no reason why they could not be if that relationship was a successful one.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—I noticed a report in the *Advertiser* this morning talking about an area north of the Junction—my geography of Adelaide is not that good, but you probably know the area they are talking about—where there are something like 1,500 jobs that have not been able to be filled. Why wouldn't people from this area seek employ-

ment in those jobs, or are there impediments to people from this area who are unemployed being able to travel to that area—for example, on public transport or what have you?

Mr Puplett—Again, that is a fairly complex question. There would be many problems. First of all, it is a transport problem, whether it is a public transport or a private transport issue. It is the cost of transport, it is whether—

CHAIR—Just briefly, how long would it take to get from here to the place where those skilled jobs are?

Mr Puplett—Driving, probably an hour and a quarter, an hour and a half—even longer, perhaps two hours.

CHAIR—And on public transport?

Mr Puplett—That is a hard question.

CHAIR—Absolutely. It is a hard question, isn't it.

Mr Puplett—It is.

CHAIR—I would hate to make a connection. There is a very simple direct impediment. The first big impediment is that north of the city is like another country from south of the city, and it effectively takes something like two hours to get there. For people who are looking to get to work, that is a huge extra cost on their day.

Mr Puplett—It is, and the public transport system does not support that sort of travel.

CHAIR—Yes, exactly. Hopeless.

Mr Puplett—You still have to get to the railway station here at the Noarlunga Centre and you still have to get from the railway station to the place of business. So public transport is an option, but not a very good option.

CHAIR—Does that answer that question?

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—It just proves the point that there is not necessarily a correlation between vacancies and the unemployed.

Mr Puplett—If I can just add to that—

CHAIR—It is a very powerful point, actually, Senator. Thank you for reminding me of it. I read it this morning.

Mr Puplett—I read that this morning too. There are opportunities within this region, and in the Murraylands there is probably an opportunity for the growth of 2,000 new jobs over the next two to three years. That is an issue we will also be addressing in regard to the best

strategic way of ensuring that there are skilled people to fill those jobs so we do not have the problem the north side of town has at the moment.

CHAIR—One of the things that just dawned on me is that it might be very interesting to see if there are 10 people from down here who qualify to fill those jobs. Perhaps industry itself or somebody else might want to provide some kind of bus that allows those 10 people to get north each day. What is the problem? The problem in this situation is essentially transport. Maybe that is what you need to address rather than lots of other things.

We have to finish, Mr Puplett. It is, unfortunately, too small a time for your very interesting submission. But please do not close your papers yet because I have got some questions that I would like to put on notice. The committee would very much welcome some descriptions and listings of the sorts of jobs that have already been successfully created. Your submission is very useful, particularly some of the data in it about unemployment, but it provides a more general description of jobs created rather than specific examples. For example, what were the local sports and recreation jobs on Kangaroo Island? You do not need to answer that question now—you can supply that information later. Are any of those sorts of jobs in sport and rec being created or have they already been created with the development of sport and the Noarlunga Sporting Centre now that south Adelaide has come south? Are there any job prospects around sport, as has been happening in other areas with other codes? I know the AFL was into job creation and traineeships. I am not sure whether any of that is happening here.

Will you also give us a bit more detail about any other jobs that have been created—for example, further to the Beach Road project? What are the other prospective jobs that you referred to when you spoke in answer to Senator George Campbell? There are a couple of other things that I would like to ask you, if you would not mind. On page 14 of your submission you refer to a state marketing and awareness raising campaign. Is that the one you have already referred to?

Mr Puplett—It is, yes.

CHAIR—Okay. Could you take it on notice to tell me what it will be about? Who is your advertising targeting? Are you advertising to job creators, school principals, local council, unemployed people or the lot? I note that you are going to have a two-day conference in preparation for the new market—that is listed here on page 14. Can you tell us a bit about that conference: where it will be held, how much it will cost, who is paying and what its main intention is? On page 15 you mention the regional labour market database and say the project is progressing well and will provide invaluable data. On the record, is that database a new thing? Is this the first time it has been done?

Mr Puplett—It is a new thing. It is an initiative within the schools within the south.

CHAIR—The schools?

Mr Puplett—The schools.

CHAIR—Fantastic! So you are saying that even now you have not really got a complete labour database in the southern region?

Mr Puplett—It will focus on attempting to track students from school to work and elsewhere, so it will be very useful.

CHAIR—Right. Who is doing it? How much will it cost? Where is it? Who can use it? You do not have to fret about writing it all down, Mr Puplett, because you will get the complete *Hansard* record and that will have all these questions for you, but you may want to shorthand it. You may want to say to us, ‘I can’t do that, Senator,’ but I really want to know who is doing that labour market database—

Mr Puplett—That is not a problem.

CHAIR—how much it will cost, where will it be stored, who will have access to it and who can use it. In reference number 8.11 you talk about developing school to work pathway programs. I am not sure of the difference between a VET coordinator and a VET project officer. Is it the one person?

Mr Puplett—Yes, it is.

CHAIR—That makes sense of a very confusing paragraph. You put in a funding proposal for a project officer. I want to know how much money, where will that person be located, who can use that person and what is that person to do. Over the page you say that Miss Linda Symons has been selected. Is that the answer to all those questions? Has she been selected?

Mr Puplett—She is the person.

CHAIR—You can tell me in your answer where she sits and how people can ring up and talk to her. You say there have been quite a few problems and issues with individual schools. Could you tell us about some of those problems with the schools?

Mr Puplett—It is really in regard to access to funds available within the various buckets, I suppose you could say—the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation moneys—and the understanding of not only how to access those funds but also what the funds are to be used for.

CHAIR—We are way over time. If you do not mind, I am just reading this onto the record. I notice it says that the second stage of the project has commenced and 98 outcomes have been achieved. I would like to know what is an outcome, or what 10 things are an outcome, or whether speaking to somebody qualifies as an outcome, as apart from getting someone a job. You mentioned the pilot business incubator. I believe that we can ask the council about that, so we will do that.

Finally, you say that a total of five programs of approximately six students have been run with great success to date. Could you tell us about the outcome? What is meant by success? Did everyone go home happy or did everyone get a job? Have there been jobs? What sort of

follow-up of all those people happens? What happens a year after the kids have left school in years 11 and 12? Can these schools tell us how many of those pupils are now still in study, still gainfully employed?

Mr Puplett, we have to finish there. This is too short a time to do justice to this, but the committee is trying to crowd lots in. We thank you very much for your submission. Can I presume, if we need more information, that we can get in touch with you?

Mr Puplett—Yes.

CHAIR—Also, we do not want to put a huge extra burden on you in writing answers to those questions, so I suggest dot points rather than a thesis. In the *Advertiser* on Tuesday, 21 April 1998, there is an article headed ‘Doubts over firm helping job seekers’. It refers to an employment firm which won a lucrative contract to find jobs. It says:

Sydney-based employment firm Hospitality Horizons won a \$15 million contract to find hospitality work for unemployed people in rural Australia.

It refers to the contract covering a large number of South Australian towns including Murray Bridge, which that I think by definition would be in your area.

Mr Puplett—It is in my area.

CHAIR—As I understand it, this has turned out to be a very big negative because the funding is not coming through—that firm has not been able to deliver what it promised. Have you got information—if not now, on notice—that you could provide to the committee about either that part of Hospitality Horizons or any other reference to that in this area?

Mr Puplett—I have no information at this stage but I will find information in regard to that.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

[9.30 a.m.]

SCHNEYDER, Mrs Elizabeth Marie, Deputy Principal, Willunga High School, Main Road, Willunga, South Australia 5172

CHAIR—The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any time request that your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions be given in camera, you might ask the committee to do so and the committee will consider that request. I point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate, as has happened in recent years. The committee has before it submission No. 38, dated 22 April 1998. Are there any alterations or additions you would like to make to that submission?

Mrs Schneider—Only the spelling of ‘inquiry’, but that is fine.

CHAIR—The committee is pleased to accept that amendment. Is it the committee’s wish that the submission be received? There being no objection, it is so ordered. Would you like to speak briefly to this and then field questions?

Mrs Schneider—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

Mrs Schneider—I would like to open by saying that I am here representing the school, not the education department. I could get in all sort of trouble if it were seen that I was representing the department. Richard asked me to speak to you because I have been working with Richard in the area consultative committee. We have an example of what we believe to be a successful program that is supporting and working with Richard. I am not here representing the department and department’s stands on vocational education and training. That is the first thing I would like to make quite clear. Certainly, my principal asked that I mention that, because he was very worried that he might get into all sorts of troubles if it were seen that I was representing the department. I am not doing that.

We have almost 900 students at Willunga High School. We get students from the beach and from the rural community. We live right in the middle of very expanding viticulture, tourism and hospitality industries. Numbers are not going down; they are going up. We did go through a slump when a new school was built. We thought we would have reduced numbers, but that has not happened. Our senior school enrolments have gone up by 11 per cent over and above what the education department actually predicted our numbers would be.

So numbers are increasing. Part of that is because of the movement to cheaper housing around the Port Willunga-Aldinga area and part of that is also because of people coming to McLaren Vale and Willunga looking for work in the viticulture and horticulture industries.

Three years ago the school had to do some fairly heavy thinking because we were starting to use all our resources for behaviour management. We thought that this was not appropriate. Tied up with this was the approach by our local industries for us to address the issue of skills of our school leavers. Alluding perhaps to a discussion you had with Richard

about why people are not being employed, part of the issue raised with is, 'Will the school please skill students in the areas that we can offer employment or where we are looking for employees.' Our employers said to us that they would like to employ our leavers because they felt that they will stay in the area and so the training will be worth their while.

As a result of that, we have now collaborated with them extensively over the last three years to develop a program where—and we are very clear on this—we have not forsaken the traditional curriculum. So we still offer the same traditional curriculum we have always offered, give or take a few subjects. If you go to any school, there have been trends away from economics to legal studies and those sorts of things. We still offer a traditional curriculum, but within our senior school curriculum, we have embedded VET, vocational education training, modules so that our students get dual credit. It means they get credit for the industry modules or industry curriculum as well as their traditional SACE curriculum.

We have chosen VET modules that skill kids for industries related to our local area. We have not offered aeroplane training or things like that when there is not a plane within cooee of us. We have concentrated our resources in areas like viticulture, hospitality, tourism and horticulture, which are pertinent to employment in our local area. The other thing we have done is have discussions with our employers and in those discussions they identified two major areas of concern. One was the area of communication skills. They believed that the communication skills of students leaving school were inadequate.

CHAIR—What does that mean? They could not talk or they could not write?

Mrs Schneyder—They could not talk, they were not confident with adults, they could not keep their sentences together. They felt that their skills in these areas were inadequate for what they needed, particularly the confidence to talk to other adults. We addressed that by taking on the full communication modules that have been delivered through industry—generic modules that almost all industry areas have. We embedded them in two modules in a compulsory work education course and two modules in the SACE stage 1 English. The reason we chose those is that they are practically based modules. Most vocational modules are very practical, whereas SACE modules, SACE units, are very theoretical. We have taken the practical components and put them into these compulsory courses for our stage 1s. The competency of students in these modules is reported.

The other area of concern was occupational health and safety. Again, we took some generic modules—in this case from the business studies units—and embedded them. Those modules are also compulsory for our students. In that area we work with the Noarlunga Community Health Services to develop appropriate workbooks, and we have now developed a web site to support that package.

CHAIR—What was the concern that the employers raised about OH&S vis-a-vis students? What were the students inefficient in?

Mrs Schneyder—They saw occupational health and safety as their major concern, I believe. They felt that we would be doing them a service if we could make students coming into their work force aware of the dangers and aware of issues like chemical handling. It has been interesting in that the feedback we have got is that the students coming into the work

force have actually supported their existing employees in matters relating to occupational health and safety.

CHAIR—Do you mean the students are now leading the charge in OH&S in industry?

Mrs Schneider—Certainly—that is the feedback we have received. A visitor from the World Health Organisation recently visited the school and that is the impression he left us with.

CHAIR—You do not get any sense that industry or employers are now handballing the responsibility for OH&S to schools?

Mrs Schneider—It is a concern.

CHAIR—Thank you. We might follow that up later. How have the students responded to communication and OH&S modules in schools?

Mrs Schneider—Very positively because it is practical—hands on.

CHAIR—What has happened to behaviour management?

Mrs Schneider—Non-existent.

CHAIR—Would you say there is a direct correlation?

Mrs Schneider—Direct.

CHAIR—Has the curriculum been changed to meet the needs of students because students have stopped acting up?

Mrs Schneider—Yes, it is relevant. I can be quite specific. We used to have a room called a time-out room. All schools have such a room; they are called time-out rooms, focus rooms or behaviour management rooms. Our room used to be full to the point of bulging, so we had an extra room. We used an enormous amount of staff—our best staff—to manage that room. We will be disbanding that room altogether at the end of this term.

CHAIR—Did you ever measure what went on down there?

Mrs Schneider—It was fascinating.

CHAIR—I think that is a very good point as to where the future lies. I am sorry to interrupt you, but have you got anything further to say? I know my colleagues are very interested to ask you questions.

Mrs Schneider—With some of the innovations—and we could sit and chat about it—we have had to make significant change. We have significantly changed the way the school is structured. We significantly changed our timetable after consultation with local employers. We are a registered training organisation to deliver viticulture. There are not many schools

which are registered training organisations. We were asked to apply for registration by our local employers because they wanted a flexible training program in the local area. Our timetable change means that their employees can attend sessions at the school at a time that causes minimal disruption. They see that as being very important. We are also prepared to be very flexible to meet their needs. Viticulture is a very seasonal industry, so when the harvesting is on we do not run classes; we run them at alternative times to suit the industry.

CHAIR—What does that mean? Are you open from eight in the morning until eight at night?

Mrs Schneider—No, we are not at the moment, because we have not been given permission to do that. But we do create the flexibility during the school day because we only have three lessons a day. Employees can then come in off the block just down the road, come in at 10 a.m., do their off-job training and be back on the site within an hour and a half.

CHAIR—But that is still between the school day of nine to four?

Mrs Schneider—Yes. We could run an after-hours class quite easily, but at this stage we have resisted because of resources.

CHAIR—That is a useful point for this committee to take note of. Thank you.

Senator CARR—These initiatives that you have taken, as you would appreciate, obviously are being done in a number of schools across the country now.

Mrs Schneider—Yes.

Senator CARR—In some respects they reflect a return to past practice. I know in my state, for instance, there was actually a division in the education system between the technical division and the high school division. Do you see a trend in education to develop manual based educational programs and academic based educational programs—an effective streaming of our educational system?

Mrs Schneider—No, I actually strongly resist that. I think the advantage we have now over what is happening in the eastern states is that we have always offered dual credit.

Senator CARR—So you are not seeing any change in the patterns of articulation to other qualifications? You are not suggesting that your school is predominantly now the training ground for apprenticeships and traineeships?

Mrs Schneider—No.

Senator CARR—Are you still providing access to universities?

Mrs Schneider—Yes. In fact, one of our coordinators is called a post-school options coordinator. Her role is specifically to work with the students from year 10 onwards and play what we call ‘a smorgasbord with pathways’. She supports students in trying a range of

pathways through schooling—a mixture of academic and vocational. Because we embed the vocational within the traditional curriculum, there are no losing options whatsoever—options are maintained. The idea is that, when they are then ready to leave, they are very articulate about saying, ‘Having tried all of these, this is now where I wish to go.’

Senator CARR—Have your retention rates improved?

Mrs Schneyder—Yes, significantly.

Senator CARR—In terms of the quality of the vocational educational programs that are offered by the high school, what professional development is provided to teachers, for instance, to undertake trade training?

Mrs Schneyder—Firstly, virtually all our staff received training through the NDPD funding two years ago and are trained as workplace category 2. That is the first requirement because then they can at least assess off-job.

Senator CARR—That funding ended two years ago.

Mrs Schneyder—Correct.

Senator CARR—What professional development is now being provided for a high school teacher trained as a high school teacher to take trade classes?

Mrs Schneyder—That is the first part. I quite clearly delineate between the two. They can only assess off-job, and that funding has continued through another source—‘ready, set, go’ funding is now provided through the education department to continue that training program. That does not, however, enable teachers to assess students on-job. That is a specific trade that I think you are alluding to. For hospitality, a full week, \$700 worth of training must be taken. Tourism is similar. Viticulture is a week of quite specific training. Furniture is the same. Those courses are expensive and are largely carried by the school. We also have a commitment to regular updates, with regular attendance at workshops, so there is no feeling that they are falling behind in any way.

Senator CARR—Does the department provide you with any funding for those upgradings?

Mrs Schneyder—Some funding is available at the school’s discretion.

Senator CARR—How adequate do you think a week’s training is to qualify teachers to take what used to be regarded as a tradesman’s job to train apprentices, which would have taken four years?

Mrs Schneyder—I actually believe schools should only be delivering what I call ‘entry level’. Consequently, that training, if they do their week of industry training, I believe is adequate, providing the school has the facilities to deliver it appropriately.

Senator CARR—I was going to come to that question in a moment.

Mrs Schneyder—That is the other issue. I am very much in favour of staff being released to do a six to eight week on-job themselves. In fact, we arranged that for our viticulture teacher who took six weeks—

Senator CARR—With your carpentry teachers, for example, would you be employing teachers who were former carpenters?

Mrs Schneyder—At the moment we do not have the right to employ any teacher; they are given to us.

Senator CARR—Would you be seeking teachers to take in the engineering area who were former boilermakers or tradesmen from the metal industry?

Mrs Schneyder—At this stage no. We would only offer level 1 and 2, which we could deliver using the teachers who have that expertise.

Senator CARR—In the old system, on which this is often modelled, teachers who were employed to take what is equivalent to level 1 and 2 in the entry level training were, in fact, fully qualified themselves.

Mrs Schneyder—True. I think there are some advantages in that. We have had some of our students at TAFE, and one of the biggest issues of concern has been the TAFE lecturer's difficulties in managing some of our students.

Senator CARR—That is a separate issue in terms of—

Mrs Schneyder—I think we have to look at teacher readiness when they are working with students of that age.

Senator CARR—I am a school teacher by trade myself so I understand the issues of classroom management. I was a humanities teacher in a tech school in Melbourne and I would be somewhat out of my depth, as a trained history and politics teacher, trying to teach metalwork. What is the difference now with your programs?

Mrs Schneyder—The difference now is that, firstly, we are only going to offer vocations or vocational training areas where we have staff expertise and an on-job training opportunity. If we do not have staff expertise at this stage we can apply for it long term through a student choice process, but we would not offer it. Most of our courses are run under a memorandum of agreement with our local TAFE institute and the maintenance of standards, as part of that agreement, states that we must have teachers with the appropriate training. I believe very strongly that, if vocational training is going to be maintained in schools, we have an obligation to meet that training requirement.

Senator CARR—Could I then turn to the question of the capital: what provision is made in the learning environment for technology centres that are adequate to meet the needs of modern industry? My experience at high schools has been that only limited craft facilities are provided, and no industrial education facilities are provided.

Mrs Schneider—I totally agree. We have an old style furniture workshop for woodwork and an old style kitchen for hospitality. We got offered 10 tenders for our hospitality students recently which we knocked back because we do not have a commercial kitchen, which we would have needed to supply or provide the work. When we asked whether we could build a skills centre on the school that included a furniture workshop we got knocked back on that too.

CHAIR—Knocked back by whom?

Mrs Schneider—Knocked back by the people who decided we should not get the funding.

CHAIR—State or federal?

Mrs Schneider—Federal.

Senator CARR—Can I make this observation to you and ask you to comment: your school community is obviously highly dedicated to making sure that the best service is provided to the students in your care. I take it you still use the concept of students rather than clients?

Mrs Schneider—Absolutely.

Senator CARR—The problem, however, is that with vocational education and training in schools, without the adequate resourcing it means that there is a much more limited opportunity for you to provide a high quality service if your teachers are not effectively trained and if the capital is not provided. Would that be a fair description?

Mrs Schneider—I agree with you. This is a personal opinion: schools should only provide what they are capable of providing to maintain industry standards. In the area of viticulture, where we have the training and the facilities to provide entry levels 1, 2 and 3, I believe it is appropriate for us to do that. If we do not have the facilities, then I do not think it is appropriate for us to offer it.

Senator CARR—Who covers the workers compensation liability for your students while engaged in industry outside the school grounds? I understand the legal implication to the school gate. Who covers it while students are on the job and, in particular, in their transfer between the school gate and the employer's premises?

Mrs Schneider—The education department.

Senator CARR—Are you certain that that is covered on both counts?

Mrs Schneider—Absolutely. The difference comes if they are paid during on-job. It then becomes the responsibility of the employer.

Senator CARR—You have had no problem with workers compensation? There have been no industrial accidents?

Mrs Schneyder—That has obviously been dealt with at length by the education department in their planning. It has become an issue in the new apprenticeship and the part-time traineeship issues. It is currently being investigated and it is an issue of concern.

Senator CARR—Do you have any new apprenticeships?

Mrs Schneyder—Not at this stage because viticulture, which is our major industry, is not very well set up for traineeships. We are working on that.

Senator FERRIS—I am interested in an historical perspective. I am wondering whether you would have any idea of, perhaps, five years ago, or a period of time some years ago before you started to move into these new training areas. Could you give us a picture of what the school was like then in terms of the opportunities for school leavers, whether you tracked them, what numbers of unemployed would have been, say, in your year 12 class, what numbers went on to university or TAFE study and what is the picture now. You have talked about two specific areas, but I wonder whether you could give us a somewhat broader picture of the way it was and the way it is.

Mrs Schneyder—Five years ago—I came to the school four years ago—it was the same size, but very much a rural population. The kids bussed in from farm properties. A large percentage of those students went back to the farm. About 40 per cent went to SATAC—looked at university—which is almost identical to what it is now. So that has not changed significantly. What has changed is the population that is now bringing students into the school. Where most students five years ago came from farms, what has happened now is that students are coming from cheap housing because of a movement to that housing along the beach-side suburbs, and we are getting the transient population because of the work in the vineyards.

There is a population change from what were largely farms—family owned, highly competitive, small viticulture industry—where students would go back into the family blocks or on to university. Where the 40 per cent going to SATAC stays the same, what you now have is probably a 30 per cent population who are coming from homes of first and second generation unemployed. They are the ones that we are having to address and look at what they are going to do when they leave school.

Senator FERRIS—I am not sure whether you were here for the evidence given by the previous witness.

Mrs Schneyder—Richard—yes, I sat at the back.

Senator FERRIS—He was talking about the strategic framework for regional employment in this area and developing measures to encourage and promote employment and training opportunities for youth. You have talked about opportunities within quite large and growing industries—the vineyard industry, in particular. What about small business? What links do you try to foster with small business in your area and perhaps a major employer such as Mitsubishi? Do you try to encourage young people to go and train in those particular areas, or do you just concentrate on the big industries?

Mrs Schneyder—The area of Willunga is unique in that it is all small business. We do not have any big business. The biggest business we have would be Mitsubishi, which our kids cannot access because of the transport difficulties. So all along we have had to work with students and small business. That has created some interesting issues. When you liaise with your local industries, you say, ‘When can you meet with the students?’ It has to be 4.30 in the afternoon because that is the time which least affects small business; it is the time when they can be available.

Our whole program has revolved around small businesses—working with small businesses, meeting small business needs. We invite those people to the school. We find out what they want. We discuss with them their various needs—be it in business, be it in retailing. We do not have any large businesses at all, which is a problem for us and one that we are looking at addressing by developing a cluster of schools in the Fleurieu.

Rather than moving north, what we are looking at doing is moving south, joining with east of Fleurieu with the large viticulture industry at Langhorne Creek, working with Victor Harbour for hospitality and big furniture factories down there, working with Yankalilla in terms of aquatics and working with Kangaroo Island and doing some shearing there as well so that our students have more exposure to more small businesses rather than disadvantaging them because there are no big industries in the area. We could not do a link like Salisbury did because there are not any big businesses to link with.

What we have also done is use local staff who live locally to create our links with industry. Because they are accepted locally and highly regarded it means they have been able to walk into small businesses, earn respect and gain the support for our students in that way. It has meant we have had to operate quite differently because that is the nature of the industries.

Senator FERRIS—I was interested in the comments that you made about communication and in particular occupational health and safety—the introduction of those training areas in your courses. They have clearly been very successful in a pupil management sense. Have you tried to point out to the state department the success you have had in that behaviour management area to try to have that replicated with schools across the state? Have you tried to point out in a practical way to the department the need for more flexibility in school hours to cope with the demands of the local employer or are you simply accepting that school hours means school hours? Are you trying to get any more flexibility introduced?

Mrs Schneyder—We have applied to be an after hours school—to have after hours classes and be regarded in that way and we are waiting for some response to that. Our district superintendent has been very supportive. He is on the post-compulsory committee for the education department. He is pursuing the issues of communication, the issues of occupational health and safety, and also our concerns about job brokering and those issues that are impacting significantly on us. He is representing us at that level to try to pursue the issues you are talking about.

Senator FERRIS—Going back to communication, have you noticed any lowering in the rate of local vandalism or delinquency or graffiti around the area of Willunga as a result?

Mrs Schneyder—The school population will say the community are saying that it is working very successfully. The school is very successful and that is one of the measures. Another perhaps comical one is that because we only have three lessons a day there are no breaks between lessons and the vandalism within the school has disappeared.

Senator FERRIS—Quite remarkable and commendable.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—The students who go through this process, do you keep any track on them after they leave your care?

Mrs Schneyder—Yes.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—What percentage of them actually finish up in full-time employment?

Mrs Schneyder—At the moment from last year's group of students 38 per cent applied for SATAC enrolment and all gained that SATAC enrolment that they applied for. Of the others, two were unsuccessful in gaining employment or further training.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—And is that a higher level than it has been in the past?

Mrs Schneyder—Yes. A lot of that is due to the acceptance within the community of post-school training, including TAFE, and students going into traineeships in the local community.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Is the training that is carried out in the companies or in the businesses industry or enterprise specific training or is it generic type training?

Mrs Schneyder—The work placements that students do as a component of their vocational is specific industry training.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—But is it enterprise specific or generic?

Mrs Schneyder—No, enterprise specific.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—And who determines the nature of the training they receive in those enterprises?

Mrs Schneyder—That is determined between the employer and our school industry coordinator who sit down and work out what is required as part of the course that the student is participating in and what the employer can provide. In some cases the employer has then released staff for training so that they can support our students.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—And your in-house coordinator, what skill levels do he or she possess to equip them to make those judgments?

Mrs Schneider—They make the links. In all cases the students have log books which indicate the skills that need to be completed, or the competencies that need to be completed. It is based on that log book how much an employer can provide in terms of training. For instance, you might be able to skill or train a student in perhaps pages 1, 4 and 8, for example, and they may need to go to another employer for 2, 6 and 9.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Who sets that curriculum?

Mrs Schneider—Industry.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Industry sets that?

Mrs Schneider—Industry and TAFE. We get it from ACTRAC. All our curriculum is purchased from ACTRAC. Once the training packages come out, I suspect we will then use the training package curriculum—curriculum determined by the training package.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—But is your coordinator a careers teacher? What is the nature of their training?

Mrs Schneider—Our VET coordinator?

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Yes.

Mrs Schneider—He is the teacher who goes out and simply makes the links with the community, with the businesses.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—I appreciate the point. But is that person a humanities teacher? What is the nature of his training?

Mrs Schneider—He actually is a humanities teacher, yes. He is also a viticulture teacher.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Is there any networking between employers in the area in terms of some employers providing some of the skills and other employers providing other elements of the skills that go to make up the generic skills?

Mrs Schneider—That is starting to happen. One of the discussions we have been having with the area consultative committees is that, for instance, the group training scheme can be involved to do exactly that and provide a mixture between employers. At this stage we are certainly looking at the school system offering skills across. But as far as employers are concerned, I think we would work through an area consultant, or Linda Symons, or a group training scheme or someone like that to manage that sort of thing.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Given that it appears you are doing a lot of training and preparation work, which really would be induction training in areas of occupational health and safety, et cetera, that people would receive once they go into employment, have you sat down and talked to employers in the region about some sort of financial contribution towards what the school is doing in this area?

Mrs Schneyder—That is already happening. The Vine Improvement Society, for example, are working with the school. The local employers support us significantly in terms of providing spraying equipment for our viticulture, storing our wine, helping us bottle our wine. They have provided our initial olives for our olive grove. They support us with roses for our horticulture students. There is a terrific amount of liaison because they see it as a huge advantage for them.

Senator CARR—You mentioned that your retention rates are actually improving. What is the percentage of students at the school who stay on to year 12? How has it changed from recent years?

Mrs Schneyder—I have not got an actual figure for it at the moment, but I would say it was about 85 to 90 per cent. That has changed significantly in the last two years because initially a lot of kids were leaving to go to TAFE at the end of year 10 and early year 11. Their perception now is that that is not the best pathway. They are tending to stay on and look at TAFE as an option about half way through year 12. That is that change in perception at looking to further training, staying on and at least beginning year 12. We also have several programs for students at risk of leaving school early, one of which is the students work two days a week and are at school three days a week. So they tend to take that on as an option.

Senator CARR—You think about 20 per cent do not complete year 12?

Mrs Schneyder—Yes.

CHAIR—I think that is such an important question, Mrs Schneyder. If there is any data that the school has got that you could provide to the committee on notice we would appreciate that very much. I know that we are not doing justice because we have not got sufficient time. You just said to Senator Campbell something about where you got your curriculum from and we could not pick up where that is.

Mrs Schneyder—ACTRAC.

CHAIR—That, presumably, is Australia-wide?

Mrs Schneyder—Absolutely. It is no longer called ACTRAC; under the new curriculum it has another name. I have not had to buy any recently so I have not found out what the new name is.

CHAIR—I sometimes think the world is under the control of sign-writers who change the names overnight without telling us. Thank you for that. We have now got that all clear. I note your conclusion states:

A dilemma still exists for schools in that training alone may not solve the employment problems that we in the south are dealing with. Job creation is essential . . .

In some ways, you are saying, ‘We can do the very best at school. We can hook into industry. We can get the kids humming and so on. But if the jobs are not there in the end, it

will all go for naught.' That will leave students even more discouraged and turned off than ever.

Mrs Schneyder—The biggest issue is that the parents already see that as a problem. What we are trying to do is turn the parents around. If they still see there are no jobs, the parents are seeing that as reinforcing, 'What are you doing all this school stuff for?' That is the problem.

CHAIR—Could you take on notice what specific steps the school is taking to work with parents, whether it is a meeting once a month or whether it is them coming to school or anything. I think the committee would be very pleased to have that. You also state:

There is a persistent failure to acknowledge the high youth and adult unemployment statistics in the south of Adelaide amongst those who allocate resources, seed funding, pilot programs.

Are you saying that the southern region is not described separately and it has to fight like mad as a part of Adelaide to get fair recognition, yet anybody will tell you, as the first submission did, that youth unemployment in this area is now 37.9 per cent?

Mrs Schneyder—Absolutely. It is a real issue. We do not understand. I had a meeting with Susan Jeanes, who is our federal member, three days ago asking her why it is happening. We discussed a number of strategies—a way we could be involved or I could be involved—maybe we are not promoting ourselves and what are we doing so that we are not accessing quite a lot of the funding and it is going north.

CHAIR—Further to your on notice answer to the question of how many students finish year 12, would you be able to provide us with any evidence of how many of your students do not want to stay in the south any longer than they need to and bolt at the first opportunity either north, west or east? I understand from the first submission that a lot of students are very happy to leave the area, which I would have thought would have lowered the unemployment statistics?

Mrs Schneyder—That is not my understanding. Our students are not leaving the area; they are staying put. That is largely because of the transport situation. I do not believe the same happens further north from where we are.

CHAIR—Once you get to here and you can hook into the train then life is easier?

Mrs Schneyder—Yes, then you can go that way. The bus to come to TAFE gets here at 9.30 a.m.

CHAIR—That is a very important point so we will note that in terms of jobs in regional areas. Thank you very much, Mrs Schneyder. That has been a very useful contribution to our deliberations in this area. If we have any further questions we would like to put to you, would you be able to provide us with answers, apart from those that we have asked on notice?

Mrs Schneyder—Fine; not a problem.

CHAIR—Thank you. We have thanked the Onkaparinga Council for the use of their facilities today. The Mayor is with us and wonders if he could welcome us on the record. Mr Mayor, we are delighted to ask you to welcome us. We apologise for standing you up for some few minutes.

Mayor Gilbert—Madam Chair and senators, on behalf of council I welcome the committee inquiring into regional employment and unemployment to the city of Onkaparinga. As is the case with many other regions in Australia, our city has felt the negative effects of both government and private sector downsizing in recent years.

The submission before you today introduces our city and highlights the problems faced by council in addressing unemployment in the region. It also outlines hopes for the future and the significant resources that council has allocated to achieve our economic development goals. The submission will be presented by the city manager, Mr Jeff Tate, with assistance from Brian Hales, general manager, economic services, and Mr Martin Threadgold, economic development officer, employment.

I commend the submission to you and wish you well in your task to address what I believe is the most important issue facing Australian society in the present era. I now hand over to the city manager to make his opening statement.

CHAIR—Just before he does, Mr Mayor, on behalf of the committee and the secretariat can I thank you again formally on the record for your absolute cooperation and assistance in enabling us to hold the inquiry here. You would know that I had the opportunity to visit down south a little while back. In the light of you saying that something like 110,000 people are now under the new amalgamated council area down south—and I can never remember the acreage—which is 10 per cent of the population of this state, it seemed to me beyond argument that this was one region our committee should come and visit. You have made that extremely easy for us. You have also given us an excellent submission that points to the hard parts and to some proposals for the future. I would just like to thank you again on the record for your assistance, to say nothing of the submission we are about to hear and pull apart.

Mayor Gilbert—The area is nearly 600 square kilometres, Madam Chair, and it has a population in excess of 140,000.

CHAIR—A population of 140,000—so I got that bit wrong.

Mayor Gilbert—We are the largest local government area in South Australia. Madam Chair, with your permission, I will retire and sit in the gallery.

CHAIR—Thank you for your patience.

[10:16 p.m.]

HALES, Mr Brian, General Manager-Economic Services, City of Onkaparinga, PO Box 1, Noarlunga Centre, South Australia 5168

TATE, Mr Jeffrey, City Manager, City of Onkaparinga, PO Box 1, Noarlunga Centre, South Australia 5168

THREADGOLD, Mr Martin Bernard, Economic Development Officer (Employment), City of Onkaparinga, PO Box 1, South Australia 5168

CHAIR—The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but should you at any time request that your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions be given in camera, the committee will give consideration to that request. I point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate, as has happened over recent years. The committee has before it submission No. 40 dated 24 April 1998. Are there any alterations or additions that you wish to make to the submission at this stage?

Mr Tate—No.

CHAIR—Is it the wish of the committee that the submission be received. There being no objection, it is so ordered. Mr Tate, would you like to open the batting, and then we will put some questions to you.

Mr Tate—Thank you. I noticed that you questioned the previous organisation, Willunga High School, about further information. We would be very happy to provide any further information that would assist in this process.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

Mr Tate—We regard this as an important investigation and review, and we would like to cooperate as much as we can with the committee. There are four people from the council, including Mayor Gilbert who welcomed you. We thought you might like some variety in voices and so on rather than having a smaller number of people churning through the information.

The City of Onkaparinga is a new organisation. It was formed on 1 July 1997 through a voluntary amalgamation as part of the South Australian government's reform program for local government. The population, as Mayor Gilbert indicated, is over 140,000 people, which is approximately 10 per cent of the state's population. So 10 per cent of the people of South Australia live in this area. It is a large geographical area—as the mayor said, almost 600 square kilometres. It is very diverse as well in terms of typography, the socio-economic make-up and the economy of the area. In fact, we regard ourselves more as a region in South Australian terms than a traditional garden variety local government body. We try to think in regional terms rather than simply in local terms.

Our organisational structure includes an emphasis on strategic planning and policy development. We try to operate within the framework of well-developed policies and strategies. It also has an emphasis on service delivery through an economic services department, an environmental services department, a social development department, and also infrastructure. As part of that, we see employment generation as a core business of this organisation. We do not see it as I think a number of councils around Australia see it—as a peripheral issue. We see it as one of our core issues to be considered, along with many others.

The sorts of things we are trying to get into the culture of the organisation are to think, plan and act strategically and, at all times when we are thinking, planning and acting, to take into account economic, environmental and social issues. It is a common planning framework in the public sector these days, but we certainly try to live in those three dimensions. We also are trying to develop a strong service culture for the organisation. We would like to ensure that this organisation takes great pride in providing public services to the area.

You will be interested to know what we are looking for from other governments. In our approach to government of the area, we look for partnerships. We are keen to work in true partnerships with other organisations. I think it is a strong feature of how South Australia works, that you get many projects where several public organisations will combine their resources to reach agreed objectives. In relation to employment and reducing unemployment, we are very keen to have a partnership approach with the Commonwealth where both the Commonwealth and ourselves can combine resources and tackle issues around unemployment. In a global sense, that is the sort of approach that we would like to take. I now ask Brian Hales to pick it up from me.

Mr Hales—Madam Chair and Senators, I would like to refer you to pages 4, 5 and 6 of the submission. Would it be all right to refer to some overheads on the overhead projector?

CHAIR—That is fine. Thank you very much. I believe *Hansard* has mechanisms for coping with this. Can copies of the overheads be provided to us later?

Mr Hales—Yes.

Senator FERRIS—Can you tell me what is on the particular pages you have mentioned?

Mr Threadgold—Mr Hales is referring to the economic program, the future direction of the City of Onkaparinga page and the attachments at the rear of the submission.

Overhead transparencies were then shown—

Mr Hales—On page 4, I have identified what the challenge is. Bearing in mind that this is a new region, a new council, which is covering roughly 3,800 businesses, with an unemployed work force, I think in the order of 8,000, there are a number of challenges which I believe we have got to broker as part of our development of the business sector and, therefore, job creation.

Challenge one is to identify and quantify the unrealised development potential in the region; to identify the resource gaps which limit realising that potential, and to develop and implement the instruments which will overcome the resource caps and connect the local surplus labour pool to the realisation of that potential. What I have outlined here is a schematic which the council is implementing which provides the opportunity, firstly, to broker challenge one, and that is to identify the unrealised development potential. It really focuses on business needs.

The schematic is deliberate in the sense that we have a number of steps here which identify that businesses are at different levels of readiness in terms of achieving their objectives. It is a dynamic process because, once a business changes its objectives—if it wants to get into export markets, manufacturing, whatever, or expand its operations—it has a number of new business needs that have to be met. In that sense it is a dynamic process, and we need a structure within the region to be able to address those needs.

As I have said in the submission, the council is not in a position to identify business needs on its own. It needs to have those people with expertise and those organisations which represent the businesses in our area. I have outlined them very roughly, and there are more here. It is fairly broad and encompassing. We talk about training institutions, and the Willunga High School, for example, would be one of those in terms of the needs of its constituents.

We have the Hackham Business Association and the Lonsdale Business Association which represent their businesses. We have what was formerly the Southern Development Board Adelaide, which is akin to the Northern Development Board Adelaide, but which will be replaced by a business enterprise centre which will endeavour to draw down state government programs for the assistance of business. We certainly have federal government and state government playing a role in that.

We also have our local McLaren Vale and Fleurieu Visitors Centre which provides a service to businesses in the McLaren Vale region. We also have the main street projects, which you are probably familiar with as part of the round of hearings that you have had. The incubator is a project which was referred to in the submission. We have funding for a feasibility study.

The regional export extension service—which I will go into a bit later—and exporters club is proposed by the council. Council will be funding that, and we are seeking funding from the state and federal government on that. We have succeeded in achieving some funding from the state government and that will address what I believe is a gap in the region in terms of addressing the export needs for business. Through that process, we believe that we can identify that unrealised potential for the region, and also identify the resource gaps which limit the potential. A number of studies have been done throughout Adelaide which have enabled council staff here, through former involvement, to identify what some of those gaps are.

In terms of business development, you will find, I believe, that there is a lack of knowledge of markets, particularly overseas markets, a lack of understanding of market

cultures and also contacts in markets. They are the sorts of things which have to be addressed for our businesses.

I will also say that, out of the studies that have been done, in the order of 70 per cent of businesses are unaware of federal and state government programs which are available to them to assist them to develop, basically because those businesses are quite small. From the McKinsey study which was done about three years ago, that is the area where there is going to be significant growth in employment in the future. The larger firms tend to be downsizing through capital replacement and the like. So the focus that we have got is really on the small and medium sized businesses that do not have access to the information that they need.

The other issue is that federal and state governments tend to provide lots of information which, for small businesses, is just too much to digest. They do need assistance to digest the information and fundamentally convert that information to knowledge for their business.

The linking mechanism for all those groups is via our proposal for an economic development forum which would coordinate the activities of all those organisations. The process we are developing here is that, rather than individual organisations having their particular constituents, they work together. I will go back to the former schematic. A business has different needs at different times, as I have outlined, and some of those organisations can be drawn in for the individual business at the time that they need them.

They may not need export extension service assistance, but when they do begin to break into export markets, if that is their desire, then through these groups—for example, the Lonsdale and Hackham businesses associations—they can identify those businesses that are interested in export and can therefore draw on another service which has been put in place in the region.

I believe there can be some benefits just from some simple coordination of existing agencies. The real pay-off in the long run comes from developing that international focus and assisting the businesses in becoming international, not necessarily just in export but in the way they think and in the way that events will affect them.

We have two examples at the moment. The tax reform agenda is going to affect businesses in our region, as will the Asia financial crisis—if we can call it a crisis. I think there are plenty of opportunities there for businesses. If we can get the thinking going that there are opportunities there, we can assist the businesses to understand how that will impact upon their particular businesses right at the local level. I think that would be an important outcome for the region.

The membership of that economic development forum is absolutely pivotal for that. It is not just the groups which exist as we see them at the moment, as responsibilities; it is also people from outside the region with international credentials who can make those links and not just identify what they are but also draw down to the local level what the issues are and make it make sense for local business. So all these organisations will become champions for their particular constituency.

One of the most important aspects is also developing those strategic alliances. That can certainly be with the state government, the federal government or the adjoining councils. For example, the Fleurieu development area has tremendous potential in conjunction with this council for tourism development and the like.

The other linkages are quite subtle. The Northern Territory government brokers linkages with the BIMPEAGA region throughout Asia. They have established a lot of linkages throughout Asia, contacts and the like, but they do not have the industrial capacity to service those markets. This region has plenty of industrial capacity, but I would suggest that they lack some of those contacts and links into those overseas markets. As an example, that is a way of developing external linkages for the benefit of this region. It would also link with the SCRN, the South Central Regional Network, through working with the Murraylands—transport issues and the like. What it does is identify what the needs are in our region and establishes the linkages to draw in the opportunities from agencies that can deliver results in those areas.

I have identified that, in the north-west region of Adelaide, an export extension study identified an unrealised export potential of \$1.1 billion. Over what period that was to be realised was not absolutely clear. It was identified by the businesses themselves that, if they overcome their impediments to export, there is a tremendous potential for wealth generation.

If you apply a multiplier—and in terms of this region someone suggested there will be one job for every \$10,000 of revenue—you start to see that if we address those gaps in wealth generation we are looking at some significant employment outcomes.

Given that this region is south of Adelaide, and is perceived as being a little further south than other parts of the Adelaide metropolitan area—

CHAIR—At the south pole, is it?

Mr Hales—I am thinking of the north when I talk about that. For example, there is a local labour market which cannot access jobs to the north. So I think part of our strategy, as we are developing it, is to develop a model analogous to our business development which identifies the needs of our surplus labour resources. We do have labour resources who are job ready and who do not need a lot of work to get into the labour force. But there are plenty in the labour force, the long-term unemployed, who do need a fair bit of work before they are actually job ready. If we cannot connect them up with the dynamic of what we are outlining there, heading for export markets and developing an international focus, then I think the training provided for the surplus labour pool needs to be connected to that aspect.

CHAIR—Can you give a comment to a question asked of an earlier witness by Senator Campbell. He said that he had read in the paper today that there is a shortage of skilled labour north of town, and lots of jobs going begging. Is there any way you see that job-ready people south of town can be connected to those jobs?

Mr Hales—Transport is one of the big issues for this area. I would suggest that, if you are travelling further than 20 minutes to half an hour, it would be fairly difficult for those people to get jobs in the north, particularly those jobs created north of the Adelaide CBD. It

is about a three-quarters of an hour trip to the Adelaide CBD and, I would say, another 15 to 20 minutes further than that. So the transport infrastructure in that regard would be one of the impediments to the creation of jobs in the north. I will not go any further than that.

CHAIR—It would be very good for us to keep hearing you, but we would like the opportunity to ask a few questions. We have now just about come to the end of our time, so we will continue on through morning tea time.

Senator MACKAY—Mr Hales, how did determine the \$1.1 billion of potential in export marketing?

Mr Hales—There was a survey of businesses. It was in the north-west region of Adelaide.

Senator MACKAY—Who conducted that?

Mr Hales—I project directed that.

Senator MACKAY—How was that \$1.1 billion made up? For example, what sort of industries identified the export potential?

Mr Hales—The full range of businesses did. The approach we are taking down here is to not concentrate on industry sectors so much as the entrepreneurs who wish to broker export markets. A number of surveys have been done federally over the last five years which identified that, of the 75 per cent of businesses that want to get into export markets, 25 per cent are actually doing something about it. The rest do not know what to do next. The survey attempted to test that hypothesis and came up with that figure on the basis of businesses identifying that themselves. They were asked, 'If all your impediments were overcome in export markets, what would be your output?'

Senator MACKAY—I appreciate that you are not taking a sectoral perspective here, but what type of industries were in the top 10?

Mr Hales—There were automotive components; there were food producers. It spanned every industry sector—for example, food production and electronics. It was not confined to any particular industry.

Senator MACKAY—So this is by the nature of an industry audit type of thing, was it?

Mr Hales—A business audit.

Senator MACKAY—Would it be possible to get some more information with regard to that?

Mr Hales—I can get a copy of that for you. The former department of transport and regional development has the copies of that study—the regional export extension service.

CHAIR—That is a state department?

Mr Hales—Yes. Wherever the regional development department is now, it should be there.

Senator MACKAY—That would be good. Thanks.

CHAIR—Mr Threadgold, did you want to take a minutes worth?

Mr Threadgold—No, in the interests of time. I responded to the terms of reference that the Senate gave this committee and I would be happy to respond to any questions that you may have to our response.

CHAIR—You are a gentleman and a scholar, Mr Threadgold. You will earn your keep as Senator Mackay says she has lots of questions. It is our fault for taking longer, but it is too interesting.

Senator MACKAY—I want to finish off a line of questioning which is a bit more general with regard to the presentation. You identified that the critical area for you in terms of industry development is SMEs. One of the problems that you have identified is lack of access to information for SMEs with regard to what government programs and so on are available. Have you also had any experience or identification of a lack of access to capital being a factor?

Mr Hales—For a lot of the businesses that have been dealt with—and I would suggest that it is the same in this area—the first stage is developing the confidence to broker the new markets, to broker expansion. Having overcome that confidence issue, the issues of capital and access to labour becomes almost a mechanical exercise. Once they know how to broker those next steps, the issue of actually getting started is probably the critical issue.

Senator MACKAY—I find that comment quite surprising. I was on a previous inquiry on industry policy and it came through very strongly that the question of access to capital was critical in breaking into both domestic and international markets.

Mr Hales—It is a critical issue. I would suggest that with the businesses that we are dealing with—with small to medium enterprises—that there is a stage before we get to that point.

Senator MACKAY—I appreciate that.

Mr Hales—They all become issues. Access to appropriate labour is a critical issue; they are all critical issues. But, in the first instance, businesses need to know how to structure their business to deal with those issues. Sure, the capital is a resource which is rationed, but businesses do not know how to access those capital markets in the first instance. That is the first point we have to address. In terms of capital, yes, there is a range of capital options which for some businesses are difficult. In terms of their own growth potential, if they rely on retained earnings, it is a very difficult exercise to expand on that basis alone.

Senator MACKAY—One of the times when I was in Adelaide previously—on the Senate industry development inquiry—we met with a range of peak industry groups within

South Australia who were very critical of a number of federal government initiatives with regard to industry policy; and, taking up your point on access to international markets, they were very critical right across the spectrum politically, particularly with regard to cutbacks to R&D, EMDG, DIFF, the export facilitation scheme and so on. You say that in terms of SMEs there is difficulty of access to information about what is broadly available, but the peak groups are saying what is broadly available has been cut back very severely. Do you have any comment with regard to that?

Mr Hales—Yes I think there are two issues there—one is who you speak to. Once again, I think state and federal government policy tends to be developed around the larger business sector. The smaller business sector are either not organised or have not got the time to make these sort of submissions, so it is a big group missing out in terms of policy setting. The model we are outlining today is a model whereby those groups gain a vehicle to have a greater say in policy setting.

Senator MACKAY—I appreciate that, I think it is a very good initiative actually. But what I am getting at is, have you had any disquiet, if you like, about what will happen once SMEs are made aware of what is available—in terms of their industry or their business sector—and that there has been this diminution, if you like, of funding to particular programs that had a very strong export orientation?

Mr Hales—One example is access to Austrade. Small business enterprises need access to people, as opposed to information; they need people to explain the projects to them. It is very much customer focus that is required. Three years ago, Austrade picked up 16 new clients out of the regional export extension service project. Unfortunately the Adelaide office was cut back significantly shortly after that—from about 11 people to four people, on the ground. So, in terms of service delivery, I think South Australia is probably suffering in that regard. We get an 1800 number to call and that goes straight through to Sydney, so proximity to the person providing the advisory service for South Australian businesses becomes very difficult.

Senator MACKAY—So what you are attempting to do here is to pick up that gap that has been left, for example, by the cutbacks to Austrade. Just in general, in terms of government assistance, both state and federal—and you are not confined to this government, either state or federal—what is your view about the level of government assistance, in terms of the programs that we are discussing?

Mr Hales—I think the government assistance programs generally do address the issues. I do not think there is any need for more programs, for example. It is the delivery of the programs which is the essential issue, and I do not think any state government or federal government is going to be resourced adequately to get down to the local level unless you set up regional offices—which would be fantastic—to deliver those services on the ground, and that is what is needed for small to medium enterprises. The proximity to services, the exporters—

Senator MACKAY—What is wrong with that concept of setting up regional offices? I think that is probably the way we should go.

Mr Hales—It is a fantastic idea.

CHAIR—Is this a recommendation you are making—seriously?

Mr Hales—I would strongly recommend that these services be locally based to get to a greater number of businesses.

CHAIR—In the council chambers or, somewhere in this complex, for example? And who would you put in it?

Mr Hales—No, not here. It needs to be separate. As I have outlined in the submission, it needs to be remote from council, simply because at this stage the perception of local government by businesses is somewhat negative. It should not be—it is just that they do not have a lot to do with local government. So it should be separated from local government. Local government still has a role to play in it, but it should be seen as very accessible to business. So it needs to be as close as possible to the concentration of business.

CHAIR—And who would be in there—somebody from Austrade or somebody with that kind of knowledge?

Mr Hales—The key staffing requirement is people who can convert information on federal and state government programs down to the needs of individual businesses. That would be the only criteria—or the major criteria. So it needs to be someone that business has faith in, trusts and whose information, they believe, will be good for their business.

Senator FERRIS—I was interested in your comment, by way of introduction, that your newly amalgamated council has decided that employment is a core business of the new council. Is that a different position to the previous individual councils?

Mr Tate—The City of Noarlunga, which is one of our predecessor councils, employed Martin Thredgold in 1995 or 1996 as an employment development officer; so one of the councils had seen it as an important element of its work. We have increased the resources, in relation to economic development, through the amalgamation process. As a result of that, we have taken it another step higher, in terms of it becoming truly a core function.

Senator FERRIS—I was interested in the comment Mr Hales made a few moments ago about translating a great deal of federal and state government information down to a locally applicable level. Surely, if that is the core business of the council, wouldn't it be the role of the council to take on that amount of information? If you are talking about delivering information in an efficient and effective way, it would surely be better to take a scoop of it and filter it to pick up what is needed, rather than expect regions all around Australia to employ people like Austrade officers—which effectively knocks out the opportunity to put that money on the ground where it belongs.

Mr Hales—It gets down to the expertise of the individuals delivering the information. Councils can take that up—it is not out of the question that councils can do that. But I would suggest that, at this point in time, we need to be facilitating it through funding—for example, the business enterprise centre and an exporters club—so that there is a structure

there where businesses can go to receive expert advice. For example, I cannot provide expert advice to businesses on export issues because I have not been an exporter or had access to export markets. The key thing is the person delivering the information to business.

Senator FERRIS—The point I was making is that the suggestion that a national organisation could effectively work through that information by having local offices would seem to me to be somewhat unnecessary.

Going to your submission—I am afraid I am not able to cite the page number, except that it is a page that talks about remedial strategies and it is page 13 of our faxed copy—you run through a number of projects currently being implemented in the city and you spoke of some of them this morning. I am wondering whether the council is using any work for the dole programs—whether you have employed anybody under that scheme and whether you would have any comment to make on that scheme? I do not see it listed here in your remedial strategies or innovative employment and training programs over the last 18 months, which is on the next page.

Mr Threadgold—We did apply for work for the dole under the pilot projects; our funding submission was unsuccessful on that occasion. In this funding cycle, we are applying for two work for the dole projects—both could realistically be infrastructure projects if we had money to employ people to carry them out, but we haven't—and they are both things that need to be done.

Senator FERRIS—What sort of things are they?

Mr Threadgold—We have 30 kilometres of coastline in our council area. We could have people working on that pretty much like they do on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, going backwards and forwards forever. That is one project—revegetation, fencing and so on along the coastal area. Another is that, with the amalgamation, we have hundreds of street signs and so on with logos of the former councils which need to be identified and replaced. They will possibly be very good work for the dole projects which will be going forward.

One thing I would say is that local government is a little cautious about work for the dole because we have problems with workers' compensation and so on. The way we are approaching work for the dole is through the use of existing brokers in the community who apply for and manage the projects on our behalf. They have our full cooperation, and we provide the resources required for the work to be carried out. We prefer to have it managed externally, rather than be the direct sponsor ourselves, for those reasons; they have the expertise and the resources—frankly, we are limited.

Senator FERRIS—I get the impression that you have worked in this region before on employment programs. Is that correct?

Mr Threadgold—Prior to joining the former Noarlunga Council two years ago, I was regional manager for DEETYA Western Adelaide and then regional manager for Southern Adelaide.

Senator FERRIS—I would like to pick up on that expertise and ask you a couple of questions. Unfortunately, this is an area that has become known for its long-term unemployment and its high levels of youth unemployment. Perhaps relying on some of your previous expertise, what would you see as the long-term factors that have contributed to that unemployment being created in this particular area?

Mr Threadgold—There are a number of issues, and some of them I touched on in the response. When you are talking of a work force of 70,000, if you have things happen such as what is reflected in the census—that is, from 1991 to 1996, we lost 1,000 public sector jobs—that can give us a jump of almost two per cent in our unemployment rate. We had the closure of Metro Meat at old Noarlunga, with the loss of 500 jobs again. You can get two or three percentage points happening just with closures like that.

In the previous hearings, you have had education comments where the school retention rates were discussed for this area. They are not as high as the state average. The types of jobs we are talking about there—with the 500 jobs at Metro Meat and some of the factory jobs that have moved to the eastern seaboard—were prime jobs for the target group of people you are talking about. They have disappeared. Hence, you get the effect of long-term unemployment.

One of the things I would like to point out is that we are a community of 150,000 people, yet we cannot get statistical data for our region. It extends from the southern statistical division of Adelaide. It is very hard for us to benchmark to access data, such as what percentage of the unemployed are long-term unemployed. My historical knowledge suggests that it is probably around 45 per cent for this region, but to clarify that is impossible. If there can be something done where statistical data is aligned with the larger amalgamated councils, it would help us in our efforts.

Senator FERRIS—Just looking at that chart that you are citing from your submission, you say there has been a 14 per cent decline in relation to the Commonwealth government and a 17 per cent decline in relation to the state government, and that private sector employment has actually jumped by 18 per cent. In fact, the largest drop in unemployment is sadly in an area which is called 'not stated', and that is a decline of 77 per cent. Would you say that was the small businesses of this area?

Mr Threadgold—Most definitely. Of our 3,800 businesses, 95 per cent of them employ fewer than 20 people. Only five per cent of them employ more than 20 people in an area this size. I receive knowledge probably on a fortnightly basis of small businesses closing. Unfortunately, by the time I hear about them, it is too late for us to intervene in a positive manner. What we are hoping to achieve with this model that Brian presented is that we can be in a position where they can come to us when things first begin to go wrong, rather than us hearing about them a week before they are due to close the doors.

Senator CARR—I would like to follow that up. If you are saying there was a 77 per cent decline in the 'not stated' category, is it reasonable to put that into the private sector and say they are predominantly small business?

Mr Threadgold—The categories are Commonwealth government, state government, local government, the private sector and not stated. It is purely a statistical response that the Bureau of Statistics use when they put the census material out.

Senator CARR—But it does not make a lot of sense, does it? It says that 77 per cent of the job losses are in a category called ‘not stated’, so we cannot identify where they have come from.

Mr Threadgold—No. For ‘not stated’ in the 1991 census, the response was 3,264 and, in the 1996 census, it was 720. The difference between those two census in the ‘not stated’ category is a change of 77 per cent.

Senator CARR—Yes, but you are thinking most of that is in small business. That is your intuition, is it?

Mr Threadgold—I do not know what other sector you would want to put it in. All I am saying is that I have not set the criteria for that statistic.

Senator CARR—I appreciate the point. The figures lead to the conclusion, I guess, that you have got a decline in public sector employment in regard to the state government of 17 per cent—nearly 18 per cent—and for the Commonwealth government it is some 15 per cent. There are those about who say that, if you reduce the size of the public sector, somehow there is an increase in employment in the private sector. What these figures suggest to me is that, when you decrease the size of the public sector, you also decrease the level of economic activity and, therefore, decrease the size of the private sector.

Senator FERRIS—The private sector group is on 18.5 per cent according to these figures.

Senator CARR—That is the point I am making. If you look at the full statistics, you will see that it includes small business, which is part of the private sector. I am supposing from your response that that could be included with the two figures together. In fact, it would give you an entirely different view. The level of employment in the region has declined dramatically in both public and private sectors.

Mr Threadgold—I think we have got a misunderstanding. What I am saying is the ‘not stated’ category could well include the private sector. The ‘not stated’ category was something that was in place in 1991 and there was a measure taken in 1996.

Mr Tate—Just to clarify, in the 1991 census, 3,264 people did not state their employment sector and, in the 1996 census, 720 people did not. I think it is a bit misleading to have the change in per cent there. It does disguise things. I guess the bottom line is three per cent growth as shown in that table.

Senator CARR—On page 14 of the submission, you indicate that there is a series of remedial actions that government has taken in addressing unemployment problems and that this is dependent upon ongoing public sector support. Given the previous discussion we have had, that does not seem to be too forthcoming. You also go on to say that major capital

works projects would be desirable. Is it your submission that there is not only a requirement for continuing public sector support in terms of remedial action but also a desirability to have major capital works projects initiated as well?

Mr Threadgold—For an area such as this, where we have high levels of unemployment, major capital works would be very desirable. We have a number of projects queued that we would like to get on with as a council, but our budgets are not capable of implementing them immediately. We have had offers where the state government is prepared to put \$2,000 towards the total salary of people who are employed if we were to implement the capital works project. That is unrealistic. We would still have to come up with something like 80 or 90 per cent of the salary for the people. We have future forecasts for capital works we would like to implement. We do not have the funding; we are faced with rate capping and so on. It would be a simple and direct way that local government could intervene immediately in assisting with the unemployment problem in our community.

CHAIR—What sort of capital works?

Mr Threadgold—Some I mentioned already. We have any number of projects we can implement along the 30 kilometres of coastline.

Senator CARR—Infrastructure projects?

Mr Threadgold—Revegetation and those types.

Mr Tate—There was some publicity recently in the daily newspaper here about the condition of surf lifesaving club buildings in this area. We have five surf lifesaving clubs, which is a larger number than any other area in South Australia. We are facing an infrastructure cost with buildings. A lot of the building stock comes from the 1970s and it is getting near the end of its useful life. We would be able to spend over \$2.5 million very quickly renovating or replacing surf lifesaving club buildings. It is that sort of work. Often, when councils talk about public works programs and so on, there is a degree of cynicism about that. I think we can justify legitimate works. The coast is the biggest example we can point to right now, but there are many road works, footpaths and so on.

CHAIR—What about the sporting complex? Are there capital works proposed there?

Mr Threadgold—Yes. Again, we have infrastructure in buildings on parks and reserves that goes back a number of years. Major renovation or replacement will be very quiet over the next 10 years, in particular. We could very quickly get capital works on the ground in relation to sporting clubs.

The Southern Sports Complex not far from here is a very good example where the state government a number of years ago worked with the council and the local community to try to develop a sports complex. It has not taken off in the way that we would want; in fact it is home to the Southern Adelaide Football Club and has only a small number of community uses. Again, we could very quickly put things on the ground with the capital works program.

Senator CARR—Don't those arguments apply to transport infrastructure, to hospitals and to education? Is this not a question that arises in terms of the fundamental problem about unemployment—that there are not enough jobs and that it is the state's responsibility to provide those infrastructure projects to alleviate that fundamental problem? How do you respond to that proposition?

Mr Tate—I think you are talking about responsibilities of various spheres of government. I do not think you can just say it is a state government responsibility.

Senator CARR—No. I mean 'the state'.

Mr Hales—I would like to add to that. There is an important ingredient in dealing with infrastructure projects like the Southern Sports Complex. Say, for example, the federal, state and local governments put up \$5 million to provide a local sporting complex. If we went that extra step and put it up as an international sporting complex, it does not become just a capital project; it becomes a facility which attracts visitors to the area, therefore creating sustainable jobs in that way. So you just need to lift the vision in terms of what you are putting infrastructure in for.

CHAIR—What would you do internationally down south? You cannot do soccer because Hindmarsh has just beaten you by about \$20 million, has it not?

Mr Hales—It is not necessarily just sports; there are many markets overseas. An example is the Japanese market, where there is a huge and growing market for executives who need two weeks away from Japan. They do not necessarily do sports; they may have a library facility for nurturing the brain. There are also very wealthy people who are prepared to come along and pay good money to be trained by an olympic athlete—they are never going to be olympic athletes themselves—and to actually be out there running with them. So you are drawing in an international market. On that simple premise, it is not a costly exercise.

Senator MACKAY—I would like to ask Mr Threadgold a couple of questions, and I am going to draw on his previous DEETYA background as well. What is happening with the employment services market here?

Mr Threadgold—Employment National is remaining local, with a reduced work force, obviously.

Senator MACKAY—Do you know how many?

Mr Threadgold—I do not know the exact numbers, but much of the gap will have been taken up by the new players such as Drake and Jobcare. We have been in touch with each of the new brokers, but we were not aware of who was going to be awarded contracts or whatever until after the announcements, which was, as I have said in the response, something we would have liked to have had some input into, because the locations they have put forward are all in Noarlunga Centre. We are a wide region, and perhaps with some consultation we could have assisted with maybe getting job brokerage services in some of the other areas within the council area.

Senator MACKAY—In what areas are there gaps?

Mr Threadgold—If you look down Willunga, McLaren Vale and Aldinga, Willunga and Aldinga in particular have high levels of youth unemployment, and we will be approaching the existing brokers to try to negotiate with them to perhaps provide some sort of service down there. But we are back to the transport problems and so on again. The public transport from a place like Aldinga to Noarlunga Centre is not as good as it should be.

Senator MACKAY—So what was there previously?

Mr Threadgold—In Aldinga?

Senator MACKAY—Yes.

Mr Threadgold—There were skillshare facilities, and the government providers used to work through skillshare in assisting with the placement of young unemployed people.

Senator MACKAY—So there was a skillshare located there, was there?

Mr Threadgold—An outreach of the skillshare program.

Senator MACKAY—What has happened to that? Has that not received funding?

Mr Threadgold—No. That is finished.

Senator MACKAY—And what did that skillshare do? Did it have a youth unemployment focus?

Mr Threadgold—It did yes. It had a focus that was fairly wide, from basic skills training to resume preparation and so on.

Senator MACKAY—I am sorry; I could not hear that. It is not your fault.

Mr Threadgold—It had a focus on basic skills training, resume preparation and job seeking skills—equipping young people with those types of skills.

Senator MACKAY—And that is not there now?

Mr Threadgold—No. But it is not impossible that we cannot replace it by perhaps approaching one of the new players.

Senator MACKAY—I appreciate that. I have one very small question here. In relation to your submission where you talk about youth unemployment figures, you say that unfortunately these figures are no longer available. What do you mean?

Mr Threadgold—It gets back to the point I made earlier; they are not available for this area. We can get southern statistical division data, but that includes Marion, Mitcham, Brighton—other neighbouring council areas. It is very hard to get data specific to our area,

and the demographics between a place like Marion and a place like Noarlunga are entirely different.

Senator MACKAY—You say they are no longer available. Does that mean they were available at some time?

Mr Threadgold—Yes. There was some data published in the DEETYA quarterly labour market estimates. They are still available, and I think it was probably up until about two years ago that youth data was available as a subset of those figures. I think that data was no longer made available about two or three years ago.

Mr Tate—I would like to make a general comment about statistics. We have tried to establish ourselves as an area of local knowledge about issues, and that includes the use of ABS and other statistics. As a general comment—and I do not have the full information here, but I would be quite happy to make some further written comment if required—we are finding that the ABS statistics are becoming less available. They are being aggregated in two ways: over larger areas and over longer time frames. So some publications that used to be available, say, quarterly, are now annual; and some that treated more localised areas are now over a wider area. As I said at the start, we try to be strategic in our thinking, planning and actions, and we try to work to strategic plans. If you are researching issues, it is very hard if you cannot get statistical information, and it is becoming a difficult problem for us.

CHAIR—And you also make the comment that those figures are not broken down by age and sex. So again, it is a lumping together. We do have to finish; we are over time. I think Senator Ferris might get back in time to ask a couple more questions, but while she is on her way back, I will ask you a question on notice rather than taking time for an answer now. This is very useful for us. I am sorry you are attending the first hearing of the committee. Clearly, what we are going to have to do is to multiply by two, or at least when we get excellent submissions—and this is an excellent submission.

From previous visits down here and from talking with mayors and so on, I understand that a considerable effort has been made in the past, particularly by the three mayors of the now amalgamated council. One of the messages that I have been given is that it has been no fun at all in this area to have all that effort, all of the network—that is, the community, council and so on who recognise the importance of getting together and trying to establish with the community opportunities for employment—undone with the change of government. Could you comment on just how much effort, pain and dollars—leave out the swear words—it has actually cost to try to continue to create jobs despite having the structure that you had all worked so hard to get into place pulled apart. I remember LEAP projects, skillshare and so on. Councils stretched their brains every which way, particularly sideways, to try to come up with ways in which you could assist down here, and then that all got stopped. Now it seems that you are starting a new process. Can you give the committee some sense of the job damage that stoppage has done in terms of this region?

Mr Tate—That is a very difficult question to answer up-front. We can have a look at it and provide some written information back to you if you wish. I guess our attitude is a fairly pragmatic one. Government programs come and go; things change, agendas change, and we understand that. What you are seeing now, I think, is that behind the amalgamation of three

councils come other institutional arrangements, and the sorts of schematic diagrams that Mr Hales showed before indicate that we are setting up new structures now to deal with issues.

Another structure that we are putting in place is a thing called ‘southern partnership’, which I do not believe was included in our submission. But it is our intention to work especially with the state government on strategic issues for this area. So it is a partnership between the council, the local members of parliament of whatever political persuasion, the state government of the day and the federal members of parliament to identify, say, six key issues that we would deal with at any one time to try to get a whole-of-government approach between the three spheres of government in dealing with those issues.

That group will meet for the first time in early June, I think, and quite clearly number one on that agenda will be unemployment. There is no question about that—that will be the number one issue. It is a question of how we actually combine our resources to work together to deal with issues.

CHAIR—I have some last questions. You either can answer them very quickly or take them on notice. What can you tell us about youth suicide and glue sniffing or comparable behaviours in this area? In your submission you tell us that you spend \$300,000 each year controlling graffiti. Is that bill going up or staying the same? If you can answer yes and no by all means do so, otherwise you can take those questions on notice.

Mr Tate—We will take on notice the question about youth suicide and glue sniffing. In relation to the costs of graffiti removal, it is rather difficult to provide accurate figures as to whether the cost is going up or down because the strategies have changed. We now have a much stronger approach, a more intensive approach, to graffiti removal. The figures for the previous years would disguise the fact that we have actually changed step and see it as a higher priority.

CHAIR—Senator Ferris, I thought you would like to have the last call for questions.

Senator FERRIS—I have to abstain. I want to get the next witness through, so I will say no.

CHAIR—Okay. Mr Tate, you have already offered to assist us with anything further, and I thank you for that. I also thank you very much for an excellent submission. I suspect we will be in touch. For the information you have already provided us, thank you very much indeed.

[11.07 a.m.]

BEUMER, Mrs Wendy Jean, Chairperson, South East Education and Training Association (Target Team of South East Economic Development Board, SA), PO Box 1445, Mount Gambier, South Australia 5290

CHAIR—Welcome. In what capacity do you appear before the committee?

Mrs Beumer—I represent the South East Economic Development Board.

CHAIR—The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any time request that your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions be given in camera, the committee will give consideration to such a request. I point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate, as has happened in recent years. The committee has before it your submission. Are there any additions you would like to make to that submission?

Mrs Beumer—What I have brought this morning are notes. The Economic Development Board has indicated to me that they are providing a fuller submission after their board meeting today. This is an opportunity to talk through some of the key issues rather than the technical issues.

CHAIR—The committee has decided to receive the submission and also your speaking notes which have just been circulated. I invite you to make an opening statement and then we will field questions. Thank you.

Mrs Beumer—Basically I want to talk through the points in the paper. We believe that it is most important to recognise that the regions are different and that they must be considered in terms of their strengths and opportunities.

It is, I guess, economics level 1 that says that natural resources influence primary industry operating successfully, which in turn influences the value adding industries. Infrastructure and support services have a significant role in attracting investment at all levels.

We believe that the support that should be provided to the communities should be based on the opportunities to increase economic activity and hence employment rather than just focus on problem areas. The potential to make a difference is important.

In point 3 we talk about the Hilmer competition policy. The implementation of this has had a very detrimental effect on our regional economies. We believe that inflexible competitive tendering is anti good business practice. Where a business will generally work with a supplier to ensure a tailored service, much of this is relational. It is based on trust and is not necessarily related to price and specifications. A business will often agree to pay a particular supplier slightly more knowing that, if there is an emergency call on a weekend, they will come out. We are not talking about nepotism, but an understanding that there is a human side to all business.

We do not believe that all factors being influenced by the Hilmer competition policy are being measured—the old ‘not counting the right beans’ factor in the bean counting exercise. We have given two examples. We could give a lot more detail, but we are just giving the points here.

The flow-on effect of public sector jobs being removed from our community is not just the standard economic indicators related to salary dollars; it also includes significant loss of volunteer expertise in running our community boards and services as well as the local footy team. The other example is that the letting of state wide contracts for equipment and consumables has actually meant increased prices for government organisations in our region compared to what local suppliers can provide. At the same time it has taken business out of our region and caused job losses. It has also influenced the perceived efficiency of regional government organisations.

In a regional economy competition and size of the market have been influences for a long time. Artificial competition created by government in a thin market is producing a wider range of choice to consumers, but many of the choices are now unstable. For example, child-care services are unable to provide core services, particularly in small towns. Also, small business has a well documented requirement for simplified interface with government and individual mentors, but it is now being given an exaggerated choice to sort through. The other example is that because employment placement services are being fragmented, services will no longer be provided in the smaller towns. Because none of these services are viable outside the larger centres, they are concentrating on the larger centres which puts an artificial level of competition into the larger centres. An interesting aside is that in this environment the federal government is providing a one-stop shop through Centrelink.

Regions see their economies more holistically than government departments and tiers operate. Inflexible programs which set guidelines unrelated to regional needs without real consultation and recognition of the decision making ability of the people in the region do not make wise use of resources. For example, good business ideas which focus on niche markets are not seen as a good risk by government departments which do not take the advice of skilled people in the region. Government departments are not generally in the best position to judge risk.

Very restrictive planning and development regulations are creating high levels of frustration. Issues include native vegetation, EPA and state planning acts. The very strong focus on why a development should not proceed rather than why a development should happen is quite detrimental.

Funding related to national skill shortages is totally irrelevant to regional needs where a significant impact could be made. Labour market programs which last for six months and include strong components of structured, accredited training relevant to the local work force needs produce work ready people. They have the right attitude and the right skills. They are not employment creation schemes, except for the actual training industry.

Labour market programs did provide a very important resource to address the well-recognised limitation to regional business expansion—namely, the lack of work force with particular skills. That was brought up in the McKinsey report.

Vocational education and training programs in our region are overwhelmed by demand from industry and business compared with unmet demand in many city organisations. This is reflected in current research funded by ANTA which describes the very close relationship between local enterprises, individuals, community and local VET providers.

Again, relating to point 2, which was the point about putting your money where there is potential, resources should be redistributed to where they will make the most impact. There has been considerable pressure for government providers of vocational education and training to amalgamate—big is better—often to the detriment of employment in regional centres.

All business sectors require a mix of business size. Viability and efficiency are not necessarily achieved by increased business size. On the same point, the majority of the very competitive private training providers coming into the market are small businesses.

Short contract periods for employment, especially in the public sector, is creating significant uncertainty which impacts on spending habits and decision making in terms of major investment. This is coupled with extended trading hours and increased flexibility in the work force producing more casual part-time and shared job situations. The long term employer-employee relationships are breaking down. Mutual loyalty is disappearing. The effect ripples out into things like the real estate markets where the major long-term investments are for families.

Senator FERRIS—I notice the name of your organisation—South East Education and Training Association. I wonder if you could tell us a little about the role and function of your organisation, specifically in relation to education and training. What sort of work do you do with unemployed youth in your area, what is your relationship to the schools and exactly what does your organisation do in relation to addressing perhaps the long-term unemployed? Could you also tell us a little about the clustering that is occurring in Mount Gambier? I must admit that I was there last night.

Mrs Beumer—So was I.

Senator FERRIS—I noticed that all the mills were working, as I was driving back from Penola last night. Are you working to supply those industries; and, if so, are you doing it through the education system? What are the schools doing to provide job ready employees for those industries? Perhaps you could think about viticulture as well, because I notice that plantings are going further and further south. Could you talk about that sort of area?

Mrs Beumer—The South East Education and Training Association is a target team of the Economic Development Board. Our board is structured so that there are target teams for major industry groupings which are the forum for those industry groupings, and they feed advice up to the board and then the board provides advice back down.

So basically the South East Education and Training Association is a forum for all enterprises involved in education, training and employment placement services. We talk about the bigger issues for the region. We talk about joint tendering where there is no other way of getting that amount of business into the region—sort of vertical integration of business where we need to work together like that.

The South East Education and Training Association does not actually do lots of little projects in its own right. It provides the forum, the infrastructure and the issues so that funding can be sought or lobbying can be made for particular things that are required for the region.

Senator FERRIS—If we were to think about the Willunga High School experience that was related here this morning—you have Grant High School and Mount Gambier High School—do you have any examples you could give us of the same sorts of case studies that are being done for the particular industry demand areas in your region?

Mrs Beumer—We have quite a number of different programs for students so that they can move into industry, either from school or through a pathway of learning that is related to vocational education and training.

I would rather work the other way—from industry demand—because most of where we are looking at is saying, ‘Unless we have the economic demand and we have the need for the jobs created, it does not matter what we do in schools and in vocational training, we build up expectations that are unrealistic.’ In our region, in terms of the economic development board model, we tend to focus on what the industry demands. Therefore, we have responded, in particular, to the forest industry where there has been a significant downturn, the removal of capital and the selling off of different parts of the industry. It is a major industry in the south east, but it is not a major industry that is booming.

We have responded with entry level training programs because they had unstable work forces; they could not keep people. Over the last four years, we have introduced a lot of vocational training which is now matched with their award structure, so we are getting a more skilled work force that is more efficient and meets the industry’s needs. So, in terms of education and training, we respond very much to the industry’s needs.

In the school programs we have had forest based vocational training programs, like VET in SACE in South Australia, but the industry’s response in that particular sector has not been very good. They are not particularly happy with that source of employees. They prefer a different source of employee with a different level of skill, maturity and expertise.

In viticulture, for example, we have a massive demand for training, because the vineyard operators and managers, like many other businesses, are no longer prepared to take on unskilled labour. In the region, we provide a lot of entry level programs designed by the industry to say, ‘On day one, if these people can do these tasks, we will employ them.’ So the education and training sector has come behind and worked with industry in terms of what they require for recruitment.

Senator FERRIS—What sort of problem is long-term youth unemployment and long-term unemployment generally in Mount Gambier and in your region? Is long-term unemployment an entrenched difficulty?

Mrs Beumer—Mount Gambier has got a considerable number of long-term unemployed people but, in our region, we have to look beyond Mount Gambier. We have some centres in our region which are quite severely affected by unemployment. Millicent comes to mind.

Everyone talks about the centre of Mount Gambier where the figures are high and all the rest of it, but Millicent is actually a very important centre in our region where unemployment is entrenched. It is very difficult.

The community has tried to do a lot of different things. I know education and training programs have been involved a lot, but there is no investment in industry and business in Millicent. So it is a bit like we were saying that continued investment in a problem area is not going to reap the rewards. We try to look more holistically at the region and say, 'Where is there going to be real potential? Can we encourage people to move to where there is real potential?' It sounds a bit callous in some ways, but why spend heaps and heaps on education and training in an area where there is no interest in employment and economic development?

Senator MACKAY—I want to ask about your organisation. Perhaps I missed this earlier, and I apologise if I did. Where do you get your funding from? How are you funded?

Mrs Beumer—We are an association of professional people involved in education and training and employment services. A very small amount of money comes from the local government to provide secretarial services to us. The rest of the work is done on a volunteer basis.

Senator MACKAY—Did you tender with regard to the employment services market? Are you that involved?

Mrs Beumer—The association itself did not tender, but members of the association did and many of them were successful, but some were not. I cannot sort of put my day job hat on here. Lots of our members tendered and were successful, and some were not. Certainly, there are some new players on the block who are being encouraged to join the association to be part of the regional forum because they are new people in the town.

Senator MACKAY—Now I understand. In the last dot point, you indicated some concern about the fragmentation of employment placement services and the deleterious effect this may have with regard to regional exigencies. Could you expand a bit on that? What has happened that has caused you to make that statement?

Mrs Beumer—There are 65,000 people in our region—25,000 in Mount Gambier and maybe another 10,000 in the area around it—and people have been given contracts for the whole region to provide services, and perhaps 10 places in this particular service. Fragmenting the market and saying 10 for you and 10 for you and 10 for somebody else is creating artificial competition. What has happened is that not one of those can afford to service the other 40,000-odd people in the region. They can only afford to be in Mount Gambier because of the costs of running the business and the numbers of people who can come through their doors.

We are very concerned in the region about what is going to really happen. The other dilemma is that the 10, 10 and 10 here in Mount Gambier are also going to be so viciously competitive for the places that are in Mount Gambier that it is going to create another

environment where people are going to have unstable businesses. You are not going to get your service to the people who need it.

Senator MACKAY—How has it altered? You said that some of your associates got contracts and some did not. How has it changed?

Mrs Beumer—If you look at the contracted case management as one example, previously the CES provided a regional service. They had agencies in Millicent and Naracoorte and they had links and infrastructure where they could tap into or visit and do things out in the rest of the region. We also had two other small contracted case managers—one that had an infrastructure through Skillshare and all sorts of things, but basically only serviced Mount Gambier. And we had another private provider who was not a Skillshare organisation who had a long-term contract with contracted case management who worked in Mount Gambier and Millicent and also visited Naracoorte.

Now, because of the splitting and certain loss of expertise, loss of core business, loss of a whole lot of things, Employment National will almost certainly only be able to provide services in Mount Gambier. We are very concerned that they are so small now that they will not be able to go out. The Salvation Army is slightly larger, we think, and we are concerned that they will not be able to go out either. Skillshare lost contracted case management and so did the private provider.

Senator MACKAY—What were they replaced with?

Mrs Beumer—Nothing.

Senator MACKAY—Nothing?

Mrs Beumer—They were replaced with these other two services which we are not sure will be able to service the whole region. So we are very concerned about how it is going to come out in the wash. We can understand that there needed to be some changes in the market, but it seems far too experimental to be spending two or three years playing games.

Senator MACKAY—And I guess there is the philosophical question about whether these services should be provided by the government, a private public mix—which is what it was previously, or be totally private.

Mrs Beumer—There is some discussion about whether government really should be providing some of the services. But going to a contrived managed market is not necessarily the answer because we were already working in a mixture of government provision and free market. We have gone to a managed market which is artificially imposing things that are going to be a problem, we believe.

Senator MACKAY—That is a good point.

Senator CARR—In point 6, you refer to the shortage of vocational education and training places in the region. Are you able to quantify that unmet demand?

Mrs Beumer—Yes.

Senator CARR—You are saying there is a shortage of places?

Mrs Beumer—We are saying that we have a lot of demand from business and industry that cannot be met by normal state appropriation of funding into the region, and it cannot be met under user choice—user choice is going to be something that is a bit of a ‘not sure’. We have lots and lots of industry demand, like viticulture, for training and insufficient funding in our region to actually meet their demands.

Senator CARR—The ABS figures from two years ago suggested that 60,000 people could not find a place in a TAFE college across the country which, of course, is probably double the levels of shortfalls in the university sector. What sort of regional calculations would you have for your area?

Mrs Beumer—I would have to go back to get you more accurate figures. We actually have waiting lists in our region for—

Senator CARR—This is for TAFE colleges?

Mrs Beumer—For TAFE courses. The other sorts of things that could be provided by private providers in the VET market is not clear until the user choice comes through, but they are actually not interested in a lot of the other types of training. They are only really interested in apprenticeship and traineeship training.

Senator CARR—How does the university sector, the higher education sector more broadly defined, figure in your calculations? Is there a problem there as well?

Mrs Beumer—We do not have very much provision at all of university sector education in our region. As an association, we have worked for many years to woo the University of South Australia and Deakin University into our region. We have run first-year courses in association with the university to try to meet the need for university courses in the region. Then what happens is that there are major university amalgamations in Victoria, or there are cutbacks in funding in South Australia, and they pull back from the regions very quickly. Warrnambool campus at Deakin almost closed two years ago because of this very thing.

What we do now is, as an association, we encourage the universities—they are members—to promote flexible delivery, promote recognition of prior learning, come into our region, and encourage people to be involved in university through extension. A project is currently being set up with the Economic Development Board to look at what happens to people leaving the region to go to other education. In our demographics, we have a big drop in population between the ages of 18 and 35. A lot of that is believed to be related to going somewhere else for further education. It is all sort of linked in with moneys going out.

Senator CARR—Are you saying that there is a shortage of places in TAFE?

Mrs Beumer—Yes.

Senator CARR—And, obviously, there is no provision in the university sector.

Mrs Beumer—That is right.

Senator CARR—And there is a limited range of educational opportunities in your region. Is that the submission you are making?

Mrs Beumer—Yes.

Senator CARR—Could I put it to you that, as I read your submission, you are actually saying that the state—by which I mean the government, the public sector—has a responsibility in terms of assisting unemployment. Actually, you are suggesting here that, through various policies of governments at all levels, they have actually contributed to creating unemployment.

Mrs Beumer—We believe so, particularly with the impact of the competition policy.

Senator CARR—Yes, and that has an impact on the whole society, not just on the economy.

Mrs Beumer—That is right.

Senator CARR—So that contraction of the economy as a result of withdrawal of government services has an impact on the whole society in terms of the interconnections between various social groups.

Mrs Beumer—That is right. It comes back, too, to the fact that some of the economic measures are not holistic enough. As I have said, they are not counting the right beans a lot of the time. The social infrastructure is very important. If government had to actually pay for the services that are provided by volunteer organisations in our communities, they would be up for a far bigger bill than they have now.

Senator CARR—Do you believe there is a role for government in terms of the provision of major infrastructure projects to assist, not just in terms of community building or nation building, but in terms of economic activity and employment?

Mrs Beumer—The board has been involved in some significant areas where they believed that major infrastructure was important and it has not been forthcoming; that is, the ongoing discussions about the railway in the region and the fact that we have marvellous information technology available but we do not have the right sort of pipes in the ground. We have things like dairy farmers not being able to expand because there is not sufficient power supply available. There are a whole lot of things like that happening. The board has been very active in trying to get solutions for our region, but it comes back to snags in development requirements, trying to explain to somebody who is not even listening to the advice of the region or believes that the region is not able to make decisions. It is a very frustrating sort of episode in some of those areas.

CHAIR—We have to finish this section, and I am terribly sorry to do that. Thank you, colleagues, for letting me interrupt. What you have given us is extraordinarily useful and very good because it highlights some of the negatives that a lot of people are not prepared to talk about; for example, not counting the right thing or seeing the impact of competition as a negative, not a plus. We must now move to public forum. I invite all of those who would like to contribute to come toward the table or near a microphone. Of course, Mrs Beumer, you are very welcome to stay and contribute.

At this point, we move to a public forum where members of the public who are here have an opportunity to express a view either on what has already been said or on any aspect of regional unemployment. The forum constitutes proceedings in parliament and is therefore subject to parliamentary privilege.

We have some processes that I would like to make clear. As this is a public forum, I should therefore speak to all of you only once, so that I do not have to do this every time. First of all, *Hansard* needs to know names and addresses, preferably public rather than private. If the only address you have is a private address, we will not put that on the record for your protection.

I would also like to advise everybody who may approach the table to speak that the committee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but should you wish to give any of your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to your questions in private, you can ask to do so. I am not sure how you can have a public forum in camera, but I can see that it is prospectively possible. The committee would of course consider your request to do so, but anything you put in camera may indeed subsequently be made public by order of the Senate. I ask you to make your comments brief because we have limited time. My colleagues may fire questions at you.

Ms Buckley—My name is Trish Buckley. I am from Christie Downs Community House. I am the community development officer. The address is Morton Road, Christie Downs. I am here with Christina Wilson. We are involved in a group called the Christie Downs Employment Support Group.

We noticed this morning that there is an awful lot of talk about youth unemployment and programs from an educational point of view. Although they are very good programs, there has not been an awful lot of focus on older people. We are talking about the 45-plus, people who have been working for a heck of a long time in industry, whose jobs are no longer needed because of X, Y and Z reasons. We are here to support people in that area.

We are hoping to set up programs within the community to actually assist people to get back into the work force. The government seems to have taken the stand that now you are over 50 you do not need to work any more. It seems to be a very negative view. People are now working on a volunteer basis; they now do not have to look for work after that age. We feel that this is really soul destroying. A lot of people here are really feeling they are finished.

CHAIR—Can you tell us what percentage of people in this area are over 45 and unemployed?

Ms Buckley—I cannot give you those specific figures, but we are seeing people coming through the centres and we are talking to people out there in the community. We are seeing large groups that are basically becoming redundant at the age of 50.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—What social issues is that generating?

Ms Buckley—It is creating a lot of social issues. For one thing, the poker machine situation is getting worse. A lot of people are getting hooked on gambling. It is putting so much pressure on everything.

CHAIR—Where is the nearest gambling?

Ms Buckley—It is everywhere. It is right outside.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Are they in the pubs?

CHAIR—*Hansard* should note that everybody is pointing just outside the door. Do you mean in the council chambers?

Ms Buckley—No, in the tavern.

Senator CARR—That is another inquiry.

CHAIR—For the record: it is not in the council chambers.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—There are poker machines in the pubs.

Ms Buckley—This is a personal point of view, but the biggest mistake was bringing poker machines into South Australia. I come from New South Wales and I have seen it over there. When I came here I thought, 'No poker machines—that is great.' But with the introduction of poker machines we are seeing more and more social issues, social problems. Poverty is really bad at the moment. Unemployment for the older people is just growing.

Senator CARR—Is the unemployment affecting more men or more women?

Ms Buckley—I am seeing a larger number of women getting involved with this sort of thing.

CHAIR—Perhaps we should get the names of our two other contributors.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—I want to ask a question about youth unemployment because the council submission said there was a relatively high level of youth unemployment in this area. Is the degree of suicide amongst young people in this area high or low?

Ms Baker—As far as I know, from a worker at the Wanilla South Youth Centre, there is a problem with youth suicide in this area. I do not know of any exact data but they were recently giving courses to introduce a program against youth suicide and to work with parents.

CHAIR—Can you just stop and tell us who you are?

Ms Baker—I live in Port Willunga. I am currently unemployed and I am trying to set up a cooperative in Port Willunga, Aldinga Beach, which will be a business to provide unemployment services and education and training opportunities in that particular locality. That is what I wanted to talk to you about today.

CHAIR—So, in answer to Senator Campbell's question, you are saying you do not have any accurate figures but you know that people are suiciding.

Ms Baker—The people I am talking about tell me that it is a problem and they are doing something to prevent that from happening through parent education. I think there were courses that were run in particular for that purpose.

CHAIR—Glue sniffing had a reputation south of the town for a while. Is that still the case?

Ms Baker—Not so much, but it is a very well known fact that, for example, in Port Willunga and Aldinga the abuse of marijuana is growing and they also have an alcohol problem.

CHAIR—The same problem as Christie Downs.

Ms Baker—Yes.

Ms Wilson—I am a volunteer self-publicist. I work for the dole for myself. At the same time as doing that for many long hours every day I am involved with the Christie Downs employment support group, which is very new. Part of the reason that Ms Buckley cannot answer specific questions at the moment is that we are brand new. At the very base level, and from a limited amount of resources, we are promoting the concept that we have established the group in the local environment.

In reference to the question about youth suicide or suicide full stop, I have two brief things to say. I also want to follow on from what Ms Buckley was saying about the plight of older people. Something that has always concerned me in this whole debate—and I have a background in philosophy, history and politics—is: when middle-aged talented people are starving to literal death in Australia, who is going to provide a role model and leadership for the youth of Australia?

Secondly, on the specific question of suicide I am involved as a freelance volunteer and unpaid journalist, and I believe that I would have the leave of the Noarlunga health services to draw the attention of the committee to the existence in this environment of a newspaper called *Women's Voices*, which is a product of the southern women's community health centre, one of the components of the Noarlunga health services. We recently ran a very good article written by a young girl—it is quite astounding—on the subject of suicide. I wish that we could table two things, if they can be accepted. One is the leaflet that we have produced for the Christie Downs Employment Support Group, and I would like to submit a copy later of the newspaper, *Women's Voices*, with that particular article in it.

CHAIR—Both of those will be very welcome. Senator Campbell or Senator Carr asked before if you have a sense of what is the cause of unemployment? What is the best way to solve the problem? We seem to have a lot of people focusing on coping with the difficulties but the problem seems to be fairly clear: get more jobs.

Ms Buckley—I think that is a pretty fundamental way of looking at it. I would like to see more programs for older people, perhaps retraining. There have been a lot of people whose jobs are now redundant. Technology has moved and the jobs of people who once had been gainfully employed for many years—they have only ever done one particular job for many years—all of a sudden are no longer available now. We need to retrain this person. It is very difficult to retrain a person over 45—some are so set in their ways—but those programs can be set in place if we really focus on some of the issues with these people. Setting up these programs would be a really good thing.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Beyond that point, one of the things that concerns me is there is not much point in us paying out a lot of money and resources to have a more highly skilled unemployed work force sitting in this area. It is really a question of how you provide the jobs to absorb the unemployed people. What are the priorities that need to be addressed in this region in terms of attracting business into the area?

Ms Baker—I would like to say something in regard to why I came here. I am going to table my submission. I am not going to read it out because you will have the opportunity to read it later on, hopefully. I am an unemployed person. I have just finalised my degree at the University of South Australia together with your brother. Since December I have tried unsuccessfully to find a job in case management. I was in case management with Mission SA. They lost their funding effectively. I have had, for example over the last few months, maybe three weeks effective case management because my case managers were looking for the same jobs as I was. We literally went together to an interview, and they got the job. I have written 200 application letters.

Finally, we congregated with a group of people to combine our natural resources in Port Willunga, Aldinga, which has the highest youth unemployment rate in this local council area and, according to the statistics, in South Australia. We are a group of people who have been volunteers, are active in the community and have worked at grassroots level.

Aldinga Beach, Port Willunga has great nature reserves. It has wonderful treasures—the Aldinga Reef, the dunes and washpool; I cannot name them all. There is a great potential to develop tourism. However, not much has happened. We have 7½ thousand people in these three communities. Skillshare provided services for a period of time but that died down. We have one lady in the Aldinga shopping centre who is willing to write CVs. That is all the assistance unemployed people get there. It takes us 20 minutes by car to come to Noarlunga where the services are provided, so not a lot of people will have the money to come on a regular basis. It costs me \$5 every time I come in here. Photocopying is not available in that area. People who do not have adequate transport, who possibly have children at school or who are young have to face a lot of barriers to come here to get the services.

In the last three months, I have negotiated with the new employment agencies that won the tender to provide services in this area to establish an outreach service or to let us sublet.

We are trying to found a co-op which provides unemployment services, job search services and adequate or needed introductory courses as bridging courses into TAFE or university. We want to do small business consultancy for the businesses in our area to provide them with information on government incentives that will help them to employ apprentices, provide traineeships and work experience. We also want to get the NEIS scheme to help people to build their own businesses, particularly in tourism.

We have another co-op in the pipeline which wants to build an artists' village plus a permaculture village in that area which would provide excellent opportunities for employment and will attract tourism to the area. But we have no funding to get this organisation together. We have no money. The agencies so far have not indicated that they are willing to provide an outreach service or maybe to give me some sort of money to work part-time or employ me part-time to provide these services. We have no facilities to work from. We work from our own private houses. We have not been able to access any funding for programs so far. We are applying for the work for the dole scheme which might be one of the options to get us established and working.

If I may make a statement on the national competition policy, the problem is that as a new organisation—as a new cooperative—we do not have the expertise to pull together a tender submission within three weeks like this work for the dole scheme and the literacy tenders that are out at the moment. We also have no prior records of audits and no prior records of financial handling so, in the competitive market, we are disadvantaged in that regard. We also might not be able to provide student contact hours for \$5 because we do not have the masses of people that we would need. Our area has been forgotten for years and years. That is resulting in the high unemployment rate in the area and the depression.

For two days I sat in the shopping centre to make our project known to the people in the area and to see whether we could get support. The support was overwhelming. I did all the questionnaires and I found that, for everyone who is registered as unemployed in the area, there are at least two more who are not registered as unemployed but are looking for employment and are either underemployed, or have given up hope, or are not eligible to be registered as unemployed. So the need is desperate. There were more people willing to work for the co-op as volunteers in the beginning to build up the businesses—

CHAIR—Can I cut across what you are saying, not because it is not absolutely fantastic, but we are getting to the end of time. I notice Mrs Beumer was nodding in agreement with some of the things that you were saying. I do not know whether you would like to come to the table and talk about that from your own experience? Are there are other people who are waiting to come to the table but thought that they would wait until these three women moved? If you would like to come to the table I welcome you now if you have anything to say. Mrs Beumer, would you like to add more? I noticed you were nodding your head in agreement.

Mrs Beumer—Yes. In a small area, 7,000 people is actually bigger than Millicent or Naracoorte, and they are seeing that there are no services going. It is not economical for the new employment places services market to go anywhere else than a major centre.

Senator CARR—There is this general consensus emerging that competition has led to a decline in the services provided. Is that the essence of what you are saying?

Mrs Beumer—Yes.

Senator CARR—The other aspect of what I am hearing from you is that these remedial steps that are being taken are not a lot of good if the jobs are not there for people to actually go to. It is no good having people job ready for jobs that are not there. Is that the other component of the present dilemma here?

Mrs Beumer—Yes.

Ms Wilson—I would like to make a comment about my observations of education and training. I believe that that would have the support of most people involved in voluntary work and in employment-unemployment support-type agencies.

The way programs are structured favours booze almost everywhere you go in the viticulture industry. I accept and understand the very high levels of expertise in this local environment in horticulture. I have some understanding of the horticulture industry, and I do appreciate the expertise that is generated out of this area. However, there are a number of areas in education and training that can be advanced over and above the area of jumping around amongst grapevines picking grapes for older people who have not had the opportunities to jump on the bandwagon of, say, advances in viticulture and the horticulture industry.

There is a problem, too, in that the persons who are providing those services, I believe, must accept that we need to acknowledge a need for change in the way we accept people into either our community support service agencies or into paid employment. Those people who are being accepted into case management and personnel agency areas, I believe, with the way the structure is moving at the moment into the focus on viticulture and the focus on tourism and hospitality, is bringing people in who have got entrenched ideas, who have got conservative ideas, who do not have the changes, who do not have the employment backgrounds, who do not have the expertise to facilitate adequately the positions that they are striving to open.

The unemployed people are the people with the expertise. The unemployed people have been doing it hard for 10 years. The unemployed people are the talented people who know what the barriers are, who know what the background is, who go back year in, year out, year in, year out for more and more and more training.

CHAIR—Can I cut across? I am sorry. This is like everything today; it is too interesting. We do not want to cut it off, but I have another member of the community who has indicated he would like to come to the table. We had better get his name and hear what he has to say because we have to wind up very soon, unfortunately.

Mr Brougham—I am Alan Brougham. I am the Regional Education Manager of the Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE for Noarlunga. The Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE caters for 13,000 students across an area stretching from Murray Bridge to Mount Barker, Victor Harbour, Kangaroo Island, O'Halloran Hill and, of course, Noarlunga. As part of my role, I

am also the Chairperson of the South West Youth Workers Network, which is the network of a range of people involved in youth work, from mental health services through to drug and alcohol services, and also education.

I am also a member of the South Central Regional Network, and Richard Puplett addressed that. I am a member of the Southern Development Board, which is about to become defunct. I am also on the Business Enterprise Centre Planning Committee, the Economic Development Forum and I am also on a committee which is investigating the possibility of a trade school in the region. Consequently, a lot of the discussion that has gone on today is very close to my heart.

In terms of the Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE, we have been averaging approximately 70 per cent of our graduates gaining employment, so I believe there is a very strong case for training and development in terms of increasing employment opportunities. One of the concerns that we have had is that a lot of employers address schools and school leavers, and then are concerned that those school leavers do not come up to the standards that they are requiring.

We have done a considerable amount of work in the last two to three years with schools across our region. Approximately 60 schools now have direct links with Onkaparinga TAFE. We are providing training programs for teachers so that those teachers can provide entry level programs—as Liz Schneyder was describing, and Liz Schneyder and Willunga School have been part of that process—and students then gain vocational training subjects which are recognised by TAFE, which means they do not have to redo those subjects.

It gives them a pathway into TAFE and we are finding that the program is proving very successful in that those students, who otherwise would have left school, are seeing new horizons and actually going on to TAFE and further training. This year, we anticipate that the number of students involved in that will be about 2,400. Last year, 450 of those students went directly into TAFE and it is estimated that probably 300 of those would not have otherwise.

CHAIR—Do you have a long-term follow up of the outcome for students going through your courses?

Mr Brougham—We are developing that. This year we have employed an employment referral officer and that employment referral officer deals with graduates and existing students in terms of trying to place them in employment. Part of that officer's role is to collect those statistics. Unfortunately, prior to now there has not been anybody available to do that, so that development is only just beginning.

CHAIR—We have to wind up, but one of the things that I am interested in is that what you are saying seems to be a little different—maybe I am just reading it wrong. But the climate, particularly for people from further south than this region here, is almost one of unemployment and that any student going through school or TAFE has to battle almost the at-home environment of long-term unemployment.

Do you have to address that in a special way? The other people from the communities speaking at the table today have said that that is in some ways a lot of their work, but what about TAFE? Do you actually find that you have got to work with people to counter the messages they are getting from home?

Mr Brougham—Yes, that certainly applies. We have a counsellor who spends a considerable amount of time working through those processes. We also have key staff members who pick that up as well. I certainly would acknowledge the difficulties that people face further south, in particular in the Aldinga-Willunga regions.

The other factor to keep in mind is that we are finding that we are getting those students who are striving for achievement—it sounds like a status level, I suppose—working with the south-west youth workers network. I come in touch with a lot of young people who just want to live for tomorrow.

CHAIR—I am terribly sorry to cut across you, but we have got another member of the community. Would you like to give us your name? We have only got a very short time.

Mr Cox—My name is David Cox and my address is Lot 18 Edwards Road, Willunga. I was hoping that one of the groups which would be here this afternoon to talk about their particular problems in this region would be the old Y Train Skillshare at Port Willunga. It will be defunct by the end of this week because it was unable to get funding in the new employment services arrangements. This means that there will be a gap in specialist services in this region for young people in the high risk age range of 15 to 20 years of age. I think one of the great disappointments in the criteria for assessing the tenders for the new employment arrangements is that there is not a requirement that there be particular specialist services for both young people and the over-45s in each significant geographical location. I regard this as a significant geographical location.

CHAIR—I am afraid that, even though I suspect we could all go on talking for a long time, we will have to end there. I certainly want to say that it is not just you people who have a lot you want to say; we have got lots of questions. It has been a very fruitful morning indeed. Thank you very much, David, and everyone else who came to the table and made a contribution. That is no easy thing. Those who have spoken on the record will have a *Hansard* transcript made available to you. You will be able to see your words in print in the mighty federal government *Hansard*.

This committee relies on what people tell us about regional unemployment, regional challenges and regional successes. We have been very much assisted by the hospitality of the council. We have also been assisted by the commitment of people here in this region—north, south and further south—to try to make things happen. I thank you all very much.

Committee adjourned at 12.07 p.m.