
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Adolescent overload?

**Report of the inquiry into combining school and work:
supporting successful youth transitions**

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Education and Training

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Canberra

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Foreword

Australian secondary students are facing more pressure than ever as they attempt to excel in their studies, participate in sporting and recreational activities and maintain an active social life. For an increasing number of young people there is an added dimension which is placing further pressure on their lives: the part-time job.

The proportion of school students in employment has increased significantly in the past two decades and today there are over 260,000 young Australians combining school and work. Despite the rise in student workers, the impact of competing demands on young people's lives is not well known. We were therefore tasked with examining the impact of combined study and work on successful youth transitions.

Above all else, the fundamental purpose of schools is to provide an education for their students. This view was shared by many students who were adamant that it should not fall to schools to accommodate their part-time work commitments. Nevertheless, the inquiry confirmed that achieving the right balance can be highly problematic for some young people.

There are considerable positive benefits for students who combine school and work. Those who find the right balance are not only rewarded with a range of social and economic benefits, but their chances of a successful transition into further education, training or work are significantly enhanced.

However, the nature of part-time work for school students has changed significantly. The extended trading hours in the retail sector and late night trading in the fast-food industry which prevail today have contributed to students working longer hours and later hours than ever before. Student workers can be susceptible to exploitative working conditions because their part-time jobs are often their first experience of the workforce and they lack awareness about their rights and obligations, including pay and conditions. The vulnerability of students in the workplace highlights the need for adequate protections and a shared community responsibility by parents, employers and schools to ensure they are protected against working excessively long, and often very late or early, hours.

While students' part-time jobs do not necessarily reflect their career aspirations, young workers acquire a range of generic skills from their jobs that are beneficial to their future employment. For many students, the acquisition of these skills is not formally documented anywhere. In considering mechanisms for students to record their employability skills, we were cautious not to place too much burden on employers with respect to additional reporting requirements which would particularly affect smaller businesses. Nonetheless, it is important that young people are provided with opportunities to attain formal recognition of the skills attained not only through their part-time jobs, but through the full range of activities undertaken beyond the classroom, including both paid and unpaid work, community or volunteer activities, and sporting and recreational activities.

Senior secondary certificates have been revised to incorporate increasing flexibility to accommodate greater numbers of students who may not be suited to traditional schooling models. The inquiry was also presented with a broad range of programs and initiatives at the state and local levels which seek to provide flexibility to assist students to combine school and work, including targeted programs for those students at risk of disengaging with their education. Given the high priority that the Australian Government and state and territory governments have accorded to lifting Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates, broadening the options available to senior secondary students is important.

It is important to acknowledge that not all young people have equal access to the opportunity to participate in part-time work while they are at school. There is also a small but significant proportion of students who are working out of financial necessity rather than for discretionary spending. There are a wide range of programs targeting students at risk of not making a successful transition. There would appear to be scope for greater information-sharing about the outcomes of these programs, in order to identify aspects of successful programs which could be implemented more broadly.

I thank my committee colleagues for their dedication to the inquiry and also wish to thank those Senators and Members who encouraged students in their electorates to participate in the inquiry by completing our online student survey. I would also like to thank those secondary schools who allowed the committee to conduct public hearings on their premises. Finally, I thank the many people and organisations who gave their time to prepare submissions and appear as witnesses before the committee, including students and staff from secondary schools across the country who participated in our public forums.

Sharon Bird MP
Chair



Membership of the Committee

Chair Ms Sharon Bird MP

Deputy Chair Dr Dennis Jensen MP

Members Mr Jason Clare MP (to 15/06/09)

Ms Julie Collins MP

Mrs Yvette D'Ath MP

Mr Steve Irons MP

Mr Robert Oakeshott MP (from 10/11/08)

Mr Sid Sidebottom MP

Hon. Tony Smith MP (to 10/11/08)

Dr Andrew Southcott MP

Mr Mike Symon MP (from 17/06/09)

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Terms of reference

Managing the demands of study and part-time or casual employment is part of everyday life for the majority of Australian school students. The impact of potentially competing demands is not well known, and there is little provision of information or guidance to schools or employers on the effect this has on the lives of young people generally, and more specifically on their career development and prospects for successful transitions. The committee's review of the impact of combined study and work on the success of youth transitions and Year 12 attainment will focus on:

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



List of abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCI	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACPET	Australian Council for Private Education and Training
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ANSN	Australian National Schools Network
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
BCA	Business Council of Australia
BSSC	Bendigo Senior Secondary College
CIT	Canberra Institute of Technology
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EOWA	Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency
FMP	Frankston and Mornington Peninsula
FWA	Fair Work Australia

GLR	Gwydir Learning Region
GRVEC	Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council
HSC	Higher School Certificate
HYPAF	How Young People Are Faring
IYC	Intergenerational Youth Compact
LCP	Local Community Partnership
LLEN	Local Learning and Employment Network
LSAY	Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QCE	Queensland Certificate of Education
QCEC	Queensland Catholic Education Commission
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education
SBAT	School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships
SET	Senior Education and Training
TCE	Tasmanian Certificate of Education
TDA	TAFE Directors Australia
TER	Tertiary Entrance Rank
TWU	Transport Workers Union
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETiS	Vocational Education and Training in Schools



List of recommendations

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Students combining school and work
- 3 School and work: a delicate balance

Recommendation 1 (para 3.63)

That the Australian Government ensures that further research is undertaken to examine student pathways and the impact of part-time employment and other extracurricular activities on students' academic performance and retention, including the motivations of those students who work longer hours.

- 4 Employability skills and opportunities for accreditation of part-time work

Recommendation 2 (para 4.55)

That the Australian Government develop and implement a national generic skills passport for secondary students to document the employability skills they develop through activities undertaken outside school. These activities should encompass paid and unpaid work (including community/volunteer activities and work for the family business), sporting and recreational activities and other life experiences.

Recommendation 3 (para 4.56)

That the Australian Government, in consultation with stakeholders, develop a Code of Practice for employers, supervisors, and workplace mentors to outline their responsibilities in assisting students to document their acquired employability skills.

5 Protections for students in the workplace

Recommendation 4 (para 5.94)

That the Australian Government establishes a national Employer of Choice for Youth program to recognise the contribution of model employers of young workers.

Recommendation 5 (para 5.98)

That the Australian Government ensures the proposed National Toolkit for Young Workers is made available to students through circulation to all secondary schools in Australia.

Recommendation 6 (para 5.107)

That, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, as a matter of priority, encourages collaboration between jurisdictions with a view to achieving harmonisation of existing state-based legislation regarding the employment of young people and national consistency of regulatory measures.

Recommendation 7 (para 5.108)

That the Australian Government progresses the establishment of a National Commissioner for Children and Young People as a matter of priority.

6 Flexible senior secondary education settings and the effectiveness of school-based training pathways

Recommendation 8 (para 6.57)

That the Australian Government evaluate recent initiatives in senior secondary provision across the states and territories, including secondary schools, specialist colleges, vocational colleges and polytechnics, in order to identify key areas of success and best practice models, and possible limitations.

Recommendation 9 (para 6.59)

That the Australian Government, in consultation with the states and territories, establish a consistent national definition for what constitutes engagement in part-time senior secondary study and part-time work for statistical and reporting purposes.

Recommendation 10 (para 6.60)

That the Australian Government undertake research to quantify the number of students engaged in senior secondary schooling as part-time students, and to assess their experiences and outcomes from part-time study. Research should focus on arrangements in schools which support positive outcomes and successful completion for part-time students and identify any limitations.

Recommendation 11 (para 6.106)

That the Australian Government work with state and territory governments to develop a plan to ensure that structured workplace opportunities are available to all students participating in school-based vocational education and training.

7 Support for students at risk

Recommendation 12 (para 7.56)

That the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, encourage evaluation and reporting on outcomes from local programs targeting disadvantaged students with a view to highlighting positive aspects of programs which could potentially be replicated.

Recommendation 13 (para 7.58)

That the Australian Government increase the provision of promotional material and information in secondary schools regarding access to government income support benefits and services for students.

Introduction

There is much more that needs to be done in schools, local communities and at a government level if we want to improve children and young people's well-being. A shift towards seeing school and work as complementary, rather than in conflict, is the first step in creating better pathways for young people between school and work.¹

The changing nature of youth transitions

- 1.1 For today's young Australians, transitions from the compulsory years of secondary school to the next phase of their lives are significantly more complex than for previous generations. It is no longer appropriate to view youth transitions as a direct passage from secondary school into employment or further education, as today's young Australians are increasingly pursuing more flexible options which often involve combining school with part-time (or casual) work.
- 1.2 While the types of jobs occupied by those combining school and work are not always reflective of their long-term career aspirations, this employment can nonetheless provide many strategic benefits that help young people to better manage the transition from school to work.

1 NSW Commission for Children and Young People, *Submission no. 33.1*, p. 8.

- 1.3 Participation in part-time work, however, can also have a detrimental impact on students. For example, there is evidence which suggests that as a student's working hours increase beyond an initial threshold, there is a reduced likelihood that they will complete Year 12.²
- 1.4 Improving education and transition outcomes for young Australians is a key component of the Australian Government's education reform and social inclusion agenda. The Foundation for Young Australians noted 'the last two economic slowdowns hit those in transition the hardest.'³ The prevailing economic climate emphasises the need to provide support for young people, who can be particularly vulnerable in such times.
- 1.5 The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) recently agreed to a series of measures to address rising unemployment, some of which include:
- bringing forward COAG's 90 per cent Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate target from 2020 to 2015;
 - halving the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and
 - halving the proportion of the population aged 20-64 without qualifications at the Certificate III level or above by 2020.
- 1.6 Two initiatives established by COAG to support these measures are:
- a **Compact with Young Australians** to increase young people's engagement with education and training pathways; and
 - a **National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions** to pursue long term reform of schooling through collaborative efforts with the states and territories, to improve educational outcomes.⁴
- 1.7 The Compact with Young Australians comprises a National Youth Participation Requirement to make participation in education, training or employment compulsory for all young people until they reach age 17. This requirement will commence from 1 January 2010 and will be implemented by all states and territories.

2 See M. Vickers, S. Lamb and J. Hinkley (2003) *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: the Effects of Part-Time Employment on Participation in Education, Training and Work*, LSAY Research Report No 30, Melbourne: ACER, p. v.

3 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 7.

4 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 'Youth Attainment and Transitions', <<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/Home.aspx>>. Accessed 22 September 2009.

- 1.8 Following COAG's commitment to a National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, a range of youth, transitions and career programs currently offered by the Australian Government are being evaluated with a view to being consolidated and streamlined in partnership with the states and territories.⁵ Where reference is made to Australian Government programs concerning youth and transitions, programs should be considered in this context.
- 1.9 The national focus on lifting retention rates comes at a time when more and more secondary students are combining their school with part-time jobs and working longer and later hours. Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Federal President of the Australian Education Union, stated:
- What we have seen is the development of two areas that do not necessarily intersect and that pose certain contradictions for us – namely, the need for higher retention, to year 12 or equivalent, recognising the importance of that for the individual child or student and for the economy, but also the fact that students are working longer hours as a consequence of a more deregulated labour market and retail environment.⁶
- 1.10 The inquiry therefore sought to examine practical solutions to assist students to more effectively balance their study and work commitments to help them to achieve positive post-secondary school outcomes.

Referral of the inquiry

- 1.11 On Monday 13 October 2008 the Minister for Education, The Hon Julia Gillard MP, asked the Committee to inquire into and report on *combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions*.
- 1.12 The committee was asked to focus on:
- providing opportunities to recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students' part time or casual work;

5 Full details on the National Partnership are available from COAG's website at: <http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-07-02/docs/NP_youth_attainment_transitions.pdf>. Accessed 23 September 2009.

6 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Australian Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 16.

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

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.13 Following referral of the inquiry on 13 October 2008, an advertisement calling for written submissions appeared fortnightly in the *The Australian* during the subsequent four months. Information on the inquiry, including terms of reference and advice on making a submission was available on the committee's website.⁷ The inquiry was also advertised through a mail out to various stakeholders, including peak bodies and organisations, and state and territory governments.
- 1.14 62 submissions, including three supplementary submissions, were received and these are listed at Appendix A.
- 1.15 Seven exhibits were received and are listed at Appendix B.
- 1.16 13 public hearings were conducted in: Canberra (seven), Adelaide, Perth, Burnie, Melbourne, Brisbane and Port Kembla. A list of witnesses who attended these hearings is included in Appendix C.
- 1.17 In recognition of the importance of engaging directly with students, the inquiry sought feedback from students through an online survey and through a series of public forums conducted in secondary schools across the country.

7 <<http://www.aph.gov.au/edt>>.

Online student survey

- 1.18 In addition to the existing body of research on students combining school and work, particularly that conducted through the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY)⁸, an online survey sought direct feedback from secondary school students which was available via the committee's website. All Members and Senators were informed about the student survey and encouraged to promote the inquiry to secondary schools in their electorate.
- 1.19 Through the survey, information was sought on the working arrangements of students, the impact of these work arrangements on their schooling, the benefits they gain from their part-time work, and the extent to which schools and employers offer flexibility to assist them to combine school and work. A copy of the printable version of the student survey is included in Appendix D.
- 1.20 Responses were received from 2,765 secondary students across the country. Of these respondents, 1,722 were engaged in some form of work outside school.
- 1.21 32 responses were received from students who attend school each alternate fortnight because they are engaged in school-based apprenticeships which facilitate their engagement in work placements. Due to the potential for these responses to distort data concerning the working hours of students combining school and work, they were excluded from Figures 2.2 and 3.2.
- 1.22 The feedback from all schools and students who participated in the survey is greatly appreciated and contributed substantially to the report.

School visits / student forums

- 1.23 The inquiry received invaluable assistance from six secondary schools which agreed to accommodate public hearings and student forums on their premises:
- Para Hills High School (S.A.);
 - Leeming Senior High School (W.A.);

8 Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) is a research program that tracks young people as they move from school to post-school destinations. On 1 July 2007, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) was contracted to provide analytical and reporting services for LSAY for the next three years. The LSAY analytical and reporting services were previously provided by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) jointly with DEEWR between 1995 and 2007.

- Tasmanian Academy – Hellyer Campus (Tas.);
 - Holmesglen Vocational College (Vic.);
 - Craigslea State High School (Qld); and
 - Illawarra Senior College (NSW).
- 1.24 Student forums conducted in these schools were attended by delegations of students from neighbouring schools, with participants from approximately 40 secondary schools involved in proceedings (see Appendix C). The committee is grateful to all schools who attended these hearings and thanks students for sharing their experiences.

Scope and structure of the report

- 1.25 VET in schools and school based apprenticeships and traineeships are significant in the context of successful youth transitions, and these issues have been researched and reported on extensively in recent times. The inquiry therefore focused primarily on examining practical issues affecting students who are engaged in part-time work outside school hours. The structure of the report reflects this approach.
- 1.26 Chapter two describes the characteristics of students who combine school and work, including hours worked, reasons for working and the types of work undertaken.
- 1.27 Chapter three examines the impact of students’ part-time work on educational achievement and Year 12 completion. This chapter identifies a range of positive aspects that students gain from working part-time, but also considers how having a job can affect available study time and completion of homework. This chapter also looks at the extent to which schools are aware of their students’ participation in work outside school and the degree of flexibility schools offer in recognition of students’ work commitments.
- 1.28 Chapter four considers strategies to recognise and/or accredit generic employability skills acquired by students through their part-time work.
- 1.29 Chapter five identifies some of the challenges students can encounter in the workplace and looks at some measures to provide assistance to young workers. Often students’ part-time jobs represent their first exposure to the workplace and young people can encounter difficulties in negotiating with their employer. Problems can also arise from a student’s lack of

understanding about their rights and responsibilities. This chapter also considers the issue of how many hours of part-time work is appropriate for a full-time student.

- 1.30 Chapter six focuses on the changing nature of senior secondary education certificates which are offering increased flexibility to provide options which cater to both academically-oriented and vocationally-oriented students. This chapter also considers the effectiveness of vocational education and training in schools.
- 1.31 While the inquiry did not examine issues concerning students at risk in great detail during hearings, these issues were addressed in a number of submissions. Chapter seven presents evidence on measures to support attainment and successful transitions for disadvantaged students and those at risk of disengaging with their education.

Definitions

- 1.32 For the purposes of this report, where reference is made to students combining school with part-time work, 'students' refers to students participating in secondary education or equivalent.
- 1.33 'Part-time work' refers to students participating in any form of paid employment (unless stated otherwise), and includes those students engaged as casual employees.

Students combining school and work

...it is scary that they are working the hours they are working.¹

Anecdotally, parents tell us that it is of major concern to them that their children are working late at night some nights and long hours within those late nights... it is often stated that the young people in question must choose between these long hours and late nights or give up their jobs – there is reported to be little room for compromise.²

Introduction

- 2.1 The proportion of full-time secondary school students in employment has increased substantially over the last thirty years. The growth in the 'casualisation' of the workforce, particularly in the retail and services industries, has enabled much greater numbers of young people to combine school and work. An increase in school participation rates has also contributed to the growth in the incidence of student-workers.³

1 Ms Helen Cridland, Bayside and Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 11.

2 South East Local Learning and Employment Network, *Submission no. 23*, pp. 6-7.

3 L. Robinson, *School Students and Part-Time Work*, LSAY research report No. 2, ACER, October 1996, p. 3.

- 2.2 Despite this student-worker phenomenon, there remains limited information available to schools and employers on the effect combining school and work has on young people's lives and their prospects for successful transitions.⁴ It's been argued that public policy has not kept pace with the increasing level of student participation in part-time work.⁵
- 2.3 In considering ways to assist students combine school and work, it is important to first identify their motivations for undertaking employment, the type of work they are doing and how much time they are spending at work. This chapter provides a snapshot of students' working arrangements outside school.

Characteristics of students in part-time work

Proportion of students combining school and work

- 2.4 Australia is among a small group of OECD countries with relatively high levels of students combining school and work (others include the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Denmark).⁶ Professor Marie Brennan stated:
- If I talk to my colleagues in Europe or most parts of Asia, they are absolutely horrified at the idea that young people are working instead of doing their work at school; that that is their work.⁷
- 2.5 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data indicates that the proportion of all school students in employment for one hour or more per week increased from 25 per cent in 1986 to 37 per cent in 2007.⁸
- 2.6 Females are more likely to combine school and work than males (see Table 2.1). The overall proportion of students working increases with school year level although a slightly smaller percentage of Year 12 female students work than Year 11 female students.

4 See Inquiry Terms of Reference.

5 Australian National Schools Network, *Briefing paper on an Inter-generational Youth Compact*, <http://www.nsn.net.au/files/ANSN_Youth_Compact.pdf>. Accessed 18 August 2009.

6 L. Robinson, *School Students and Part-Time Work*, LSAY research report No. 2, ACER, October 1996, p. 8.

7 Prof. Marie Brennan, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 8.

8 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 10. ABS data is based on young people aged 15 to 19 attending school.

Table 2.1 Proportion of school students aged 15 to 19 in employment by sex and year level (as a percentage of the total in each sex and year group), 2007

	Males	Females	Total
Year 10 or Below	23	31	26
Year 11	30	48	39
Year 12	43	46	45
Total	31	42	37

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 9.

Why do students work?

- 2.7 The reasons secondary school students take on a part-time job have been examined in a number of research studies, which have suggested various overlapping reasons.⁹ The desire to earn money, the quest for financial independence or increased personal autonomy and the belief that such experience would be of assistance in the future – particularly in securing employment after studying, have all been identified as motivations for young people combining school and work.¹⁰
- 2.8 For a smaller proportion of students (estimated to be around 10 per cent), likely to belong to families in the lowest socioeconomic quartile, evidence suggests that combining school and work is based on the need to provide income for their family or income to support their continued study.¹¹
- 2.9 In 2007, the NSW Teachers Federation commissioned independent research which explored the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of Years 10 to 12 students with respect to the relationship between their school and work. The findings of the study were presented in the report, *You're gold...if you're 15 years old* (the *You're gold* report).

9 L. Robinson, *School Students and Part-Time Work*, LSAY research report No. 2, ACER, October 1996, p. 4.

10 L. Robinson, *School Students and Part-Time Work*, LSAY research report No. 2, ACER, October 1996, p. 4.

11 L. Robinson, *School Students and Part-Time Work*, LSAY research report No. 2, ACER, October 1996, p. 5.

- 2.10 The study examined some of the reasons why students work part-time. One common reason was that 'teenagers perceive that life for them is more expensive than ever,'¹² whether it be the costs of technology (such as mobile phones or iPods), saving for a car, the ongoing costs associated with maintaining a car, or the various expenses associated with socialising.
- 2.11 While technological commodities like mobile phones may be considered by some to be a luxury, the *You're Gold* report emphasised that 'for many young people today, technology is the way they communicate and connect with their social network.'¹³ However, in line with Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) research, the report pointed out that money was just one of a range of motivations for students to undertake part-time employment.
- 2.12 A survey of 584 students aged 14 to 17 conducted by the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian found that the most common reason for working was to save money (25 per cent), with 16.5 per cent of respondents indicating that they worked to support themselves, and 10.2 per cent revealing that they worked to support the family business or income.¹⁴
- 2.13 During the committee's student forums, participants provided information on their motivations for working. The majority of students reported their primary reason for working was to save money. Saving for a car appeared to be the highest priority for most students, while others were saving for an overseas holiday, or putting money away to cover some of the costs of tertiary education. Students saw having a part-time job as a means of obtaining a level of financial independence and personal responsibility. For example, Angelo, from Cheltenham Secondary College in Melbourne, stated:

I do not want to keep asking my parents all the time for money. After all these years I can fend for myself a little bit more than I could back then. They have their bills to pay too. They have a mortgage. I do not want to keep taking chunks out of their pay cheque.¹⁵

12 NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission no. 22, Attachment A*, p. 23.

13 NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission no. 22, Attachment A*, p. 23.

14 Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, *Submission no. 46, Attachment A*, p. 11.

15 Angelo, student, Cheltenham Secondary College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 April 2009, p. 39.

- 2.14 Other students noted the benefit they gained from having financial independence to pay for those things that parents may be reluctant to pay for. Tara, from Perth's Leeming Senior High School, stated:
- ...not all parents can hand out a \$50 note every week. It is good to have financial independence and it is good not having always to ask your parents for money.¹⁶
- 2.15 Hannah from Canberra Girls' Grammar School added:
- ...I pay for my car, my registration, my insurance, clothes, food that I want when I go out, birthday presents – all those little things that your parents will not pay for. It is really good to be able to do that by yourself.¹⁷
- 2.16 Para Hills High School in Adelaide surveyed a section of its student body prior to the committee's visit and when asked their reasons for working, some students indicated that they took on work due to pressure from their parents, either to earn money to pay their own bills or to take on additional responsibility. One student, for example, had commented that 'Mum made me get a job.'¹⁸
- 2.17 In addition to making money, many students also reported that they enjoyed the opportunity of making new friends from outside school. For example, during a student forum at Illawarra Senior College in Port Kembla, participants described the supportive environment in their workplace as being 'like a second family'.¹⁹ Having a part-time job was also seen as 'a place of escape' which gave students an outlet for not having to worry about school work.²⁰
- 2.18 The feedback received during student forums is generally consistent with LSAY research. For example, LSAY research which focused on the 2003 cohort of 15 year old students found that 98 per cent of secondary students surveyed who worked part-time identified 'want spending money of their own' as one of their reasons for working, with fewer than 9 per cent of students working because their 'family needs the money'.²¹

16 Tara, student, Leeming Senior High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 45.

17 Hannah, student, Canberra Girls' Grammar School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2009, p. 15.

18 Ms Janette Scott, Principal, Para Hills High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 19.

19 See Tomas, student, Illawarra Sports High School; and Andrew, student, Warrawong High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, pp. 36-37.

20 Andrew, student, Warrawong High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 37.

21 J. Abhayaratna, L. Andrews, H. Nuch, and T. Podbury, *Part Time Employment: the Australian Experience*, Staff Working Paper, Productivity Commission, 2008, pp. 93-94.

Students' part-time jobs: 'a big social sacrifice'

- 2.19 In any discussion on students balancing school and work, it is important not to overlook the fact that students make significant sacrifices when they make the decision to take on a part-time job. Often, the job comes at the expense of extra-curricular activities such as sports or pursuits in music or the performing arts. However, perhaps the greatest sacrifice for those students who work is that their part-time jobs mean that they have little or no time to socialise.
- 2.20 Allison, from Illawarra Senior College, emphasised the need for teenagers to find time to socialise with their friends, as this 'is a part of growing up and social development.'²²
- 2.21 The *You're gold* study found that time to socialise was a key difference between teenagers who work and those who do not. The report noted that 'ironically, workers have the money but not the time, while non-workers have the time but not the money.'²³
- 2.22 When asked how they might otherwise use the time they usually spent at work, some students indicated that they would be more likely to allocate more time to socialising than studying. For example, Maddie from Parkdale Secondary College, stated:
- I would probably use it to hang out with friends more often than anything. There would be more study time, obviously, but a lot of it would go to committing to friends.²⁴
- 2.23 Some students felt that giving up social time to balance school and work was a viable sacrifice, particularly for their final year of schooling. The following comments from students give some indication of the priority they place on having a part-time job and the sacrifices they are prepared to make to keep it:
- Owen:** Really, I have made a big social sacrifice because I just do not have any time for mates. As for my motivation, I think, 'Yeah, you can mess around with your mates but, in 10 years, where will that have got you?' In 10 years time I will look back and think, 'Well, yeah, it's been pretty hard yakka, but it's got me where I wanted to go.'²⁵

22 Allison G, student, Illawarra Senior College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 48.

23 NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission no. 22 Attachment A*, p. 24.

24 Maddie, student, Parkdale Secondary College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 April 2009, p. 57.

25 Owen, student, Craigmore High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 34.

Matthew: A number of my friends have given up a sport that they have played previously for eight to 10 years because they had to get a job or did not have to get a job but decided that they would get a job. When it got too tough to keep both, they kept the job.²⁶

Lena: I gave up my callisthenics classes and stuff. Because of my work, I could not keep up the homework and the class work and Rock Eisteddfod and the competitions and stuff like that. It was just all piling up too much, so I cut out my callisthenics first, and then the Rock Eisteddfod is next before my work.²⁷

James: I have already given up half of my sporting time so that I can get to work and still have time for homework.²⁸

Where do students work?

- 2.24 Data obtained from responses to the committee's student survey confirmed that while students work across a diverse range of industries, the vast majority are employed in the retail (48.4 per cent) or fast food/hospitality (29.8 per cent) industries (see Figure 2.1).
- 2.25 Outside retail/hospitality, the most common type of work undertaken by students was babysitting, child-minding or after-school care (6.8 per cent). A further 3.7 per cent of student workers had community or sport-related jobs, such as refereeing/umpiring games on weekends.
- 2.26 It was acknowledged that the types of jobs predominantly performed by students are not areas which require specialised skill or training. This led some stakeholders to consider whether such jobs should form part of a formal pathway, given that in many cases, students do not envisage a long-term career in these industries.²⁹

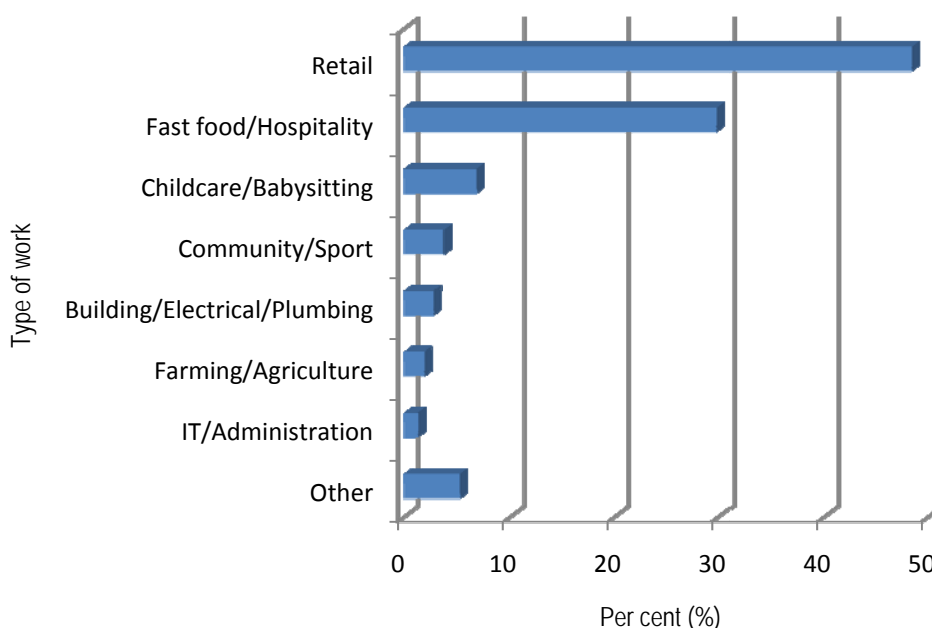
26 Matthew, student, Grace Lutheran College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 47.

27 Lena, student, Parkdale Secondary College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 57.

28 James, student, Salisbury High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 34.

29 See, for example, Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission no. 18*, p. 5.

Figure 2.1 Committee survey data: Industry in which students are employed



Source: Committee student survey data, 2009.

Students' working hours

2.27 ABS data indicates that of those students aged 15 to 19 who work at least one hour per week, the majority (approximately 69 per cent) are working 10 or fewer hours per week (see Table 2.2). Approximately 22 per cent of working students are working between 11 to 15 hours per week, while approximately 9 per cent are working 16 hours or more.

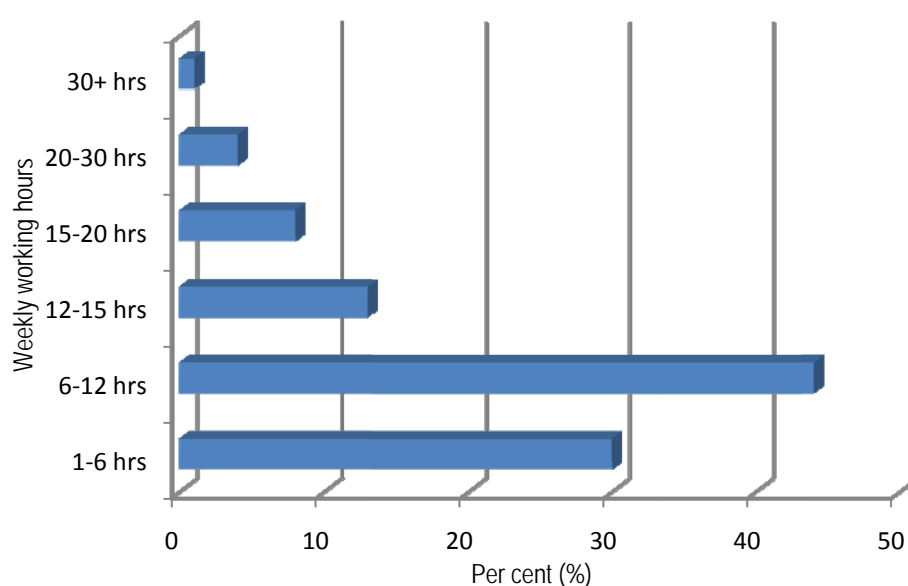
Table 2.2 School students aged 15 to 19 years – hours worked per week by year group (as a percentage of all school students in employment in each year group), 2007

Hours per week	Year 10 or below (per cent)	Year 11 (per cent)	Year 12 (per cent)	Total (per cent)
1 to 5	28	21	22	23
6 to 10	46	46	46	46
11 to 15	21	24	21	22
16 or more	5	9	11	9
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 10.

- 2.28 The average weekly working hours of students indicated by ABS data broadly aligns with data from the committee's student survey (see Figure 2.2). The committee's student survey indicated that 30 per cent of students in employment work between 1 to 6 hours per week, 44 per cent work between 6 to 12 hours per week, 21 per cent work between 12 to 20 hours per week, while 5 per cent work in excess of 20 hours per week (this includes 1 per cent who spend over 30 hours per week at work).

Figure 2.2 Committee survey data: Students' weekly working hours



Source: Committee student survey data, 2009.

- 2.29 During forums with secondary students across the country, participants were asked for their views on how many hours they felt they could regularly devote to part-time work during a school week. The overwhelming majority of students suggested that 12 to 15 hours was probably the maximum they could manage before their part-time work started to significantly impact on their school work. The following comments from students reflect this view:

Luke: Fifteen hours works for me. Some weeks it has just appeared on the roster, and I have ended up working 20 or 22. Because it has only happened now and again I have managed to work everything else around it, but if it happened on a regular basis it would be too much for me.³⁰

30 Luke, student, Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus), *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 23.

Theodore: Per week, I could probably try to fit in 10 or 15 hours... That would be a reasonable amount to be able get everything done, hopefully, but I am not too sure.³¹

Tomas: For normal school students, I think eight to 12 hours is probably a good number, because you are not doing too much, but you are not doing too little. So you can complete an eight-hour shift on a Saturday or you can do the extra four hours on a Thursday night, which will not impact on your schooling and education as much.³²

Heath: Probably around 15. I think that once you get over 15 it is really too much with everything else you have got, because most people our age have got things other than school and work they need to do, and they need to fit that in as well.³³

Paige: I think about 10 to 14 is reasonable for schoolchildren. Up to 12 is fine for kids up to grade 10. It is fine as long as you are not doing consecutive nights during the week and you are not spending your whole weekend at work; maybe a day at work is all right, but two days is a bit excessive.³⁴

Brett: I am doing roughly 15 hours a week, and I think that if I did more than 20 I would really not manage. I have done 22 hours in one week, and it got really hard—I did not really have enough time for sleep or to go out and hang out with friends or anything like that.³⁵

- 2.30 The Commission for Children and Young People NSW found that task-focused jobs, or jobs based around specific activities (i.e. agricultural, caring, delivery, sports-related work) are more likely to involve shorter working hours. Jobs in sales, fast-food/hospitality which are based around the operating hours of the business are more likely to involve longer hours.³⁶

31 Theodore, student, Parkdale Secondary College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 April 2009, p. 50.

32 Tomas, student, Australian Technical College – North Brisbane, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 46.

33 Heath, student, Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus), *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 23.

34 Paige, student, Grace Lutheran College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 46.

35 Brett, student, Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus), *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 24.

36 The Commission for Children and Young People NSW, 2005, *Ask The Children: Young people speak about their experiences at work*, June 2005, p. 4.

- 2.31 The committee's survey data showed the retail and hospitality sectors as having similar breakdowns in working hours. Students who have jobs as carers or in a community/sporting related sector were more likely to have shorter weekly working hours.
- 2.32 Identifying the lateness of the hours students spend in work is more difficult to quantify and was not addressed directly through the committee's student survey. Anecdotal evidence suggested that it was not uncommon for students to have shifts finishing at 10pm or later during the school week.
- 2.33 Some students referred to situations where shifts were scheduled to finish at a particular time, but in reality they would be required to stay back after closing and do cleaning up tasks regardless of how late that was. This scenario appears to be particularly prevalent in the fast food/hospitality industry, where trading hours tend to be later. Melissa, from the Tasmanian Academy in Burnie, stated:

A couple of my friends work after school and then after the shops close at 11 they have to ... clean for a couple of hours. So they are not getting home until one o'clock. They also live out of town, so they can be pretty stuffed the next day. Some of them also have to open the next day at six o'clock.³⁷

37 Melissa, student, Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus), *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 16.

School and work: a delicate balance

It is very important to me to have a job – it means I am earning money – yet the HSC is also vital. Finding the balance is so important. I don't think many people know how to do this.

- (Stephanie, student, NSW)

Introduction

- 3.1 Consistent with evidence presented during the inquiry, research suggests that there is an inherent value in young people undertaking work during their school years. However, at some point, work can start to become an impediment and students' school performance deteriorates as work demands increase.
- 3.2 It is a significant challenge to address the point at which work can turn from a benefit into a negative because this can be highly variable depending on the circumstances of the individual. The ability of a student to cope with balancing school and work can be affected by a range of factors, including their extra-curricular activities, their schooling arrangements and their personal development. A student's decision to work longer hours may also be an indicator of their disengagement from school rather than contributing to a reduced educational achievement.¹

¹ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 12.

This makes it difficult to establish a causal link between participation in part-time work and academic performance.

- 3.3 Establishing whether part-time work affects a student's likelihood to complete Year 12 is also problematic. There is evidence which suggests that, above an initial threshold, the likelihood of a student dropping out of school increases as the number of hours they spend in part-time work increases.² The significance of Year 12 completion rates lies in early school leavers being at greater and ongoing risk of labour force marginalisation.³
- 3.4 A key finding from the 2008 How Young People are Faring (HYPAF) report is that school completers are more likely than early school leavers to enter further study, and have an advantage entering the labour market. They are also more likely to secure full-time employment. For young people no longer in education and training after seven post-school years, 17.2 per cent of early leavers are unemployed or not in the labour force, compared to only 5.8 per cent of Year 12 completers.⁴
- 3.5 While research suggests a correlation between part-time work and early school-leaving, the relationship is not necessarily causal. Some students, for example, make the decision to leave school prior to Year 12 from an early age, and their engagement in part-time work is a deliberate strategy to establish an employment history. Vickers, Lamb and Hinkley's 2003 Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) study which examined the effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work, stated:
- It cannot be assumed that part-time work simply erodes commitment to study, so that those who work during high school inevitably drop out.⁵
- 3.6 There were a number of submissions which acknowledged the complex relationship between school and work and cautioned against making

2 M. Vickers, S. Lamb and J. Hinkley, *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: The effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work*, LSAY Research Report No. 30, February 2003.

3 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 5.

4 Foundation for Young Australians, *How Young People are Faring*, 2008, p. ix.

5 M. Vickers, S. Lamb and J. Hinkley, *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: The effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work*, LSAY Research Report No. 30, February 2003.

definitive assumptions about the potential benefits or risks of working while at school.⁶ Professor Erica Smith, for example, stated:

While some studies have shown a negative impact on grades when more than about 10 hours a week are worked, it is hard to tell whether this is a result of the part-time job or whether the students working long hours are not particularly engaged with schooling anyway. Our research has shown a substantial minority of students working quite long hours in Year 12, for example, and these could well be students who are not particularly interested in academic achievement. In some cases they may already have commenced their 'full-time post-school jobs' and are fitting in schooling around them.⁷

3.7 Similarly, DEEWR noted:

...the relationship between school and work is complex and can be affected by a range of factors, including the personal characteristics of the student and their level of engagement in school. This makes it difficult to establish direct causal links and means that some evidence on the potential benefits or risks of working while at school needs to be treated with caution.⁸

3.8 The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) advised that it was undertaking a study which sought to answer the question of 'whether combining school and work is detrimental or beneficial to students in terms of their school outcomes, their post-school study outcomes and their post-school employment outcomes.'⁹ Ms Alison Anlezark, Manager, LSAY, NCVER, added:

We felt this was the critical question at the nub of a lot of the anecdotal stories that you hear.¹⁰

3.9 NCVER's study examines the effect of combining school and work on retention to Year 11, Year 12, on Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) score, post-

6 See, for example, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 8; Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission no. 12*, p. 3; Australian Industry Group, *Submission no. 37*, p. 6.

7 Prof. Erica Smith, *Submission no. 9*, p. 3.

8 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 8.

9 Ms Alison Anlezark, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 2.

10 Ms Alison Anlezark, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 2.

school full time study and full-time employment for people who complete Year 12.¹¹

- 3.10 The committee eagerly anticipates the findings from this research. However, at the time this report was prepared, a draft of the findings was still being considered by DEEWR, who commissioned the research.
- 3.11 The following chapter examines the positive aspects of having a part-time job during high school. It also looks at the extent to which schools provide flexibility to help students meet the demands of balancing work and study. Finally, the complex relationship between having a job while studying and how this impacts on educational achievement and Year 12 completion is considered.

The positive aspects of part-time work for students

- 3.12 There is a general consensus that young people's participation in some form of work while at school holds an inherent value. This was acknowledged widely by students, parents and teachers, as well as peak bodies and academics. Combining school and work can:
- enhance a student's confidence and self esteem;
 - contribute to their financial well-being;
 - facilitate the development of social networks;
 - allow students to gain useful knowledge and independence and exercise greater responsibility and self-reliance;
 - instil a work ethic and attitude; and
 - enable students to develop work and organisational skills, including time management skills.
- 3.13 Dr Phil McKenzie, Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), noted that 'working is a very positive experience in the main, as long as it is not an unreasonable number of hours or in an exploitative situation.'¹² The NSW Teachers Federation agreed, citing research which suggests that

11 Ms Alison Anlezark, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 3.

12 Dr Phillip McKenzie, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 49.

‘the positive aspects of work for young people far outweighed the negatives.’¹³

- 3.14 VETnetwork Australia suggested that the biggest advantage of part-time work for students is that it provides experience of work in a relatively adult way.¹⁴ Students identified one of the major positives of their part-time jobs as communication skills and confidence gained from being in an environment which required regular interaction with adults:

Belinda: I work with a lot of adults and it is nice to be treated like an adult when they talk to me. It is having the confidence to speak to strangers and everything like that.¹⁵

Sam: I have met a lot of great people through my work...Through them I have got to know other people. It has improved my communication skills in talking to adults.¹⁶

- 3.15 Mrs Deborah Richardson, President, Leeming Senior High School Parents and Citizens Association in Perth, reflected on the benefits her son had gained from his part-time work experience:

He gets an awful lot out of his work – responsibility and dealing with customers...The responsibility is fantastic.¹⁷

- 3.16 Another benefit for students in undertaking part-time work is that they learn a range of organisational skills and how to manage their time effectively. For example, a focus group of students from Bendigo Senior Secondary College reported that:

...the experience of combining work and study promoted good organisational skills and thus helped with time management – a skill vital to being a successful student and good employee.¹⁸

- 3.17 Para Hills High School’s survey of some of its students asked respondents to indicate the positive effects of their part-time work on their learning at school. Principal Ms Janette Scott relayed some of the feedback collected from the survey:

The positive effects were that it improved their attitude to school; work harder to get good grades; feel more organised; better time

13 Ms Sally Edsall, NSW Teachers Federation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 9.

14 VETnetwork Australia, *Submission no. 34*, p. 5.

15 Belinda, student, Reece High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 50.

16 Sam, student, Latrobe High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 50.

17 Mrs Deborah Richardson, Leeming Senior High School Parents and Citizens Committee, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 32.

18 Bendigo Senior Secondary College, *Submission no. 55*, p. 8.

management. There were quite a few students who said that it built their confidence. They can talk better to staff and peers. A number said that they had developed better communication skills and they use those at school. They learn about money. One said that it improved maths because they cannot use calculators at work. One said that it provided money for lunch and excursions, so that child is paying for some of the expenses of coming to school.¹⁹

- 3.18 Professor Erica Smith expressed concern about the often negative manner in which students' jobs are perceived. She maintained that there are positive aspects of work which are of interest to students:

There is a worrying consensus among many stakeholders that the jobs that students do while at school are menial, boring, and sometimes dangerous and exploitative. Students' jobs in fact seem to offer interest to most young people, and many offer career paths so that students are already working in supervisory capacities before they leave school.²⁰

- 3.19 Professor Smith also suggested that rather than being seen as 'pocket-money' jobs, the part-time work undertaken by students should be seen as 'a legitimate and important part of the economy and of young people's working careers.'²¹

- 3.20 Vickers, Lamb and Hinkley's 2003 LSAY study which looked at the effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work found that while having a job in Year 9 correlated with a reduced likelihood of completing school, it generated substantial and lasting labour market benefits for young people once they leave school. For example, students who had a job in Year 9 were more likely to enter apprenticeships or traineeships and were also more likely to find full-time employment than be unemployed.²²

- 3.21 Many students provided feedback that they believed having a part-time job while studying would enhance their future job prospects. However, some of those planning tertiary education did not think their retail/hospitality jobs offered much benefit because they were pursuing

19 Ms Janette Scott, Principal, Para Hills High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 19.

20 Prof. Erica Smith, *Submission no. 9*, pp. 4-5.

21 Prof. Erica Smith, *Submission no. 9*, p. 5.

22 M. Vickers, S. Lamb and J. Hinkley, *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: The effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work*, LSAY Research Report No. 30, February 2003, p. 29.

careers in much different fields. A selection of students' views on their workplace experience is included in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Committee survey responses: Students' views on their workplace experience

Q. Do you think that your work experience will help you find a job when you leave school?

'My work has trained me in lots of ways including talking to people, food preparation, money handling and fast service. These are skills needed in lots of jobs.' – Helen (NSW), 20-25 hrs per week.

'I hope that future employers will look favourably on my work experience in customer service and retail and that it may give me an edge against other applicants.' – Sarah (Qld), 6-9 hrs per week.

'Yes and no. It will benefit me as it will give me insights on how to treat customers, interact with workers and follow instructions. However the part-time job I have now is nothing like the career I intend to do after University.' – Aneta (Vic.), 3-6 hrs per week.

'I have gained confidence and people and management skills through being a waitress.' – Becky (WA), 3-6 hrs per week.

'I have increased my confidence, understand how to work within teams and [it] will look good on my resume.' – Charley (Tas.), 9-12 hrs per week.

'I work in hospitality after school, and that experience has given me the opportunity to handle money, deal with customers, be organised, manage my time better, get along with different personalities and learn how to budget my own money.' – Allison (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'I'll have the experience of time management and prioritising—qualities required in any job.' – Claire (ACT), 9-12 hrs per week.

'Very nearly everything that you do is going to give you something to put on a résumé. I don't intend to go into retail, but being on the checkout means that I develop people skills, which is a useful skill to have.' – Carmen (ACT), 6-9 hrs per week.

'I have more experience in dealing with money, challenging situations and people.' – Maddison (WA), 9-12 hrs per week.

'I've learnt many skills that I know will help me later on. Without work I don't think I would have enough knowledge about work life for when I leave school. Working is learning in a practical way that I believe is needed to understand work-life.' – Iva (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'I have practical skills in dealing with young children and their parents, and my job requires initiative, quick thinking, and discipline.' – Georgia (ACT), 3-6 hrs per week.

'Employers will look on me more highly than someone who doesn't know what working is like.' – Anna (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'I have learnt consumer service skills and confidence that can only be taught through the workforce. I have also learnt time management and commitment, by giving up things to work.' – Simone (WA), 3-6 hrs per week.

'My part-time work gives me the skills and knowledge of retail and the inner workings of the shop. My job also gives me the experience and skills of working together in a team environment, and also dealing with the public through customer service. These things obtained from my work experience will definitely assist me in finding, holding and succeeding in my chosen profession when I leave school.' – Michelle (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'Tutoring is always good to have on a resume. I have also worked at Bakers Delight and that has provided me with team working skills, customer service skills and a good working experience. I hope to get another job on top of tutoring as soon as I finish my bar course. With all these experiences in the working field I hope that I will be able to present myself as a dedicated and skilled worker in the future.' – Rose (ACT), 1-3 hrs per week.

'Now that I have been in the workforce in a casual position for over two years now, it has given me the experience to handle working in the workplace, dealing with employers and applying basic skills to new environments.' – Sophie (NSW), 3-6 hrs per week.

'Yes. Because my job has taught me many things, particularly about customer relations, that are undeniably applicable in later jobs.' – Ashley (ACT), 12-15 hrs per week.

'My experience working with a team of others and communication skills with both fellow workers and customers will help me separate myself from others with lesser experience.' – Meggan (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'It provides basic skills within the retail industry (e.g. dealing with people, operating a till), and will provide a reference for future work, showing that I have experience and making me more employable.' – Miles (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'The training that has been provided to me as a Woolworths employee will stay with me throughout any future career.' – Declan (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'Any job looks good on your CV, but it won't help that much, especially as I don't aim for a career in retail. I'm guessing that a Uni degree will influence job finding a lot more than casual work experience at a budget department store.' – Jane (Tas.), 6-9 hrs per week.

The impact of part-time jobs on students' study time

3.22 A 2001 NCVER study surveyed students with part-time jobs to examine how hard they found it to fit time in for schoolwork as well as their job (see Table 3.1). 9.2 per cent of 665 students surveyed reported that they found it 'very hard' to fit in their school work as well as paid work, 27.7 per cent responded that they found it 'quite hard', while the remaining 63.2 per cent said that it was 'not hard' to fit time in for school work around their paid work.

Table 3.1 Students' reporting on how hard they found it to fit in their schoolwork as well as their paid work

	Very hard		Quite hard		Not hard		Total	
1-5 hours per week	10	5.2%	37	19.4%	144	75.4%	191	100.0%
6-10 hours per week	17	7.6%	72	32.1%	135	60.3%	224	100.0%
11-15 hours per week	10	9.2%	39	35.8%	60	55.0%	109	100.0%
16-20 hours per week	17	20.5%	27	32.5%	39	47.0%	83	100.0%
21+ hours per week	7	12.1%	9	15.5%	42	72.4%	58	100.0%
Total number of students	61	9.2%	184	27.7%	420	63.2%	665	100.0%

Source: NCVER, *School students learning from their paid and unpaid work*, 2001, p. 53.

3.23 The report noted:

As might be expected, students working longer hours were generally finding it harder to fit in their schoolwork. However, even amongst the 83 students working 16–20 hours a week nearly a half did not find it hard at all, with only a fifth finding it very hard. It should be borne in mind that some students ascribe more importance to time spent studying than others, and there is a possibility that those choosing to work reasonably high numbers of hours might not have spent much time studying anyway. This might help to explain why a large proportion of student workers working over 21 hours a week did not find much difficulty fitting in their studies when it might be expected that they would have the greatest difficulty.²³

3.24 Almost half (46.4 per cent) of approximately 1,700 students with part-time jobs who completed the committee's survey indicated that their work affected the amount of time they have to study (see Figure 3.2).

3.25 The proportion of students affected generally increased as the hours spent at work increased, excepting those students working in excess of 30 hours a week, of which 71 per cent did not believe their working hours affected their study time.

3.26 This finding is consistent with the 2001 NCVET study and may be a reflection of the fact that 'many young people who are not succeeding at school pursue part-time work as an important step towards the workplace'²⁴ and therefore the time spent at work would not be otherwise utilised for study. The more recent body of research conducted by NCVET based on LSAY data, which has yet to be released, appears to confirm this finding. Ms Alison Anlezark from NCVET stated:

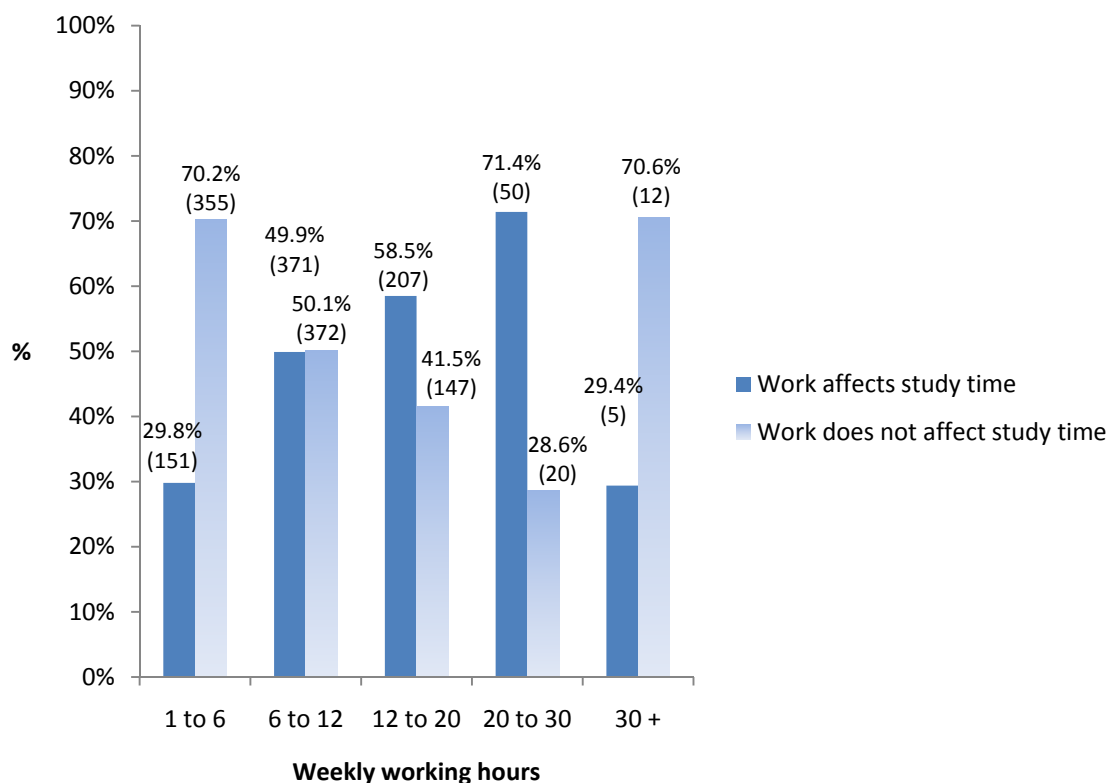
Where hours are longer it appears that individuals show a stronger orientation towards employment rather than academic pursuits. It is almost as though they become a bit disengaged with the school and they are more interested in work than they are in their schoolwork.²⁵

23 E. Smith and A. Green, *School students' learning from their paid and unpaid work*, NCVET, Adelaide, 2001 p. 54.

24 Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission no. 12*, p. 3.

25 Ms Alison Anlezark, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 3.

Figure 3.2 Committee survey data: The impact of part-time work on students' study time



Source: Committee student survey data, 2009.

3.27 Figure 3.3 contains a selection of survey responses from students relating to the impact of their work on the time they have to study. The responses suggest that there are a significant number of students who experience fatigue owing to the number of hours they spend at work, or the lateness of the hours they are working. During student forums, some students who worked in excess of 25 hours per week during a school week were adamant that they were coping. However, teachers told a different story. Mr Con Apostolopoulos from Para Hills High School stated:

They do come to school tired. I have noticed, in particular this year, that there has been an increase in the amount of *Mother* soft drink or these ... high energy little booster [drinks] that they are using to get them through the morning. They are coming to school in six packs. They could be sharing them or keeping them throughout the day.²⁶

26 Mr Con Apostolopoulos, Para Hills High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 21.

- 3.28 The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian stated that the negative impacts on students working long hours include 'difficulties with concentration, fatigue, inadequate exam preparation and incomplete homework.'²⁷

Figure 3.3 Committee survey responses: The impact of work on study

<p>Q. Does your work affect the amount of time you have to study?</p> <p><i>'Yes. On the weekends, the time I get to study and finish assignments are limited due to sport and work.'</i> – Rhiannon (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week</p> <p><i>'By the time I get home from work it's at least 8:30pm and then I have tea and by then it's too late and I'm too tired.'</i> – Rebecca (Vic.), 9-12 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'I work after school a lot, so homework is a struggle as I have to do it when I get back home, so I go to bed late and am always tired the next day.'</i> – Joseph (WA), 15-20 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'I work Thursday nights, Saturday and Sunday around the middle of the day usually which is very frustrating because they are usually only 3 hour shifts which disturbs my day, I never have a day off to do anything that I want or need to do, meaning when I do have some leisure time in the afternoon or night I usually do not have the energy or motivation to do my study.'</i> – Briannon (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'They roster me on for too many hours and too late at night on school nights.'</i> – Nic (Qld), 20-25 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'I sometimes have to work both days on the weekend during the day from 8-3 and this effects the amount of time I have to study as that is most of my weekend gone.'</i> – Emily (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'Often work impedes with my opportunity to study out of school time. This makes life in general much more stressful and school more difficult than it has to be.'</i> – Matthew (Tas.), 9-12 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'I do not study on Saturday or Sunday, my main study times. Thursday nights are also out and I only have about half of Monday.'</i> – Samuel (WA), 9-12 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'I don't work long enough for work to affect my study.'</i> - Ben (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'I work 4 hours every Thursday afternoon from 5-9. Sometimes 2 or 3 times a week depending on roster. It makes it difficult to get any substantial work done such as homework and general study because by the time I get home and have dinner I'm too tired!'</i> – Lilly (NSW), 3-6 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'I work late nights most Thursdays and every Friday and Saturday so I tend to sleep in Saturday and Sunday mornings restricting the amount of time I have to study. In addition after a long week at school, and then two late and long nights at work I'm too tired to even think about studying most weekends.'</i> - Erin (ACT), 9-12 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'I work on Wednesdays and that's during the middle of the week - the most crucial time to get everything done for the weekend and for the end of the week's work. If I don't have a lot of time to do my homework after work then that's my weekends gone... which means 'no life!!!'</i> – Elysia (ACT), 1-3 hrs per week.</p> <p><i>'No time for study on weekends as work and basketball use up my weekend.'</i> – Justin (WA), 9-12 hrs per week.</p>

27 The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian [Qld], *Submission no. 46*, p. 4.

'I tend to work on Thursday and Friday evenings, and Saturday and Sunday mornings. Throughout the week I do mostly light study, going over class work and finishing off notes. I use the weekends for my assignments, major study, and projects. This means however juggling a social life, work and study into a few hours.' - Claire (ACT), 9-12 hrs per week.

'There is no time left to study... After work (9-5 on Saturday and Sundays, and 4 hours on Thursdays) I'm too tired and unmotivated to do much study.' – Lauren (NSW), 15-20 hrs per week.

'I do work after school. That's at least 5 hours I won't be studying. And if I have a shift after school, that's from 4:30 (I catch the bus) typically to 8:30, so I don't study all night unless it's urgent. I still get it done though- just means I can't watch as much TV!' – Carmen (ACT), 6-9 hrs per week.

'When I used to work 3 days a week it definitely affected my study because I was working up to 15 or more hours. Now I keep it to one day a week in order to achieve proper time management and a regular study habit.' – Paige (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'I often work on weekends so it effects the time I have on the weekends. It becomes difficult to complete tasks which require a large amount of time. When working shifts during the weekday I will go straight to work and usually will not leave until at least 9pm. It becomes difficult on these nights to complete any form of school work.' – Simone (NSW), 12-15 hrs per week.

'If I work a four hour shift after school (4pm til 8pm) then I am left with very little study time for that night after eventually getting home then having dinner etc.' – Jackson (Vic.), 9-12 hrs per week.

'If I have to work long hours on the weekend I find I'm too tired to study much. Also doing late shifts through the week affects my energy levels for school the next day.' – Emma (NSW), 12-15 hrs per week.

'Seeing as I work the Thursday late-night shopping shift, it means that I have less time to complete homework and assessments that are due in over the weekdays. When I come home from work, I experience fatigue and therefore, I'm not motivated enough to do work.' – Emily (NSW), 3-6 hrs per week.

'I work 7am- 3pm on a Saturday and am too tired or unmotivated to do homework or assessments that have been set for the weekend. I play sport on Sunday, either Tennis or I go sailing, so that doesn't leave much time for me to get homework done either.' – Samantha (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

3.29 Bendigo Senior Secondary College suggested that working longer hours 'can also lead to absenteeism from school as students take time to catch up on homework and reduce the stress of keeping up with study.'²⁸

3.30 Lachlan from Leeming Senior High School was working a couple of different jobs which included a position in the fast-food industry. He explained that the long hours he sometimes worked and the lateness of those hours impacted on his ability to complete school work:

Sometimes I would come home at 1 o'clock and I would have an assignment that was due the next day and I would be struggling at the computer. I remember a couple of times my mother coming in and waking me up because I was asleep on the keyboard.

Sometimes they like to pressure you into taking someone else's shift if they call in sick. One time I had to do an 11½ hour shift with only one break. You get a break only every six hours and that

break would be only half an hour at the most. They then get you up and you have to work again. That is pure time standing up making or taking orders.²⁹

'Something has to give'

- 3.31 Inquiry participants emphasised that for young people, it is not just about balancing school and work, as students also spend much of their time outside school socialising or engaging in sport and recreation or other extra-curricular activities. While some students indicated that they are prepared to put their social lives or sporting activities on hold to maintain a part-time job, it is clear that many are not. The competing demands on a student's time can have a significant impact on their study. The Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools Queensland noted:

In a recent study, students were asked to apportion their time for study, sport, socializing and work commitments. Where the school authorities suggested that senior students required at least 15-20 hours per week of organized study to complete their commitments effectively, some were actually working for this amount of time and school responsibilities took up fewer than 5 hours each week. Work commitments in some instances commenced on Thursday, involved weekend work usually with a late closing and some shifts on other weekdays. Add to that sporting and social commitments and, for some students, schooling becomes incidental.³⁰

- 3.32 Ms Jennifer Marks, VET Manager, Sandringham College, indicated that in some cases, the value which students place on their part-time work, socialising and sporting activities means that school becomes a lesser priority:

Something has to give. Some of our students...talked about the fact that it is not just a question of balancing school and work; they have to balance sport, friends and everything else that goes on. Often school is a lower priority for a teenager than all the other things. Some students will say 'Work is important because that provides me with the money to do all the things that I want to do.' Of course their friends and their sports are also really important,

29 Lachlan, student, Leeming Senior High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 51.

30 Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools Queensland, *Submission no. 32*, p. 4.

so school is a poor last. If we want them to do well in school we have to address those issues. It will not be hard to ensure that they are serious about their work.³¹

Juggling part-time work and set homework

- 3.33 Individual schools generally have their own homework policy which is developed in consultation with the school community including the school's parents and friends association or parents and citizens association. Schools' homework policies reflect the needs of their students so they are able to maintain an appropriate balance in their lives between school, family, recreation and part-time work.
- 3.34 Evidence to the inquiry suggests that students with part-time jobs can experience difficulties meeting homework requirements, particularly in their final years of schooling where the workload increases significantly. They can often find themselves caught out between completing homework tasks or complying with their rostered work shifts. Fulfilling the requirements of both can require students to complete schoolwork at an unreasonably late hour.
- 3.35 James from Salisbury High School in Adelaide explained that he was working five nights a week, from 4pm until around 11pm or midnight each night, to save money to support himself through university. James indicated that his work arrangements were impacting heavily on his school work, and that he would often be up until 5am in the morning just to complete homework, yet he was convinced that what he was doing was sustainable and that he was managing to find a balance.³² While this is an extreme example, it does highlight the kind of pressure that some students with part-time jobs can be confronted with.
- 3.36 A problem highlighted during discussions with students is that often students fail to communicate with their teachers about the challenges they are facing combining school and work. Students tend not to tell their teachers about their work commitments because they feel that choosing to work is their decision, and that it should not be offered up as an excuse for failing to complete homework. Some of the comments from students via the committee's survey which reflected this view are reproduced in Figure 3.4.

31 Ms Jennifer Marks, Sandringham College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 April 2009, p. 9.

32 See *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, pp. 50-51.

3.37 Mrs Jo-Anne Fletcher, the parent of a teenager combining school and work, described the dilemma that can confront student workers when they are allocated significant overnight homework tasks:

...she has had nights when she has had so much homework that she has rung her boss and said, 'I cannot come in. Can someone else work the shift because I have heaps of homework?' and her work will not let her have the night off and she has to go to work. I understand that they have a business to run but she is stuck in the middle. 'Do I do the homework and lose my job, or do I go to work and then have to sit up until midnight to do the homework?' It is a bit of a battle for them, but they do it for the experience as well as for the money. They are also learning what is out there.³³

Figure 3.4 Committee survey responses: 'We chose to work: it's our problem'

'Working part time is our choice so it is always out of school hours. There is really nothing the school can do to make combining school with work easier.' – Madeline (NSW), 3-6 hrs per week.

'...it's more up to the individual to find a flexible job and to have good time management skills. After all, how can a school with say 300 yrs 10-12 students provide a timetable that works effectively with each individual's work and study schedule.' – Claire (ACT), 9-12 hrs per week.

'If someone cannot handle studying and working together then they should work less hours or not work at all.' – Rachel (ACT), 3-6 hrs per week.

'I think work isn't really a problem for students if they are dedicated. If a student wants to succeed in order to further themselves they must make sacrifices and I think that people sacrifice school work rather than social time or actual work because school really isn't of top priority to them.' – Paige (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'Working is your own choice. School work should be your main priority if you are behind school work because of work it's your problem.' – Brooke (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'...it's our own choice whether we wish to work or not, it's not really necessary in our final year of school if all we feel we should be doing is studying.' – Sophie (NSW), 3-6 hrs per week.

'It is primarily my fault, as I say yes to every shift they offer me at work. It is my problem.' – Samuel (WA), 9-12 hrs per week.

'I don't see how [schools providing flexibility] would be possible, considering that work is (usually) an individual's choice.' – Laura (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'It's really up to the individual how he/she organises their time.' – Tara (ACT), 1-3 hrs per week.

'I think [combining school and work] is something than an individual has to work out, your school cannot be responsible for everything you do.' – Louise (ACT), 6-9 hrs per week.

3.38 Of 1,690 respondents to the committee's student survey engaged in part-time work, 21.5 per cent indicated that their school provided flexibility to enable them to work while meeting study requirements.

- 3.39 Some of the ways in which schools assist students with part-time work identified by respondents included:
- allocating set homework which could be completed in designated study periods;
 - teachers negotiating extensions on set homework and assessments where students have work commitments;
 - providing opportunities for additional tutoring; and
 - allowing students to miss classes and catch up on the work at a later stage.
- 3.40 Some excerpts from students' responses to this section of the survey are listed in Figure 3.5 below.

Figure 3.5 Committee survey responses: Flexibility provided by schools to help students who work

Q. Does your school provide any flexibility to enable you to work while meeting study requirements?

'No – Teachers believe year 12 students should not work whilst doing their HSC and try and discourage their students from it. I think this is hard as I personally need to work during this time.' – Iva (NSW), 10-12 hrs per week.

'Not really. School wants us to get the work done no matter what other things we have going on in our life.' – Bronte (Qld), 6-9 hrs per week.

'Some teachers are slightly lenient with normal homework if we give them advance warning of our work commitments.' – Jackson (Vic.) 9-12 hrs per week.

'Teachers offer help and tutor before and after school and at lunch time.' – Vanessa (WA), 6-9 hrs per week.

'They don't take 'I had to work' as a reason for not completing something.' – Janina (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'No – not really, when your assignments and tests come they are all at the same time which can be quite stressful and chaotic.' – Emma (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'Yes – If I have to work on a school night usually my teachers will just tell me to do as much as I can but if it's too hard to complete it's not such a drama.' – Gabe (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'No – But I don't think they should either, because I made the decision to work. School is always more important.' – Laura (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'Yes – having communication between me and the teacher means that we are able to negotiate and come to an agreement.' – Lauren (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'No – Although the school is required by law to give 2 weeks notice of an assessment, this is not enough time when juggling with work and school and 4 or 5 other demanding subjects. The school does not care, if your assignment is late, that's too bad and you get a mark of zero.' – Briannon (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'Yes. It depends on the individual teachers, most teachers are reasonable. However I don't think that it is the school's responsibility to do this, as [school] is more important than work.' – Josh (NSW), 3-6 hrs per week.

'Teachers could be more understanding towards students with jobs'

- 3.41 One of the questions on the committee's student survey asked whether there was anything that could be done to make combining work and school easier. While there were a range of practical suggestions offered in response to this question, an overwhelming number of responses simply said 'less homework!'.
- 3.42 Resentment to homework was prevalent throughout survey responses and consistent with feedback the NSW Commission for Children and Young People received in its consultations with children on the issue of combining school and work. Commissioner Ms Gillian Calvert noted:
- We found that homework was almost universally resented by children as something that they fail to see the point of and that they experienced as really undermining their quality of life in a way, and often leading to fights with parents and creating conflict with parents.³⁴
- 3.43 Feedback from students indicated that there often appeared to be little communication between teachers when setting homework (see Fig 3.6).

Figure 3.6 Committee survey responses: Making combining school and work easier

Q. Is there anything that can be done to make combining school and work easier?

'I think that schools need to realise that students have to work, not everyone's parents can give us a steady cash flow as well as pay for all the other things we need. I need money to live as well. Without money a social life and relaxing goes down the tube. But when I apologise for not completing something 100% or to a better standard because of work issues then my teacher tells me to manage my time more efficiently or quit my job because it is VCE and VCE is more important. But without money how are we supposed to get cars? pay for our phones? internet? laptops to do our work on? stationary? Everyone needs money.' – Kate (Vic.), 9-12 hrs per week.

'All the teachers think their subject is the most important, and I think they forget that there are 6 other teachers all wanting homework handed in the next day etc. We do approx. 6 hours of school a day and I don't think anyone looks forward to going home and doing another 6 hours of school work just to meet teacher demands.' – Lauren (NSW), 15-20 hrs per week.

'Teachers should be more understanding of the demands that both a heavy senior school workload and a part-time job entail. When students have part-time jobs, teachers should be able to negotiate/limit the amount of homework to allow students to keep up.' – Hannah (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'...schools need to have more [of a] role in helping find the right balance of school, work and fun. Teachers are more worried about school than the other two. We need balance in our lives.' – Stephanie (Vic.), 6-9 hrs per week.

'...the work we are given in class should stay in class. Because a teacher has not planned out the class time effectively to fit in all of the course work this should not impact on the student's out of class study time. This is separate from assessment.' – Amanda (ACT), 20-25 hrs per week.

34 Ms Gillian Calvert, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, *Transcript of Evidence*, 25 June 2009, p. 5.

'Teachers shouldn't be so hard on us if we don't complete homework as we get it from every teacher, every day, which is a lot and as well as working, it is very hard.' – Natalie (NSW), 3-6hrs per week.

3.44 Students suggested that a perceived lack of communication between teachers and inconsistency and uncertainty as to the level of flexibility allowed by individual teachers contributed to the difficulty of balancing school and work:

Bianca: Sometimes I will have a shift from 4.30 in the afternoon until nine o'clock at night – I work in hospitality – and she might say, 'You have to finish all these questions by tomorrow.' And I say, 'Miss, I have to work tonight. Can I have an extra day or something.' She just pretty much says, 'No, tough luck.' Then you have to get up at, like, five in the morning and finish your homework, or you have to stay in and do it at lunch, which is pretty bad... There are some teachers who are really understanding and who will say, 'Hand it in the next day,' or, 'Do only some questions.' And there are other teachers who just make you do it and do not really care.³⁵

Katherine: I find that for some periods I do not have any homework at all, and then a week later I will get a whole load of homework that is due by the next week and it has to be done around the same time. I am thinking that maybe some communication between the teachers as to when they are going to give students homework and to figure out the basis on which they are going to give their homework... I think everyone is finding it really hard to manage with a whole load of homework at one time. If it were spread out a bit it might help.³⁶

Ben: I do not know about other schools and their assignments; they tend to give us two weeks notice for all our assignments but they come in blocks. So you will get four assignments at once, and it is within the space of a couple of days, and then you have to try to get them all done within that time. That makes it a bit harder because on some weeks you will be fine with work, and the next week you will not have any time to do work.³⁷

35 Bianca, student, St Joseph's Catholic High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, pp. 48-49.

36 Katherine, student, St Mary's Star of the Sea College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 49.

37 Ben, student, St Joseph's Catholic High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 33.

- 3.45 However, there was also an acknowledgment that teachers are becoming more understanding with the increasing prevalence of students balancing school and work:

Torby: I think teachers are starting to get it right. I know last year in my classes I saw people who had work and school, and teachers were starting to become very understanding of it and encourage you to work because it shows you the workforce and what is out there in front of you, not just the school grounds around you. They are not going to be there to protect you all the time and to show you which way to go.³⁸

Fiona: ...I am 100 per cent confident that if I went to a teacher at my school and said, 'I've had too much stuff on and I really need more time on this,' they would be okay with it. I do not know whether that is just the way teachers are at my school or because generally I have a good track record of getting my work in on time and that kind of thing, but I think that the most important thing for a school to be is flexible. Fair enough, if a student in general never gets their work in on time and you can tell that they just do not manage their time, you may not trust them, but if you have no reason to doubt a student, I think it is really important to give them the benefit of the doubt and just be flexible and understanding with students.³⁹

- 3.46 Ms Theresa Creagh, Queensland Catholic Education Commission, noted that while schools do have a responsibility in the pastoral care of young people, their core business is to ensure that students are educated. Ms Creagh stated:

I think we are placing [an] incredible responsibility on the schools. I would really appreciate it if your inquiry could ensure that the work that is being done by schools on preparing students for work is recognised. The role of schools is to ensure that young people are educated. For some students, part of that education is in work in those latter years. I think we need to recognise that the core business of schools is the full education of young people, including transition into work through traineeships et cetera. In the fullness of life, the pastoral care of those young people is part of the schools' responsibility. The partnership with parents and with business and industry is a role that schools play, but schools

38 Torby, student, Holmesglen TAFE, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, pp. 69-70.

39 Fiona, student, Melba Copland Secondary School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2009, p. 25.

cannot be the answer to it. So I think we need to keep a very full picture of the responsibility. It is a societal responsibility to bring young children to adulthood. The school plays a vital role, the family plays a vital role and society plays a vital role. I completely support the statements made about the incredible pressure society puts on young people and how all of us can work together to educate them to be citizens of this country of whom we can be very proud.⁴⁰

The impact of students' part-time work on educational achievement and Year 12 completion

- 3.47 While there are a range of benefits for students undertaking some part-time work, the educational achievements of students combining school and work can also be adversely affected by work arrangements.
- 3.48 Various studies through the LSAY series have examined the impact of part-time work during high-school on educational outcomes. LSAY studies have also sought to examine the relationship between part-time work and school completion.
- 3.49 Robinson, for example, examined the effect of part-time work on school students and found that, 'in general, having a part-time job did not have an adverse affect on the likelihood of students completing secondary school or on their academic performance in Year 12.'⁴¹ The study was based on over 3000 young people who were aged 19 in 1994 and who had been surveyed annually since they were 14 years old.
- 3.50 Robinson's study found that Year 12 results were a little lower for those who worked more than 10 hours per week during their senior schooling than those who did not work. It also found that Year 11 students who worked more than 10 hours per week were slightly less likely to finish Year 12 than those who did not work.⁴² Upon releasing the findings,

40 Ms Theresa Creagh, Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 16.

41 L. Robinson, *The Effects of Part-Time Work on School Students*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, Research Report No. 9, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, 1999, p. v.

42 L. Robinson *The Effects of Part-Time Work on School Students*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, Research Report No. 9, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, 1999, p. v.

ACER suggested that concern about the impact of having a part-time job on students' schooling 'appears to be unfounded.'⁴³

- 3.51 A subsequent LSAY study by Vickers, Lamb and Hinkley in 2003 examined the effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work, noted that rates of part-time work among students had increased substantially since the early 1990s on which the 1999 report's findings were based.⁴⁴ Vickers, Lamb and Hinkley therefore sought to re-examine the relationship between part-time work and educational outcomes for students, by examining a cohort of students who were in Year 9 in 1995. The study found that participation in employment beyond five hours per week was associated with an increased likelihood of dropping out before the end of Year 12. Vickers, Lamb and Hinkley also found that the more hours students were engaged in work outside school, the higher the likelihood of non-completion.⁴⁵
- 3.52 The most recent body of research conducted by NCVET based on LSAY data, which has yet to be released, examined the activities of the 2003 cohort of 15 year old students. Ms Alison Anlezark from NCVET advised that the study found that combining school and work 'appears to have a negative impact on study outcomes...in terms of retention between years 10, 11 and 12, and on TER score.'⁴⁶ Ms Anlezark added:
- We also find, though, that the results are modest unless the number of hours are long, which leads us to conclude that individuals can combine school and work with minimal impact on their study if their hours are moderated.⁴⁷
- 3.53 DEWR reported that international research is broadly aligned with the findings in Australia – that 'low to moderate hours of work have little negative impact on school achievement or completion, however higher hours may have a slightly negative impact on school achievement.'⁴⁸

43 Australian Council for Educational Research, *School students benefit from part-time work*, media release, 7 May 1999, <<http://www.acer.edu.au/news/990507.html>>. Accessed 14 July 2009.

44 M. Vickers, S. Lamb and J. Hinkley, *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: The effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work*, LSAY Research Report No. 30, February 2003, p. 3.

45 M. Vickers, S. Lamb and J. Hinkley, *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: The effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work*, LSAY Research Report No. 30, February 2003, p. v.

46 Ms Alison Anlezark, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 3.

47 Ms Alison Anlezark, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 3.

48 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 16.

- 3.54 The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry submitted that there is insufficient research into the educational and employment pathways of students and the impact that engagement in part-time work or other extracurricular activities such as community or voluntary work and sports has on the quality of educational outcome.⁴⁹
- 3.55 Vickers, Lamb and Hinkley also acknowledged the possibility that the statistical associations between part-time work and non-completion are not causal or only one of an array of relationships, and that participation in part-time work may be the *result* of a decision to leave school early, rather than a *cause* of early leaving. Vickers, Lamb and Hinkley supported further research to clarify the elements at work and their relationship to one another.⁵⁰

Gender differences

- 3.56 LSAY research also identified gender differences with regards to the impact of students' part-time work on Year 12 completion. Vickers, Lamb and Hinkley, for example, found that:
- Males who work 5 to 15 hours per week during Year 9 are approximately 40 per cent less likely to complete Year 12 than those who do not, while males who work more than fifteen hours per week (up to and including full-time work) are approximately 60 per cent less likely to complete Year 12; and
 - Females who work part-time during Year 9 are much more likely to complete Year 12 than their male counterparts.⁵¹
- 3.57 After analysing LSAY data which suggests that working longer hours is more strongly associated with school non-completion for boys than for girls, Vickers Lamb and Hinkley stated:

The answer may be that the life choices open to males who leave school early are far more favourable than those open to female early leavers. Boys still greatly outnumber girls in the apprenticeship system. Girls who wish to gain a secure place in the labour market cannot rely on this avenue. Instead, their success in the labour market appears to depend on their ability to

49 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Submission no. 27*, p. 11.

50 M. Vickers, S. Lamb and J. Hinkley, *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: The effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work*, LSAY Research Report No. 30, February 2003, p. 29.

51 M. Vickers, S. Lamb and J. Hinkley, *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: The effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work*, LSAY Research Report No. 30, February 2003, p. v.

demonstrate solid achievements in the formal education system
...It seems that, as a result, girls have learned to balance the
demands of schoolwork and participation in part-time work.⁵²

Committee comment

- 3.58 In the main, part-time work for students is a very positive experience. Students value the independence that comes from having a job and gain confidence from interacting with adults in the workplace. They also acquire a range of employability skills which hold them in good stead for future employment.
- 3.59 There is a point, though, at which spending too much time to work appears to translate into diminished academic achievement and a decreased likelihood of completing Year 12. The point at which participation in part-time work shifts from a positive to a negative indicator is virtually impossible to discern because some individuals cope with the demands of having a job better than others. The pressures of a job on a student's performance at school can also be influenced by other external factors such as a student's extra-curricular activities or the time they spend socialising outside school hours.
- 3.60 The responses to the committee's student survey gave some indication of the extent to which schools are accommodating students' part-time work arrangements when setting homework and assessment tasks, and negotiating extensions to deadlines. However, there was also evidence which showed that teachers may not be aware of the amount of time students are spending in part-time work outside school.
- 3.61 Students' survey responses showed that an overwhelming number of students with part-time jobs feel that their working hours impact on the amount of time available to study. But on the evidence available, the degree to which part-time work impacts on educational attainment cannot be quantified. Further detailed investigation is needed to understand and measure the relationship between part-time work and academic achievement and Year 12 completion. Specifically, research is needed to examine what role other external factors play in influencing academic achievement, including a student's extra-curricular activities outside part-

52 M. Vickers, S. Lamb and J. Hinkley, *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: The effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work*, LSAY Research Report No. 30, February 2003, p. 12.

time work. Where students working part-time do not go on to complete senior secondary education, it cannot be assumed that this is a direct result of their working hours, as evidence suggests that students often work longer hours because they are not engaged in their learning anyway.

- 3.62 The committee notes and commends NCVET projects currently in progress which are seeking to unlock some of these questions using data obtained through LSAY, including one project which will explore how different types of work, and work and study combinations, are related to educational and labour market outcomes.⁵³

Recommendation 1

- 3.63 **That the Australian Government ensures that further research is undertaken to examine student pathways and the impact of part-time employment and other extracurricular activities on students' academic performance and retention, including the motivations of those students who work longer hours.**

53 See NCVET, Work in Progress, *Combining VET and Employment in Youth Transitions*, commenced 30 June 2009. Available online at: <http://www.ncvet.edu.au/workinprogress/projects/10431.html>, accessed 5 October 2009.

Employability skills and opportunities for accreditation of part-time work

The passing of two decades since discussion started in Australia about recognition of part-time work for accreditation purposes highlights not an antipathy to proceeding but more the complexity of the mechanisms required to effect that accreditation in a meaningful manner.¹

Introduction

- 4.1 The previous chapter illustrated the range of skills that students develop through their part-time jobs. Yet for many students combining school and work, the learning that takes place in the workplace is not being formally recorded in any context. The following chapter explores opportunities to recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students' part-time or casual work.²
- 4.2 This issue is particularly pertinent as the inquiry coincided with the Australian Government undertaking stakeholder consultations on the introduction of a *Job Ready Certificate* – a proposed national certificate

1 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission no. 18*, p. 6.

2 Inquiry Terms of Reference.

which offers a 'simple, affordable and practical way to assess and report job readiness.'³

- 4.3 The proposed Job Ready Certificate seeks to target students participating in secondary school vocational education programs, at least initially. It was suggested that where part-time work is linked to a formal school-based training program, 'the recognition and accreditation of skills and competencies gained is reasonably straightforward.'⁴ However, establishing mechanisms to recognise the full range of work undertaken by students outside the classroom presents a significantly greater challenge.

Defining employability skills

- 4.4 There are a range of skills and personal attributes which can contribute to an individual's employability. There has been much work, both in Australia and internationally, on defining employability skills (also referred to as generic skills, capabilities or key competencies)⁵ and a number of competing definitions still exist.⁶ Employability skills refer to broad generic work-related competences and personal attributes which are valued by employers.⁷
- 4.5 Table 4.1 outlines some of the key developments in Australia in defining the generic skills which contribute to an individual's employability. One such development was the report of the Australian Education Council's Review Committee (the Mayer Committee) in 1992 which proposed a set of key competencies (the Mayer Key Competencies). The Mayer Committee defined these key competencies as:

...essential for effective participation in the emerging patterns of work and work organisation. They focus on the capacity to apply knowledge and skills in an integrated way in work situations. Key competencies are generic in that they apply to work generally rather than being specific to work in particular occupations or

3 R. Sweet, *The Job Ready Certificate, A Discussion Paper for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*, December 2008, p. 1.

4 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission no. 18*, p. 5.

5 Department of Education, Science and Training (2002), *Employability Skills for the Future*, p. 3

6 E. Smith and P. Comyn, *The development of employability skills in novice workers*, NCVER, Adelaide, 2003, p. 12.

7 R. Sweet, *The Job Ready Certificate, A Discussion Paper for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*, December 2008, pp. 24-25.

industries. This characteristic means that the key competencies are not only essential for participation in work, but are also essential for effective participation in further education and in adult life more generally.⁸

- 4.6 The 2002 report, *Employability Skills for the Future*, prepared for the then Department of Education, Science and Training by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia, adopted the following definition of employability skills:

Employability skills are defined as 'skills required not only to gain employment but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions'.⁹

- 4.7 The report also devised an 'Employability Skills Framework' which built on the Mayer Key Competencies and identified a range of employability skills and personal attributes.¹⁰ The framework identified eight employability skills:

- **communication** skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers;
- **team work** skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes;
- **problem-solving** skills that contribute to productive outcomes;
- **initiative and enterprise** skills that contribute to innovative outcomes;
- **planning and organising** skills that contribute to long-term and short-term strategic planning;
- **self-management** skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth;
- **learning** skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes; and
- **technology** skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks.¹¹

8 Australian Education Council and Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (The Mayer Committee), *Key Competencies: Report of the Committee to advise the Australian Education Council and Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training on employment-related Key Competencies for postcompulsory education and training*, Sands and McDougal Pty. Ltd., Australia, 1992, p. 7.

9 Department of Education, Science and Training (2002), *Employability Skills for the Future*, p. 3.

10 Department of Education, Science and Training (2002), *Employability Skills for the Future*.

11 Department of Education, Science and Training (2002), *Employability Skills for the Future*, p. 7.

Table 4.1 Key Developments in Generic Skills in Australia

Early initiatives	
1985 Karmel Committee	The Committee chaired by Peter Karmel looks into the quality of education in Australia (Quality of Education Review Committee 1985). It highlights the importance of an internationally competitive labour force and stresses that outcomes of education should contribute to Australia's competitiveness. The Committee recommends that students in primary and secondary schooling be prepared for both education and employment through attaining skills such as accessing information, communication and working in groups.
1991 Finn Review	A review of young people's post-compulsory education and training in Australia by Finn (Australian Education Council Review Committee 1991) recognises the importance of young people developing key competencies. Due to changing technology and changing economic circumstances, the training system must emphasise both the acquisition of specific technical skills for the job and flexibility. This requires strong grounding in generic and transferable skills.
1992 Mayer Committee	At Finn's recommendation, the Mayer Committee (Australian Education Council, Mayer Committee 1992) develops a set of key competencies essential to preparing young people for employment. Seven competencies result from extensive consultation with the various education sectors and the business community.
Industry-led initiatives	
1999 Australian Industry Group	The Australian Industry Group commissions a report (Allen Consulting Group 1999) that draws attention to the importance of both 'hard' (notably information technology) skills and 'soft' skills (for example problem-solving, team skills, willingness to be adaptable) which need to be developed prior to recruitment.
2002 ACCI/BCA	The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA) undertake a study of employers' views on generic skills. They produce an expanded list of skills as the basis for employability, which includes the various stages of working life. The report acknowledges that combinations of these skills lead to high job-related performance and their integration in real life should not be overlooked in how they are developed and assessed.
Joint initiatives	
2002- National Policy Development	The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) takes up the issue of employability skills development through the VET sector, including pilot testing various approaches to improving the identification of these skills in training packages. This is in response to consultations and research that indicate success in the teaching and learning of these skills depends on them being made more explicit. In July, ANTA begins to co-ordinate a collaborative cross-sectoral approach to employability skills as defined by Australian industry, to be appraised in 2004.

Source: NCVET, *Defining generic skills: At a glance*, Adelaide, NCVET, 2003.

4.8 The personal attributes that contribute to overall employability identified in the Employability Skills Framework are:

- Loyalty;
- Commitment;
- Honesty and integrity;
- Enthusiasm;
- Reliability;
- Personal presentation;
- Commonsense;
- Positive self-esteem;
- Sense of humour;
- Balanced attitude to work and home life;
- Ability to deal with pressure;
- Motivation; and
- Adaptability.¹²

4.9 Even where students are developing the types of skills identified in the Employability Skills Framework which enhance their appeal to future employers, it was evident that often employers and students themselves do not make this connection. This is especially the case where students' part-time jobs are not indicative of their future career aspirations. Mr Ian Palmer stated:

Some industries will argue that time in a retail shop has no credit off a construction trade, but I would argue that three months in retail gaining employability skills, is equal to 3 months in any trade gaining employability skills and should be recognised.¹³

4.10 Workplace Learning Illawarra highlighted the importance of students being able to identify their value to employers:

One of the things that my organisation recognises is that young people do not necessarily recognise the qualities and value they bring to the workplace. They do not necessarily understand what that value is and use that to their advantage so we need to get around that.¹⁴

4.11 A representative from DEEWR added:

...it is not just about being able to say a young person is job ready because they have ticked boxes; it is actually about getting them to

12 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Employability Skills for the Future*, 2002, p. 46.

13 Mr Ian Palmer, *Submission no. 6*, p. 5.

14 Mr Greg McLean, *Workplace Learning Illawarra, Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 13.

recognise, 'My work at McDonalds actually might be useful and the skills I have gained are something an employer will want from me when I go to another workplace'. They do not see that link and that is a failure in a career development sense that they do not get the experience or the opportunity to do that.¹⁵

- 4.12 The WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry described the value that employers place on students' ability to demonstrate employability skills developed through their part-time work:

We find that overwhelmingly most of the kids that have had part-time or casual jobs have developed employability skills, are able to demonstrate them and are eminently more employable after they finish school... We have found that when employers are looking to employ someone they look at their resume or CV, and first of all they will look at their educational achievement and how well they have done. However, they then turn to see if they have had a part-time or casual job, because that in itself tells a big story.¹⁶

The Job Ready Certificate

- 4.13 The Australian Government has proposed to develop a Job Ready Certificate as a practical tool for recognising employability skills. The proposed Certificate has four key features which are outlined in a discussion paper commissioned by DEEWR. The Certificate will:

1. Assess the job readiness of **senior secondary students who are taking vocational education programmes and report on this at the end of Year 12, before they leave school and enter the workforce;**
2. Assess and report **personal attributes** that are important in work as well as agreed **key employability skills;**
3. Be assessed **in the workplace**, during work placements that are part of upper secondary vocational education programs; and
4. Be a **national stand alone certificate**, additional to existing upper secondary and vocational education qualifications.¹⁷

15 Ms Renae Houston, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 14 May 2009, p. 13.

16 Ms Anne Griffiths, Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 6.

17 R. Sweet, *The Job Ready Certificate, A Discussion Paper for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*, December 2008, p. 2.

- 4.14 DEEWR suggested that the Job Ready Certificate could potentially target the following student groups:
- students undertaking VET in Schools as a key part of the Trade Training Centre in Schools Program;
 - VET in Schools students from Year 9 to Year 12 undertaking on-the-job training;
 - secondary students who complete Year 12 but do not go on to post-school education or training; and
 - students undertaking community service as part of a gap year.¹⁸
- 4.15 The discussion paper acknowledged that through the Employability Skills Framework presented in *Employability Skills for the Future*, ‘broad agreement’ had been reached on what should be included in the term employability.
- 4.16 The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) supported the implementation of the Certificate ‘as part of a suite of measures’ to recognise the employability skills gained by VETiS students. The ACTU stated that it ‘looks forward to working with government to ensure that this certificate is robust, nationally recognised and portable.’¹⁹
- 4.17 The Australian Education Union noted that complex issues were involved in the consideration of the Job Ready Certificate or an equivalent:
- ...with respect to the job ready certificate or whatever it may manifest itself in terms of a title, while there is merit in obviously considering the further development of that, I make the point that it involves things that are not easy to deal with... Do you get a nine out of 10 for loyalty or an eight out of 10 for loyalty? What does that mean – loyalty to whom and under what terms? Do you get an A-E grade for team work? How do you define that? On punctuality, I thought ‘punctual’ was punctual. It is not a bit early; it is not a bit late. It is not being prepared to stay and work for nothing. These are very complex things...²⁰
- 4.18 The introduction of a Job Ready Certificate presents some significant challenges. The Government has acknowledged that the reputation of the proposed Certificate’s assessment tool will depend upon employers being involved every step of the way. Submissions have emphasised the

18 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 58.

19 Australian Council of Trade Unions, *Submission no. 21*, p. 8.

20 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Australian Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, pp. 33-34.

need for the end product to be something that is going to be meaningful to both the student and employer. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for example, expressed concern that the Certificate may be 'another thing that could be fraught with difficulty where the intention is very good'.²¹

- 4.19 DEEWR undertook a series of consultations on the Job Ready Certificate concurrent with the committee conducting this inquiry. DEEWR advised that a report on the consultations is being prepared, but had not been released as the committee's report was being prepared.

Challenges in accrediting students' part-time work

- 4.20 Drawing on the Queensland experience, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) suggested that the shortcomings of previous attempts to accredit students' part-time work can be attributed to two dilemmas recognised worldwide in attempting to accredit skills acquired outside a formalised education and training setting. The dilemmas referred to by QCEC are:

1. on the one hand avoiding a mere paper chase to accumulate credits towards a qualification that is ultimately worthless because it has no substance, and
2. on the other hand forming a mechanism for accrediting that is ultimately fair, equitable, simple and achievable.²²

- 4.21 While some employers might be capable of determining the skills a student displays in the workplace, the QCEC suggested that the impost of this task on employers and the difficulties in determining and reaching comparable standards 'adds to the complexity, the resourcing and the question of whether the outcome is worth the input'.²³ It was suggested that it would be difficult to achieve consistent judgments from employers as part of the accreditation process without training and understanding.²⁴ There are also instances where a student's direct supervisor or manager may be a student themselves. For example, Mr

21 Ms Mary Hicks, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 32-33.

22 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission no. 18*, p. 2.

23 Ms Theresa Creagh, Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 6.

24 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission no. 18*, p. 3.

Jeffrey Beddows, a careers adviser at the Tasmanian Academy's Hellyer campus, stated:

It is amazing how many of our year 12 students, particularly in supermarkets, are now supervisors, particularly on the weekend.²⁵

- 4.22 Some witnesses expressed concern about the additional reporting responsibilities and administrative tasks associated with a formal accreditation process. The WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry acknowledged that these additional responsibilities 'would not be practicable or acceptable to industry or schools, particularly in times of general staff specific skills shortages and teacher shortages.'²⁶ Mrs Deanne Reynolds, a careers adviser at Canberra Girls' Grammar School, stated:

I would be loath to over-administer a lot of this and loath to see legislation come in that put too much emphasis and too much onus on students, schools and business owners. But it would be nice if there was a level playing field and some recognition of the wonderful work that these young people do.²⁷

- 4.23 Inquiry participants were concerned about whether a certificate around employability skills would have sufficient credibility to hold weight within the employment market.²⁸ The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian expressed reservations about the possibility of a legislative requirement for employers to formally record the skills learnt by young people in the workplace. Ms Julie Harcourt stated:

...it does not immediately strike me as enormously beneficial to go down that legislative path to require employers to tick boxes to give accreditation or to recognise the skills, because I think you could have that devaluing... I am not sure that any employer would look at two people and go, 'You have got your boxes ticked and you haven't'.²⁹

25 Mr Jeffrey Beddows, Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus), *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 32.

26 Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA, *Submission no. 30*, p. 6.

27 Mrs Deanne Reynolds, Canberra Girls' Grammar, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2009, p. 28.

28 See, for example, Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network/ Peninsula Local Community Partnership, *Submission no. 43*. (insert more)

29 Ms Julie Harcourt, Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 13.

- 4.24 A representative of the Burnie Chamber of Commerce who also operates a newsagency, stated:

I find when I am recruiting that a good reference is far better than an institutional certificate saying that they have worked X amount of hours part time or regularly. If you get a reference that says that they have worked at McDonalds or KFC and they have lasted 12 months, it is always a very positive sign.³⁰

- 4.25 Mr Ian Palmer, who chairs the NSW Local Community Partnership Network but submitted in a private capacity, stated that:

Logging employability skills is not as important as teaching them. Whatever system is developed it must not steal teaching time; promote cynicism in students that they are doing some sort of Mickey Mouse course; or disenfranchise employers from the skills training agenda.³¹

Examples of efforts to recognise learning outcomes from part-time work

- 4.26 Across state and territory jurisdictions a range of processes for accreditation of skills acquired by young people in the workplace are already in place or have been tested.
- 4.27 Efforts to date to recognise learning outcomes from part-time work were described by VETnetwork Australia as having achieved only limited success.³²
- 4.28 The Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network (FMP LLEN) and Peninsula Local Community Partnership acknowledged that school programs with processes for accrediting skills can 'vary from school to school both in quality and in the frequency/regularity with which they are used.'³³
- 4.29 Some examples of tested approaches to recognising learning outcomes from part-time work include:
- encouraging employers to place students on school-based traineeships;

30 Mr Alan Berechree, Burnie Chamber of Commerce, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 6.

31 Mr Ian Palmer, *Submission no. 6*, p. 2.

32 VETnetwork Australia, *Submission no. 34*, p. 5.

33 Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network/Peninsula Local Community Partnership, *Submission no. 43*, p. 2.

- acknowledging part-time work on local certification and school references;
 - allowing part-time work to count as structured workplace learning (SWL); and
 - allowing part-time work to count as work experience for school certification purposes.³⁴
- 4.30 An accreditation mechanism in Victoria exists through the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) which is an alternative option to the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) for students interested in undertaking a vocationally oriented senior secondary education. While enrolled in VCAL Year 11 and 12 students can gain recognition and credit for their part-time work.³⁵
- 4.31 VCAL has a compulsory work-related strand and schools are allocated resources to provide support to students.³⁶ The flexibility offered through VCAL also means that it is able to accommodate students' work into their daily timetable rather than as an additional obligation.³⁷ However, there is no arrangement for recognising the part-time work for those VCE students not undertaking VET-related subjects. The FMP LLEN and Peninsula Local Community Partnership explained:
- Credit is given almost exclusively against vocational education and training subjects in VCAL and to some extent, VET programs in the VCE. There is no evidence of a similar process being used with "academic" subjects in VCE nor of regular time allowances being made for young people who work part-time to sustain their participation in education.³⁸
- 4.32 The discussion paper on the Job Ready Certificate points out that there are a number of school courses in other states and territories that make direct reference to employability skills, but 'in some cases relatively few students seem to enrol in them.'³⁹
- 4.33 In Queensland, students can undertake a workplace or community learning project which is separate from any established school, training
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34 VETnetwork Australia, *Submission no. 34*, p. 5.

35 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, pp. 62-63.

36 Ms Jennifer Marks, Sandringham College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 April 2009, p. 9.

37 Career Education Association of Victoria, *Submission no. 52*, p. 1.

38 Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network/Peninsula Local Community Partnership, *Submission no. 43*, p. 2.

39 R. Sweet, *The Job Ready Certificate, A Discussion Paper for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*, December 2008, p. 25.

or other educational program. Successful completion of the project contributes one credit towards the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). Despite this initiative, the QCEC stated that:

The reality is however that the process of applying for recognition of the learning project and fulfilling the paper work requirements is probably not within the capacities of many individual students. Neither are the incentives great.⁴⁰

4.34 The Western Australian Department of Education and Training identified three existing workplace learning programs which provide opportunities for students to develop skills in the workplace and obtain credit towards their senior secondary certificate:

- Work Skills is a program endorsed by the WA Curriculum Council which enables students to demonstrate achievement of employability skills through paid or unpaid work.
- Workplace learning on-the-job training involves training and assessment in a real or simulated workplace, providing supervised learning activities contributing to the assessment of one or more units of competency from a national training package.
- Workplace learning employability skills provides opportunities for students to demonstrate at least 20 skills relevant to entry-level training, in a real workplace.⁴¹

4.35 Ms Valerie Gould from the Independent Schools Council of Australia commented on a previous process established by the WA Curriculum Council to recognise part-time work as part of structured workplace learning which contributed to secondary qualifications. She suggested the program was unsuccessful due to the demands placed on those involved and the lack of resources:

The main reason the first one fell over...is that for these students to be in part-time work, be it in retail or hospitality and fast food, the employer had to be willing to give up time to assess the skills and also to give them experience in a range of things. You could not just have them flipping hamburgers the entire year and hope they would pick up a range of skills. Often these students did not have the wherewithal to talk to their employer about doing an

40 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission no. 18*, p. 2.

41 Curriculum Council of Western Australia, *Western Australian Certificate of Education Manual 2009*, <http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/files/pdf/WACE_Manual_2009_Section5.pdf>, accessed 21 September 2009.

assessment. Teachers were willing to support them but they got absolutely no time allocation to do that. If it is going to work it really comes down to this: just because they are doing part-time work and therefore are not in front of a classroom, they still need that support. That would be the same across all schools and all states. It is hugely time consuming, but I think we have to remember, particularly as to those students that might be the ones who do not graduate and do not have successful transitions, that students are going to cost us an awful lot more in the future if we do not get it right when they are in their early years. I hate to say it, but it still comes down to resourcing, as so many good things in schools do.⁴²

- 4.36 The Tasmanian Government advised that some Tasmanian schools have adopted a “skills passport” or a “work placement diary” which allows a student and their employer to communicate those skills gained in the workplace to their school. However the program is not consistent, nor is it recognised state wide.⁴³
- 4.37 The Tasmanian Government also drew attention to its *Guaranteeing Futures* initiative, through which schools are encouraged to recognise employability skills and to record and document these in a student’s pathway plan.⁴⁴
- 4.38 The NSW Catholic Education Commission advised of funding obtained by the NSW Department of Education and Training through COAG to develop resources for schools to facilitate assessment based on recognition of student’s experiences in retail and hospitality workplaces (including voluntary work placement).⁴⁵

Recognising work outside formal VET arrangements

- 4.39 The range of examples described above illustrate that the success of programs to accredit part-time work is heavily dependent on the relationship between employer and school, and a strong commitment from school staff. Despite the difficulties in recognising work undertaken outside a formal school-based VET program, there was support for

42 Ms Valerie Gould, Independent Schools Council of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 18.

43 Tasmanian Government, *Submission no. 35*, p. 2.

44 Tasmanian Government, *Submission no. 35*, p. 2.

45 Catholic Education Commission NSW, *Submission no. 5*, p. 2.

investigating opportunities to record the full range of students' experiences. Mr Greg Mclean from Workplace Learning Illawarra stated:

I think there is probably an opportunity outside the school based apprenticeship and traineeship system, with recognition occurring to create some pathways in those industries that are likely to provide the career opportunities further down the track.⁴⁶

- 4.40 If an accreditation process were to be introduced to recognise informal work as well as formal training, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) stated that it would not be feasible to expect that this process could be wholly managed by the small number of workplace trainers and assessors and/or schools.⁴⁷ This view was supported by the Australian College of Educators which highlighted the existing pressure on staff resources within schools:

There is some evidence that school managed VET completion rates are as low as 20 percent in some areas which does not augur well for work experiences that young people organise for themselves outside of school hours. It is the norm for VET teachers and careers advisers to say that there is insufficient time to do the task well and as early as possible to guide young people in the career and thus subject choices they are required to make.⁴⁸

- 4.41 Mr Ian Palmer outlined some of the difficulties he has observed from previous efforts to recognise students' employability skills:

...attempts to have employers consistently and objectively comment on a student's employability skills have met with patchy success to date. In many cases the employer does not have the time, training and assessment skills, or inclination to do much more than a simple tick and flick check list. Over the past decade I have witnessed many well intentioned attempts to improve this without much success. Once a young worker has established a working relationship with the employer, the supervisors often struggle to offer a detached, objective view of the student's skills due to the fear of de-motivating the "worker". Perhaps this is just human nature, but either way it makes it very hard to get effective feedback from employers who seem to default to brief glib statements, or politely neutral statements. It's a brave employer indeed who offers constructive feedback that risks hurting a

46 Mr Greg McLean, Workplace Learning Illawarra, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 13.

47 Australian Council for Private Education and Training, *Submission no. 16*, p. 4.

48 Australian College of Educators, *Submission no. 49*, p. 3.

students feelings or creating public relations problem for the business. These real world factors must be taken into account when designing any system or it will fail.⁴⁹

- 4.42 There was a broad range of suggestions from submitters about what the process for recognising and accrediting students' acquired employability should entail. ACPET acknowledged that it is the evidence gathering process which is the most time consuming, and therefore suggested:

...an approach where teams of people from workplaces and schools can be trained in the required skills so that they can be part of a team approach to gathering evidence and determining competency of the individual.⁵⁰

- 4.43 The WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry advocated a process whereby the onus for maintaining paperwork and recording tasks undertaken while at work was placed on the students themselves, who would be required to accurately present this information on their resumes.⁵¹ It was acknowledged that the issue with any form of self-assessment process would be encouraging student participation in the exercise.⁵²

- 4.44 The Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council (GRVEC) suggested that schools should maintain an electronic record of students' work (both paid and unpaid) for students who elect to provide this information.⁵³ GRVEC supported the development of a national method of recording skills and attributes based on the Employability Skills Framework whereby employers would record attainment of skills in a generic logbook available to all students and schools would record this information.⁵⁴

- 4.45 Gundagai High School suggested a system whereby a student's employability skills would be recorded as a supplement to their formal certificate on completing high school:

Where school students have been in regular part-time employment for, say, one year, their employers should sign off on an agreed (or system-devised) list of employability skills. This list could be added to the formal certification of student achievement at the

49 Mr Ian Palmer, *Submission no. 6*, p. 1.

50 Australian Council for Private Education and Training, *Submission no. 16*, p. 4.

51 Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA, *Submission no. 30*, p. 7.

52 Mr Ian Palmer, *Submission no. 6*, p. 3.

53 Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council, *Submission no. 10*, p. 3.

54 Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council, *Submission no. 10*, p. 4.

completion of their secondary education. Recognition of regular part-time work over a period of two years would compliment a student's school based studies.⁵⁵

Committee comment

- 4.46 Although they may not recognise it, students develop generic skills through their life experiences outside school which contribute to their employability, regardless of whether those experiences are directly related to their future career aspirations. Recognising and accrediting these employability and career development skills continues to present a significant challenge.
- 4.47 There are a range of examples of existing programs or potential programs in place across jurisdictions, predominantly catering to vocationally oriented students, some of which have been identified in this chapter. However, often schools report that they are not adequately resourced to deliver programs effectively. The success of these programs has thus been highly variable.
- 4.48 The proposed Job Ready Certificate seeks to assess the job readiness of students participating in secondary school vocational education programs.⁵⁶ However, there are a large number of students acquiring a range of employability skills through their experiences beyond the classroom which are not linked to a formal vocational education program. These experiences may include students' paid part-time jobs, primarily in the retail or fast-food and hospitality sectors, or it may be through community activities or volunteer work, including sporting and recreational activities. It is imperative that these students also have an opportunity to have formal recognition of the employability skills they develop in these settings.
- 4.49 Therefore, in addition to the development of the Job Ready Certificate, the Government is encouraged to examine opportunities to recognise the generic skills developed by students through the full gamut of activities they may undertake outside school. Such an undertaking will present complexities in documenting and evaluating the employability skills acquired by students in the workplace equitably as work is not linked to

55 Gundagai High School, *Submission no. 56*, p. 6.

56 R. Sweet, *The Job Ready Certificate, A Discussion Paper for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*, December 2008, p. 16.

a formal VET qualification. However, evidence received throughout consultations with students suggests that they would like to have this information recorded. Such an initiative would provide opportunities for students to reflect on the skills they are developing through their various activities, and to identify skills that complement their classroom learning and are valued by employers.

- 4.50 Extending opportunities to document employability skills more broadly will also allow those who cannot access paid part-time for various reasons, such as remoteness, the chance to record evidence of where they are acquiring these same skills through other means.
- 4.51 If students were presented with the option to voluntarily register their work arrangements with their school, as per the suggestion from the Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council, this would contribute an awareness of students' work-related activities to teachers. A common message conveyed during the inquiry was that teachers lack knowledge about the part-time work arrangements of their students.
- 4.52 Any initiative to recognise the employability skills acquired through part-time work or extracurricular activity should not create an administrative burden for employers. Given the large proportion of students to whom a skills passport may be desirable, it is not feasible to expect that employers would manage this process without most of the responsibility resting with students to document their activities.
- 4.53 The committee envisages a national generic skills passport which is easily accessible to students both online and through their schools. This passport would consist of a template which contains a series of skill recognition proformas based around the Employability Skills Framework, where students can identify where they have demonstrated having acquired a particular skill. Responsibility for developing and maintaining the record would rest with the student, and the passport would be validated by employers, supervisors or team leaders.
- 4.54 There is likely to be scepticism as to how much weight a generic skills passport will hold with employers if it is not validated through accredited assessors. However, the proposed device offers a mechanism which would be advantageous to students and employers without creating an administrative burden or an onerous assessment and reporting process.

Recommendation 2

- 4.55 That the Australian Government develop and implement a national generic skills passport for secondary students to document the employability skills they develop through activities undertaken outside school. These activities should encompass paid and unpaid work (including community/volunteer activities and work for the family business), sporting and recreational activities and other life experiences.

Recommendation 3

- 4.56 That the Australian Government, in consultation with stakeholders, develop a Code of Practice for employers, supervisors, and workplace mentors to outline their responsibilities in assisting students to document their acquired employability skills.

Protections for students in the workplace

Many schoolkids are afraid of their bosses. I know I am, and I feel that a lot of local businesses are exploiting their younger/student employees. Until this year (I'm year 12 now), I was doing 3 shifts a week, often working until after midnight on a school night. Something needs to be done about this, as it is not just me. If we complain or leave on our rostered clock-off time, we get targeted.

– (Name withheld), student (NSW).

*I get fairly good pay but many friends are getting **low wages** and sometimes **no breaks** for 9 hour shifts. Is there a policy for this? We need breaks and food.*

– Margo, student (NSW).

Introduction

- 5.1 The experience of young people in the workplace can vary significantly from a very positive experience to one in which they can be exposed to mistreatment. Student workers can be particularly vulnerable because they often lack awareness of their employment rights and obligations, and their level of knowledge about pay and conditions places them at a distinct disadvantage when entering employment.¹ Young employees also lack external supports and self-confidence. As a result, they can be

¹ Commission for Children and Young People WA, *Submission no. 40*, p. 3.

susceptible to exploitative conditions such as working long hours.² Consideration of the rights and opportunities of young workers can take on increased significance in the context of a tightening labour market.³

- 5.2 The NSW Teachers Federation noted that if a student's first experience of employment is a negative one, it can have a lasting effect on their view of the workplace.⁴ The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian added that:

Problems in the workplace can contribute to challenges students face with their personal, economic and social circumstances. These issues can create barriers to learning for some students.⁵

- 5.3 This chapter considers measures to assist students in the workplace, many of whom are experiencing their first taste of the work and yet who often lack information about their fundamental rights and obligations.

Flexibility provided by employers to assist students

- 5.4 It was encouraging to note responses to the committee's student survey and student forums indicated that the great majority of employers appear to accommodate students' requests to take time off or reduce their working hours when they have a high work load or during exam periods, provided adequate notice is provided.
- 5.5 Of the 1,690 survey respondents who participate in some form of work, 1,153 (68 per cent) indicated that their employer provides flexibility to assist them to meet study requirements, for instance, when assignments are due or at exam time. Data from survey respondents suggested that students were more likely to receive flexibility from their employers if they were working less than 15 hours per week (69.2 per cent) than those working in excess of 15 hours per week (62.1 per cent). A selection of comments from students on this issue is included in Figure 5.1.
- 5.6 While smaller businesses are often unable to offer the same degree of flexibility as those with a large pool of employees to draw from, it is clear

2 Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, *Submission no. 46*, p. 2.

3 Commission for Children and Young People WA, *Submission no. 40*, p. 4.

4 NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission no. 22, Attachment B*, p. 13.

5 Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, *Submission no. 46*, p. 2.

that, for the most part, employers really value young workers and do the right thing by them.

5.7 Nonetheless, reference was made to employers who believe they are doing the right thing by their young workers and have appropriate systems in place, but despite their best intentions, fail to provide adequate flexibility. Furthermore, employers often fail to communicate with their young workers to find out just how they are faring in the workplace. Of greatest concern are examples of employers who do not appear to take the interests and needs of students into consideration at all.

5.8 Maxine from Canberra Girls' Grammar School who works for a family business in a restaurant, suggested that there was little provision for flexibility within the hospitality industry:

I have no choice when I work.... [Management] want you to do these specific hours and if you can't do it they don't want you. It really depends where you work. If it is in hospitality I know they do not care about your outside life; it is whether you can work. If you are tired, that is not acceptable.⁶

5.9 The Australian National Schools Network emphasised the need for adequate protections for school-aged employees:

Students need to be *protected* against excessively long hours of work, against injury and abuse, and against employers who do not allow rostered time off for major assessments.⁷

Figure 5.1 Committee survey responses: Flexibility provided by employers to assist students

Q. Does your employer provide flexibility to help you meet study requirements, for instance, when assignments are due or at exam time? If you answered yes, can you give examples of how your employer provides this flexibility?

'Yes – They told me when I started that school was more important than work and that if I needed time off during exam time I just needed to give them two weeks notice and they would be fine with me having the time off.' – Emily (ACT), 12-15 hrs per week.

'No – if I don't tell them 3 weeks before hand, they roster me late shifts and they get angry if I chuck a sickie.' – Adrienne (NSW), 15-20 hrs per week.

'Yes – My employer understands that I am in upper high school so I can take as much time off work as I need to complete assignments etc.' – Gabbi (WA), 15-20 hrs per week.

'Yes – My employer lets me take hours off to complete important exam studies or assignments and calls other employees to swap shifts with me to suit my study requirements.' – James (Qld), 15-20 hrs per week.

'No. I get told to work and I work.' – Anthony (WA), 9-12 hrs per week.

6 Maxine, student, Canberra Girls' Grammar School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2009, p. 7.

7 Australian National Schools Network, *Submission no. 13*, p. 2.

'Yes – My employer tries not to roster me on during weeknights only when absolutely necessary to give me adequate time to complete my school studies.' – Gabe (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'Each of the casuals have set shifts to do. If for instance, I had an exam that I needed to study for, I would offer around my shift for others to cover for me. If it's not covered and I physically can't do it, my employer would understand because my schooling is crucial at this age.' – Cherie (ACT), 12-15 hrs per week.

'My employer is good and understands that I have other commitments and allow me to take time off if needed, or work less shifts.' – Gabrielle (ACT), 6-9 hrs per week.

'Yes – she says that study is more important so she limits junior's shifts so we can only do so many a week.' – Casey (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'Yes – He just understands the needs of school children and when I need time off he will give it.' – Bridget (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

'No – My Manager/Boss said she doesn't control my school work and that I can't take a day off without filling it out later.' – Isaac (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'Yes – My employer provides flexibility for me by allowing me to change my availability when I need to revise for a test or exam.' – Natasha (WA), 3-6hrs per week.

'Yes – They want me to do well at school and get the grades I need for medicine. They are very kind to me and don't make me work set hours. Some weeks when I have a lot of exams I don't have to work as they let me study.' – Angharad (ACT), 6-9 hrs per week.

'Yes – I'm pretty lucky to have employers who allow flexibility throughout my employment. They are very aware that year 12 is a big year in terms of school and study. If I need time off during exams or if I have a big assessment they happily give it to me.' – Emma (NSW), (6-9 hrs per week)

'(My employer) gives me any hours I need off and has a good relationship where he is generally interested in my wellbeing.' – Emily Louise (WA), 9-12 hrs per week.

'No – not usually, but if they do they seem annoyed and aggravated by the fact that I am unable to work. In saying that they sometimes give me the hours I want, depending on which supervisor is on the shift.' – Lauren (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'Yes – there is an unavailability book. If an assessment is coming up I can notify my manager that I will not be able to work certain days by placing my name in the book. Also, because I am a casual it is already perceived that I may be unable to work some days, it is not a big issue.' – Lani (NSW), 3-6 hrs per week.

'Yes – I have given my boss a roster of when I have a lot of assignments due and all the dates of exam weeks and she has said it is up to me whether or not I want to work around those times.' – Madeline (NSW), 3-6 hrs per week.

'Yes – if I ask for time off I can generally get it but they never are happy about this.' – Tyler (NSW), 12-15 hrs per week.

'No – they expect that school work is needed to be done over working, however I need to work to give support to my single mother.' – Jessica (NSW), 12-15 hrs per week.

'No – they don't because they believe school work/your education is more important than having an income at this stage of life.' – Katie (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

'Jobs that allow for school expectations are difficult to find.' – Kate (NSW), 12-15 hrs per week.

5.10 The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian noted that 'adequate protections for young people in the workplace can assist students to enjoy the independence they gain from

part-time work as well as assisting them to get on with the job of learning.⁸

- 5.11 A traineeship manager from a fast-food chain presented evidence about the policies and practices in place to accommodate students' school-work balance needs:

As an employer of high school students, [we are] flexible about the study requirements of our employees and we understand the importance of balancing the demands of work and study. Parents of students are required to sign employment application forms and agree to the shift availability stated on this form. This assures the manager that the student has parent consent to work these hours whilst studying. During exam time throughout the school year, student employees may request to reduce their shift availability due to their increased study load...being a large employer with an average of 55 staff members per store, can easily accommodate these requests for reduced hours because we have enough staff to cover the students' shifts. Our peak business is over the school holidays and many of our employees who are high school students enjoy working extra shifts and earning more money during that period. We believe it is good business sense to be flexible to the needs of our employees, to maintain a positive work environment, to increase retention rates and to reduce the costs associated with staff turnover.⁹

- 5.12 While it was clear that employers are concerned to ensure there are policies in place to help students balance the demands of combining school and work, evidence from student workers suggested that such policies do not always translate into best practice at the coalface. Alex from Leeming Senior High School, stated:

You need to have a large availability so that they can drop shifts on you and so that you can do backups. Earlier this morning somebody was referring to having to stay behind late and having to do extra hours that they were not rostered on to do. That used to happen a lot when I worked [in the fast food industry]. If a lot of people come in to buy fast food you have to accommodate them. On school nights I have had to stay back an hour or a couple

8 Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, *Submission no. 46*, p. 2.

9 *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 4.

of hours... I have had to send my parents home and they have had to come back later. It is a pain for them.¹⁰

5.13 A major obstacle to clear communication was that young workers can often be supervised by other school-aged employees. For example, Fiona, a student from Melba Copland Secondary School in Canberra, explained that within nine months of working at a fast food restaurant as a 15 year-old, she was given responsibility supervising people aged 18 or 19.¹¹

5.14 One employer group of a large number of school-age students in the fast food industry indicated a number of processes the organisation had in place in support of young managers:

There are many up and coming talented young managers in our system ... the maturity level varies, as does the educational background. There is a point of reference or a mentor in every store. It is usually the restaurant manager or the district manager. They provide support to the young managers and crew members of the store. It would be expected that if the young manager is confronted with issues that they perhaps do not have the skills to handle, they would know whom they need to refer that situation to. There are open lines of communication between the restaurant manager and their young assistant managers in the stores.¹²

5.15 However, evidence from students suggested that policies for young managers either were not in place in a range of organisations, or where they were, did not always translate into practice at ground level. Trent, from Reece High School in Devonport, stated:

A friend of mine who is the same age as me...works seven days a week religiously, over and over again. She is a supervisor. She trains other people. I do not think she is qualified in health and safety and she trains people who have to work there.¹³

5.16 As discussed in chapter two, where students have responsibilities for closing up a business at the end of a shift, this can also impact on their working hours.

10 Alex, student, Leeming Senior High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 41.

11 Fiona, student, Melba Copland Secondary School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2009, p. 11.

12 *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 17.

13 Trent, student, Reece High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 61.

Negotiating with employers

5.17 Young people can be taken advantage of, not necessarily due to a lack of awareness about their rights, but because they lack the skills and confidence to be assertive in negotiating with employers. Numerous examples were given by students who find it difficult to approach their employers about taking time off, or saying 'no' when contacted to cover a shift at short notice. As a result, students often find themselves consistently 'on-call' and are unable to work to a study plan. Some students reported having to keep their mobile phones turned on at school in case they are called in to work. James, a student from Edmund Rice College in Wollongong, explained:

You never know when they are going to call you. They could call me now and I would have to go to work this afternoon.¹⁴

5.18 Jaison, also a student at Edmund Rice College, stated that he recently had a three-hour shift one week and then it turned into 16.¹⁵

5.19 A common response from students was that they were made to feel guilty if they tried to say 'no' and therefore often found themselves doing longer hours and more shifts than desired. The following comments from students illustrate young workers' vulnerability when negotiating with employers:

Owen: I do struggle a bit saying no because they try to use some sort of guilt trip on you. They ring you up and say, 'Oh, can you work? We really need you. We could really use you,' and all that stuff. Then you just give in: 'Yeah, I'll come and work.' You fall behind in your studies quite a bit, but I have the support of my teachers to just kick back into gear.¹⁶

Adam: At a previous job, I was working six till five. I was getting pressured into working those hours – they made me feel bad if I did not...it was a guilt thing. They said, 'If you don't work, you just let everybody else down.'¹⁷

Lauren: I think that I do know my rights, but I have been pressured into working when maybe I did not want to or should not have. Even though I do realise that it is my right to say no, I do

14 James C, student, Edmund Rice College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 40.

15 Jaison, student, Edmund Rice College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 43.

16 Owen, student, Craigmore High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 34.

17 Adam, student, Australian Technical College North Brisbane, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 50.

feel pressure from the workplace to work when I am not available.¹⁸

Amber: Our old manager, if I rang up and said that I could not come in, would guilt trip me over the phone. I came into work one day really sick; she said I had to come and I was not allowed to not come in. So I came in and ended up going home, throwing up and being really sick. I nearly fainted in the store, and she really did not care. She called me in the very next day, asking me to work again. I was starting to do five-hour shifts before school. I would start at 5am, finish at 10 and then go straight to school afterwards. That was really killing my sleeping time. By the time I got to school, I had no energy left and I would fall asleep.¹⁹

- 5.20 There was also a concern amongst students that refusing to take on an additional shift when requested would have repercussions when future rosters were prepared. Chris from Leeming Senior High School in Perth, stated:

There is always that pressure. I have talked to people in my year and in the year below who have that same dilemma. Some of them feel pressured. They believe that if they say no one time they will not be asked again. I understand that but I think it depends on the relationship between you and your manager.²⁰

- 5.21 Ms Jennifer Jago, a Pathways Planning Officer at Latrobe High School in Tasmania, added:

I have had a number of people over the last few years make comment that if you knock back a shift, particularly if you do it a number of times, you will miss out on shifts. I had a case just the other day. It was someone I know. She is not actually a student. She had two days off sick and she only got one shift this week. So, yes, it does have an impact. Young people in particular who want those jobs see that as a major problem so they will not often, depending on the circumstances of the job, say that they do not want to work until 10 o'clock at night. That is a big issue.²¹

- 5.22 Jaison from Edmund Rice College described a situation where, because he has had to turn down shifts due to increasing demands of school work, he
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18 Lauren, student, Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus), *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 20.

19 Amber, student, Craigmore High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, pp. 39-40.

20 Chris, student, Leeming Senior High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 24.

21 Ms Jennifer Jago, Latrobe High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 60.

rarely gets shifts in the holidays anymore, despite wanting the additional work.²²

- 5.23 Students can also be reluctant for parental involvement in their negotiations with employers. Tabitha, a student from St Clare's College in Canberra, stated:

I suppose employers sort of expect that as we have a job we are responsible for ourselves so then, if your parents step in, employers think, 'Well, clearly you can't look after yourself and you're not responsible enough to have this job, so we won't continue to give you shifts', or 'If you're going to whinge and cause trouble for us, we don't want you working here.'²³

- 5.24 A further issue arising for many students was their belief that it is standard practice to have to find their own replacement if they were unable to do a shift.

'Sometimes they forget that I am only 16'

- 5.25 Students are valuable workers, not only for the skills and enthusiasm they bring to the workplace, but also because they are usually paid an age-based wage, which makes them attractive to employers. While there is a certain level of responsibility which rests with students to balance the competing demands in their lives, there is also a responsibility which lies with employers to recognise that their young employees are still in transition to adulthood, and work is often just one in a series of priorities they are trying to balance. Based on evidence from students, there are employers who are neglecting this responsibility when composing rosters or when calling on their young employees to take on additional hours:

Alexander: They would say, 'You are working only nine hours a week. Why can you not do an extra five hours?' I would say, 'Because I am 15. I do not do extra. Nine hours a week is enough for me.' That is what my parents were telling me. As other people were saying, your parents are your guide in whether or not to take on a job.²⁴

Sanja: ...some employers do not understand that you have school and work...I wanted to study and everything but I could not because of the hours they gave me. I was part time and I told them

22 Jaison, student, Edmund Rice College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 56.

23 Tabitha, student, St Clare's College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2009, p. 9.

24 Alexander, student, Leeming Senior High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 50.

what hours I could work and stuff like that, but they wanted me to work other hours and I knew that I could not do it. They did not seem to understand. In the end I had to quit because of the hours that they kept putting on the roster.²⁵

Rachel: I am working part-time and I knew that when I went into the job, but sometimes they forget that I am only 16. It is not a job that I am going to be doing forever. Next year I want to go to university. Sometimes the employer thinks it is a bit more serious than it is, that it is our whole life, and they do not realise that we have friends, school and family. For me everything comes a bit before work. A couple of my friends have said that sometimes their employers do not understand that they have a life outside their jobs. If someone gets sick or it is someone's birthday you need to show your support to that person. Sometimes employers could be a bit more considerate.²⁶

Jessica: I used to work but I had to quit at the beginning of the year because I just found it very hard and stressful... You have to find a boss who will understand, I guess, and help you. If you do need the time off it is rare that you will find an understanding boss who will let you have that time.²⁷

Students' awareness of their rights at work

- 5.26 Discussions with students throughout the inquiry reinforced the observation in submissions that young people tend to lack awareness of their rights concerning rates of pay and employment conditions.²⁸ The NSW Commission for Children and Young People noted that it was not only young people, but their parents, schools and employers who are unsure about young people's rights and obligations in relation to work.²⁹
- 5.27 It was also evident from the committee's student forums that young people experience difficulties understanding the terms of their

25 Sanja, student, Applecross Senior High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 49.

26 Rachel, student, Leeming Senior High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 47.

27 Jessica, Illawarra Senior College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 39.

28 See Australian Council of Trade Unions, *Submission no. 21*, p. 19; Brotherhood of St. Laurence, *Submission no. 12*, p. 5; NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission no. 22*, p. 12.

29 NSW Commission for Children and Young People, *Submission no. 33.1*, p. 7.

employment contract. The ACTU noted that young people are less likely to have the confidence to challenge their employer on these matters.³⁰

- 5.28 The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian stated:

Knowing the standards and conditions they should expect in the workplace and how they can seek redress in cases of mistreatment will improve the position of young people in the workplace and enable them to be empowered.³¹

- 5.29 The Commission also suggested that young workers' vulnerability is increased when they lack knowledge of their employment rights and this can encourage abuse of young people in the workplace. The Commission stated that while it is important young people's rights at work are protected, 'it is just as important that employers, parents/guardians and young people in particular are aware of these rights.'³²

- 5.30 A National Young Workers Campaign undertaken by the Workplace Ombudsman over 2007-08 targeted 440 employers for a compliance audit. Of 399 audits which had been finalised at 30 September 2008, 165 (41 per cent) of employers were found to be in breach. Breaches largely related to wages (60 per cent), with 18 percent related to weekend penalty rates. The Ombudsman found that the high non-compliance rate was 'indicative of the vulnerability of young workers in the workplace.'³³

- 5.31 The NSW Teachers Federation found that once students start work, they are interested in the 'rules' of the workplace and want to know that they are being treated fairly. The Federation also found that many students believe such matters should be taught in school.³⁴ Mrs Deanne Reynolds educates students about their rights at work in her capacity as a careers adviser at Canberra Girls' Grammar School. However, Mrs Reynolds acknowledged that:

30 Australian Council of Trade Unions, *Submission no. 21*, p. 19.

31 Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, *Submission no. 46*, p. 3.

32 Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, *Submission no. 46*, p. 3.

33 Fair Work Ombudsman, *National Young Workers Campaign*, <<http://www.fwo.gov.au/Audits-and-campaigns/Documents/National-Young-Workers-Campaign.pdf>>, accessed 25 September 2009.

34 NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission no. 22*, p. 11.

...making young people aware of their rights and where they can find information about their wages and conditions and what is expected of them is generally not well done in schools.³⁵

- 5.32 Occasions where students were treated unreasonably in their first job but did not realise it because it was their first exposure to the workforce appeared to be quite common. Often, students only came to learn of their unfair treatment when they moved in to another job with better systems and practices in place. Fiona, a student from Melba Copland Secondary School in the ACT, had her first experience of work as a 15-year-old in a fast food restaurant. She stated:

I did not have a formal induction and I was being paid \$6 an hour, which I now believe is less than I should have been paid. By the time I had been working there for eight or nine months I was working as a supervisor but being paid the same as everyone else, even though I was only 15 years old and supervising people who were maybe 18 or 19. I had absolutely no idea of my rights as a worker and I did not know how a boss should treat his employees. I know now that my boss was not treating us properly, because he was such an angry person and the way he was talking to us was not right, but I had absolutely no idea that it was not okay. Not to get paid for four weeks and then get paid at the end of four weeks was also not all right. I think it is important, particularly for a first job, that you know what your rights are before you get into it, because I just assumed that that was what part-time work was like.³⁶

- 5.33 Hannah from Grace Lutheran College in Brisbane, only came to realise she had been working under exploitative conditions when she found out more about her rights at work in a subsequent job:

I had a job before this job, and I was working eight-hour shifts and did not realise that I was allowed a break. I was the only junior there, and I was left alone for a section of time, whereas at this job they gave me a leaflet on all the rights that I have. That has shown me, and my workplace makes sure that all those rights are followed through every time I work.³⁷

35 Mrs Deanne Reynolds, Canberra Girls' Grammar School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2009, pp. 27-28

36 Fiona, student, Melba Copland Secondary School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2009, p. 11.

37 Hannah, student, Grace Lutheran College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 44.

- 5.34 The *You're gold...if you're 15 years old* report, found that some students 'are willing to turn a blind eye to abusive practices for the opportunity to make money and gain employment experience.'³⁸ This finding was supported in evidence from Luke from the Tasmanian Academy's Hellyer Campus. Luke stated that he was fairly confident that he knew his rights, but he still believed that employers 'may push the boundaries a bit sometimes' with respect to young workers. Luke suggested that even where young people are asked to do things that they 'probably know are not right', they had a tendency to 'want to go along with it anyway.'³⁹
- 5.35 Drawing on their own workplace experiences, students agreed that they should be much better informed about their rights. Maddison from Grace Lutheran College in Brisbane, stated:
- I believe that it should be compulsory – the government should print a handout or something like that – for all employers to give information to their employees. I know that when I started I was just given a couple of sheets to fill out, and that was just tax sorts of things; there was nothing about my rights or any future things that I would need to know, such as the age when my wage rate changes and things like that. I really do not know any of that, and it should be compulsory.⁴⁰
- 5.36 Tomas from the Australian Technical College - North Brisbane added:
- ...we should be informed a lot more about our rights and the regulations. Because we are new to the workforce it is a little bit frightening to know what your rights are at work.⁴¹
- 5.37 The accessibility of information about young workers' rights and the way it is disseminated is also an important consideration in ensuring students utilise this information. Otherwise, as was suggested by Jessica from the Tasmanian Academy in Burnie, students will learn from experience:
- ...in a lot of the businesses where we work, nobody has actually touched the book of rights on the table. Realistically, even if you provide us with a booklet of our rights at work, how many people are going to go through and read what their rights are?
Everything, especially at this age, comes from experience. Even if

38 NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission no. 22, Attachment A*, p. 9.

39 Luke, student, Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus), *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 20.

40 Maddison, student, Grace Lutheran College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 44.

41 Thomas, student, Australian Technical College – North Brisbane, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 42.

you do provide the documents, even if you do have pamphlets handed out in support groups, a select few will read it, but generally it will be another one of these informative pamphlets that we are not going to sit down and look into.⁴²

- 5.38 It should be stressed that while evidence suggested that many students do not believe they are not adequately informed of their rights, there are clearly employers who disseminate appropriate information very effectively. For example, Natasha, a student from the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), explained that she was fortunate to work for employers who paid her correctly, gave her an employment record and issued a manual about her rights at work. She added, 'I do not see enough of that happening in other establishments.'⁴³ Stephen, also from CIT, stated:

I work for McDonalds. When I started there I was told: 'This is your rate. This is the award you are paid under.' I was given a booklet with information and various means to find out more information if necessary.⁴⁴

- 5.39 Other students reported attending formal induction programs when commencing work where they were briefed not just on pay and conditions, but also occupational health and safety issues.⁴⁵

Measures to assist young workers

- 5.40 The evidence presented in this chapter relates the significant disadvantages that can confront young employees in the workplace. Student workers lack awareness about their pay rates and conditions and can be vulnerable to mistreatment or exploitation. Lack of awareness is often compounded by a limited capacity and power to negotiate with employers and their lack of external supports and self-confidence.
- 5.41 DEEWR acknowledged that with the significant number of students now in employment, 'the need for appropriate protection, rights and fairness in the workplace is very important.'⁴⁶

42 Jessica, student, Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus), *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 21.

43 Natasha, student, Canberra Institute of Technology, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2009, p. 11.

44 Stephen, student, Canberra Institute of Technology, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 August 2009, p. 10.

45 See *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 58.

46 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 29.

- 5.42 This section looks at some existing or proposed measures to support student workers.

The new Fair Work system

- 5.43 Australia's new national workplace relations system – the Fair Work system – came into effect on 1 July 2009. The system was established by the *Fair Work Act 2009* and covers the majority of workplaces in Australia.
- 5.44 Key elements of the new system include:
- a legislated safety net of 10 National Employment Standards;
 - new modern awards [as defined in the Act];
 - revised enterprise bargaining arrangements;
 - streamlined protections dealing with workplace and industrial rights, including protection against discrimination and unfair dismissal; and
 - two new organisations to regulate the system: Fair Work Australia and the Fair Work Ombudsman.⁴⁷
- 5.45 The new system is being implemented in stages and some features will not be implemented until 2010.

Fair Work Australia and Young Worker Liaison Officers

- 5.46 Fair Work Australia (FWA) is the new independent national workplace relations tribunal charged with carrying out a range of functions including:
- providing a safety net of minimum conditions, including minimum wages, in awards;
 - facilitating good faith bargaining and the making of enterprise agreements;
 - granting remedies for unfair dismissal;
 - regulating the taking of industrial action;
 - resolving a range of collective and individual workplace disputes through conciliation, mediation and in some cases arbitration; and
 - functions in connection with workplace determinations, equal remuneration, transfer of business, general workplace protections, right of entry and stand down.⁴⁸

47 Fair Work Online, *The new fair work system*, <<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/The-new-Fair-Work-system/>>, accessed 21 September 2009.

48 Fair Work Australia, *Our Role*, <<http://www.fwa.gov.au/index.cfm?pagename=aboutrole>>, accessed 21 September 2009.

- 5.47 FWA will assist employees who feel they have been subjected to discrimination, harassment or unfair dismissal. FWA has a website <<http://www.fwa.gov.au>> and national information line where young people can access information and assistance.
- 5.48 A measure specifically relevant for young people is that FWA will have a Young Worker Liaison Officer in each state to develop information relevant to young workers and monitor complaints made by young workers to FWA. These FWA officers will
- make sure information provided by FWA is information young people want and need;
 - make sure information is in terms young people can understand;
 - monitor the terms and conditions of young people under the new workplace relations system; and
 - monitor complaints made by young people to FWA.⁴⁹

National Code of Practice for Young Workers

- 5.49 The Australian Government has committed to the development of a voluntary *National Code of Practice for Young Workers* which will be devised in broad consultation with stakeholders and the states and territories. The Code will deal with issues such as rostering arrangements for children during school hours, training, mentoring in the workplace and occupational health and safety for young people at work.⁵⁰ The Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP, suggested that parents concerned about their child's employment could be confident that if the employer was complying with the National Code of Practice, then their child would be working in a fair and safe workplace.⁵¹
- 5.50 The NSW Commission for Children and Young People favoured national regulation of young people's work over a voluntary code of practice, citing the complexity of the industrial relations system and lack of protections for young workers to substantiate the need for a consistent national approach which gives due regard for young people's schooling needs.⁵²

49 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 34.

50 *Forward with fairness for Australian workers*, ALP Policy Document, pp. 8-9.

51 *Forward with fairness for Australian workers*, ALP Policy Document, p. 9.

52 NSW Commission for Children and Young People, *Submission no. 33.1*, p. 7.

Young Workers' Toolkit

- 5.51 The Government is also developing a *Young Workers' Toolkit* as a practical means of providing key information for young people about starting work and issues they may encounter in the workplace. DEEWR suggested that the Toolkit would be distributed to young people through organisations such as TAFE, Centrelink, FWA offices and online via the FWA website.⁵³
- 5.52 The Minister for Youth, the Hon. Kate Ellis MP, has been seeking feedback from young people on the proposed Toolkit through the Australian Youth Forum website <<http://www.youth.gov.au/ayf>>. The Government is seeking contributions from young people so it can ensure the Toolkit provides information that will be useful to young Australians. Some of the common questions that confront young people in the workplace which the Toolkit proposes to address, include:
- How do I find out how much I should be paid?
 - What can I do if I think I am not being paid correctly?
 - How do I bargain for my terms and conditions of employment?
 - What should I look for in an employment contract?
 - What is the difference between casual and ongoing or permanent employment?
 - Can I be required to do unpaid trial work?
 - What's the difference between work experience, volunteering and paid work?
 - I feel I have been bullied and harassed at work – what should I do?
 - What meal or rest breaks am I entitled to?
 - My boss rosters me on late at night when there is no public transport to get home – what can I do?
 - What can I do if I have problems during a training placement or apprenticeship?
 - I think I have been dismissed unfairly – what can I do?
 - I am concerned I am being asked to do work that isn't safe. What can I do?
 - I am an overseas student – do I have the same rights as local employees?⁵⁴

53 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 34.

54 Australian Youth Forum, *Youth at work*, <<http://www.youth.gov.au/ayf/Ideas/DiscussionForum.aspx?TopicID=16>>, accessed 28 August 2009.

'Students@work' website

- 5.53 After analysing findings from its research into students combining school and work, the NSW Teachers Federation sought to develop resources to assist each of the affected stakeholder groups. The Federation has established the website <<http://www.studentsatwork.org.au>> which consists of four sub-sites for students, teachers, parents and carers, and employers and provides a vast array of materials. The Federation gave a demonstration of the website during a hearing in Canberra.
- 5.54 The section for students, for example, has a list of links which includes 'looking for a job', 'applying for a job', 'accepting a job offer', 'staying safe at work' and 'bullying, discrimination and harassment'. It also includes a CV builder. The employers section includes a link on 'being a model employer of students'. The Federation explained that the website provides links to a range of external sites where information is readily available. Ms Sally Edsall explained:

We did not try to reinvent wheels; we tried to send people to places where there is information. We have tried to present examples of what bullying might be but also what it might not be. There is information saying, 'Sometimes you might be asked to do something by an employer that is a perfectly reasonable thing to do and this doesn't necessarily constitute bullying behaviour.' Under 'Harassment and discrimination', rather than try and redefine all the complexity of the legal issues, we have said, 'Look, in New South Wales this is where it is across Australia and really you have got to go to the [Anti-Discrimination Board] or to the [Australian Human Rights Commission].' They are the places to go to for the detailed information.⁵⁵

- 5.55 Also built into the website is a time management tool which enables students to plan their time, but also facilitates communication between stakeholders in students' working lives – their peers, parents, teachers and employers.⁵⁶

An 'Intergenerational Youth Compact'

- 5.56 The Australian National Schools Network (ANSN) has proposed the development of a national *Intergenerational Youth Compact* (IYC) because it believes that young people are being left to resolve complex problems

55 Ms Sally Edsall, NSW Teachers Federation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 June 2009, p. 3.

56 NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission no. 22*, p. 22.

with insufficient guidance and support from teachers, employers and parents. ANSN is a not-for-profit national network of teachers, researchers, schools, systems, sectors, unions, universities and community and business partners.⁵⁷ The concept behind an IYC is that any school, community or group of organisations which endorses the principles underlying an IYC (see Table 5.1) would sign on and promote themselves as an IYC site.

Table 5.1 Principles underlying an Intergenerational Youth Compact

<p>1. Providing high-quality learning opportunities for all young people is fundamental to building a society of competent adults. Worksites should be places where young people gain basic employment skills. Wherever possible, workplace contexts should also support the acquisition of higher-level vocational and technical skills. Youth employment should not be 'skill free'. It should include training components that lead to recognised credentials;</p>
<p>2. Our schools must provide flexible programs that respond to the pressures involved in juggling school and work. Flexible timetables, opportunities for extended completion of year 12, and second chance options need to be widely accessible;</p>
<p>3. Young people need guidance on how to combine study and work effectively. Teachers, ancillary staff, employers, unions, and other community agencies should all contribute to delivering 'joined up' programs. Students who work should be encouraged to provide peer support for each other within the school context;</p>
<p>4. Young people have a right to live, study and work in safe environments. As they take their first steps into paid employment, it is their right to be protected against harassment, exploitation, and physical injury;</p>
<p>5. Additional resources are required to provide effective transition support for young people who are from socially and economically excluded communities. No single program or policy can meet the diverse needs of these young people. Indigenous youth, refugees and recent immigrants, homeless and undersupported youth, and young people from remote rural communities must be supported through programs that are crafted and integrated locally, resourced both locally and centrally, and designed to meet their needs;</p>
<p>6. The whole community is responsible for the wellbeing of our young people. Responsibility includes being compassionate, respectful and helpful. Helping young people to manage the many transitions along the diverse pathways that eventually lead towards adult lives requires joint efforts from teachers, parents, employers, students, and others in their communities.</p>

Source: Australian National Schools Network, Submission no. 13, pp. 3-4.

57 Australian National Schools Network, *An Overview*, 2008, p. 3.

5.57 ANSN suggested that an IYC would be based on the following three components:

1. *IYC Hubs*, which would bring employers, teachers, parents, students, and others in local communities together. Following the *IYC Principles* outlined above, they would examine the impacts of combining school and work, engage students in a dialogue about learning, identify gaps and problems in relation to school delivery, community services, and workplace regulation, and develop improved forms of transition support for young people.

2. *A national IYC network*, through which educators, employers, parents, and students could learn about and learn from a wide range of initiatives that are being implemented around Australia through the *IYC Hubs*.

3. *Employer and Union commitment to IYC principles*. This is perhaps the most audacious component of the proposal. It would demand high-level leadership from peak bodies. The intention would be to create a recognisable 'badge' for youth-friendly employers, and for unions that give high priority to protecting young people's rights.

5.58 ANSN noted that a number of employers, non-government organisations, local community partnerships, schools, unions and young people themselves have undertaken promising initiatives which already adopt the principles underlying an IYC. An IYC is proposed to connect these initiatives and those who manage them into a mutually supportive network.

5.59 ANSN also identified some secondary schools providing flexible programs which assist students combining school and work. These are discussed in the following chapter.

Regulation of the working environment for young people

5.60 Presently, regulation of the working environment for young Australians remains a legislative matter for state governments. As a result, young workers can be afforded different levels of protection depending on the jurisdiction in which they work. Businesses can face practical difficulties where there is a requirement to observe both federal workplace laws and state child employment laws.⁵⁸ Some state and territory governments have

58 Prof. Andrew Stewart, *Exhibit no. 1*, p. 29.

restrictions about the age that young people can be employed, the type of work they can do and when they can work.⁵⁹

- 5.61 Professor Andrew Stewart's 2008 report for the NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People, *Making the World Work Better For Kids*, noted the varying degree of inconsistency across jurisdictions:

In some jurisdictions the regulation of child employment is almost non-existent, in others extremely elaborate. There are no national standards, except in restricting the performance of work during school hours. There are also problems of integration or consistency. Some businesses are required to comply with both federal and State labour laws when employing someone under the age of 18. It is questionable how widely such a requirement is understood or complied with, especially in small businesses.⁶⁰

- 5.62 Professor Stewart's report advocated an approach to the regulation of child employment based on four main premises:

- a *national focus*, to be achieved either by the passage of a federal law on child employment, or through harmonisation of State and Territory laws;
- the adoption of *clear and simple* rules and processes;
- a need for those rules and processes to be *consistent* with general labour laws - in particular by dealing only with those matters that cannot or should not be left to those general laws; and
- the adoption of various strategies for informing those concerned of their entitlements and obligations, and for overcoming the problems that many young workers encounter in asserting their rights.⁶¹

- 5.63 Some inquiry participants advocated national regulation of children's work. For example, the NSW Commission for Children and Young People stated that 'we need to have at least a harmonised approach to the way in which we regulate children's work.'⁶²

- 5.64 The NSW Commission for Children and Young People indicated that a regulatory approach should consider things such as the age at which

59 Fair Work Online, *Best Practice Guide: An employer's guide to employing young workers*, <<http://www.fwo.gov.au/Best-Practice-Guides/Documents/05-An-employer's-guide-to-employing-young-workers.pdf>>, Accessed 21 September 2009.

60 Prof. Andrew Stewart, *Exhibit no. 1*, p. 39.

61 Prof. Andrew Stewart, *Exhibit no. 1*, p. 39.

62 Ms Gillian Calvert, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 7.

young people work, the length of hours for which they work, the time at which they work, as well as employer responsibility for the dissemination of information about occupational health and safety issues.

5.65 Queensland's Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian agreed and suggested that 'clear, robust and simple legislative protections should exist nationally to support all young workers.'⁶³

5.66 The NSW Teachers Federation added:

We want students to be able to undertake part-time work with the confidence that they are going to be working under properly regulated conditions and they know where they can find information and support if they need it. That is where the federal government can assist, with uniform standards and legislation. We want expanded opportunities for students to combine school and work...⁶⁴

5.67 It was also argued that any national regulatory scheme must be supported by an information and advisory service for children and young people, parents, schools and employers.⁶⁵

How many hours should students work?

5.68 Students expressed some confusion about receiving mixed messages from parents, schools and employers about how many hours they should be working, or whether they should even be working at all. Many students reported being encouraged by their schools or teachers to give up their part-time jobs during their senior schooling years:

At the beginning of this year I had an English teacher who said, 'Quit your job.' I said, 'I love my job.' She said, 'You should quit because you have to study. English is more important.' I said, 'I love my job. It is a bit of a release for me.' ...The teachers are saying, 'Quit your job. You have to study', but your parents are saying, 'Go and get a job.'⁶⁶

5.69 The South East Local Learning and Employment Network also commented on the negative attitude of teachers with regards to students' part-time work:

63 Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, *Submission no. 46*, p. 2.

64 Ms Sally Edsall, NSW Teachers Federation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 10.

65 NSW Commission for Children and Young People, *Submission no. 33.1*, p. 8.

66 Rachel, student, Leeming Senior High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 April 2009, p. 53.

In our experience, there is a strong view held by many educators that part time work is NOT good for a student's school work. It is common to hear from them that part time work interferes with learning and that many students suffer in their results because of their part time work load.⁶⁷

5.70 DEEWR agreed that educators do not always appreciate how much young people value their part-time work outside school.⁶⁸

5.71 While it may be difficult to establish the impact of work on educational attainment, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission stated that 'it goes without saying that overwork, especially successive late shifts and "closings", can have a detrimental effect on a young person's learning, not to mention their overall health.'⁶⁹

5.72 As noted in chapter three, one of the major dilemmas in determining what represents an appropriate number of hours for students to be spending at work is that research suggests that 'different individuals appear to tolerate different hours.'⁷⁰

5.73 The impact of a student's work can also be affected by other activities they engage in outside school time such as sports, dance, music practice, or community service. Students involved in sporting teams, for example, can be required to train a number of times during the week and then play competition on weekends. One student stated that:

Some kids have a lot of sporting commitments which disrupts and interferes with study time. I am home for only half the weekends of the year and train five times a week.⁷¹

5.74 It is also questionable whether students have the capacity to self-assess when the number of hours they are working is impacting on their school work/health. This was evident during the school forums where examples were provided of students taking on too much work to the point where it impacted adversely on their academic results. Two such instances were related by senior students from Grace Lutheran College in Brisbane:

About a year and a half ago now...I was only at the end of grade 10, but the other workers there were at the end of grade 12. A guy

67 South East Local Learning and Employment Network, *Submission no. 23*, p. 4.

68 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 3.

69 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission no. 18*, p. 4.

70 Ms Alison Anlezark, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 3.

71 Nicholas, NSW, student survey response.

and a girl there were both doing up around 20 hours a week... they both had aspirations to go to university, but, unfortunately, neither got the [results] they expected.... Their opportunities got cut down a bit. It is just annoying to see them trying to juggle it all. You wish someone would sit them down and say: 'There is a life after this year and you should try and keep your eyes focused on the future as well. It is great to make \$3,000 this year, but how is it going to impact on you for the rest of your life?' You just wish that you could help some people who are struggling and give them a hand.⁷²

A girl at my work decided to work too many hours last year. She was finishing year 12 and, because she chose to work too many hours, she did not get into the subject she wanted to do – she failed to reach the prerequisite for it because she juggled too much with work and school...She has been telling me not to work as many hours. She said it was just too hard.⁷³

- 5.75 The Parents and Friends' Federation of Western Australia acknowledged that part-time work can limit a student's options with respect to further education:

For university bound students, part time work can adversely affect university entry prospects, especially for the higher Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) courses - excessive work hours can often affect the achievement levels of year 11 and 12 students with rigorous study demands.⁷⁴

- 5.76 One of the questions canvassed during the inquiry was whether there should be a cap, either enforced through legislation or otherwise, on the number of hours students spend in paid employment and the lateness of those hours.
- 5.77 Various states have child employment legislation which restricts the hours young people can work, although legislation generally only applies to young employees aged under 15 (or in the case of Queensland, aged under 16).
- 5.78 Queensland enacted child employment legislation in 2006 which regulated the working environment for school-aged children under 16 and limits their hours of work to ensure that their employment does not adversely

72 Matthew, student, Grace Lutheran College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 49.

73 Hannah, student, Grace Lutheran College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 49.

74 Parents and Friends' Federation of Western Australia, *Submission no. 3*, p. 3.

impact on their studies. Specifically, the legislation prevents school-aged children from being required to work longer than:

- 12 hours during a school week;
- 38 hours during a non-school week;
- 4 hours on a school day; and
- 8 hours on a non-school day.⁷⁵

5.79 Additionally, the legislation does not allow school-aged children to work between the hours of 10pm and 6am and children between 11 and 13 years of age who are performing supervised delivery work are not allowed to work between 6pm and 6am.⁷⁶

5.80 In New South Wales, an employer must not require a child under 15 to work later than 9.00pm if the child is required to be at school the next day. Children also cannot be required to start work less than 12 hours after a previous shift, whether for the same or for any other employer.⁷⁷

5.81 Victoria's child employment legislation restricts children under 15 from working more than 3 hours per day and 12 hours per week during the school term, and 6 hours per day and 30 hours per week outside the school term. Work is generally to be performed only between 6:00am (or sunrise) and 9.00pm, with a rest break of at least 30 minutes after every 3 hours of work, and a minimum break of 12 hours between shifts.⁷⁸

5.82 In the Northern Territory it is an offence for an employer to require a child to work after 10:00pm at night and before 6:00am in the morning where the child is under 15.⁷⁹

5.83 Students conveyed some support for rules which limit how late they can be asked to work via the committee's student survey:

I believe that if a night curfew were introduced for school-aged employees, this would make my experience easier, as I can be kept back at work until midnight on school nights, with no compensation whatsoever. This makes it difficult to do homework

75 Queensland Government, *Submission no. 41*, p. 12.

76 Prof. Andrew Stewart, *Exhibit no. 1*, pp. 48-50.

77 Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection – Child Employment) Regulation 2005. Available online at: <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/example-folder-5/CE_Regulation_2005_Amended_2008.pdf>, accessed 16 September 2009.

78 Prof Andrew Stewart, *Exhibit No. 1*, p. 46.

79 Prof Andrew Stewart, *Exhibit No. 1*, p. 54.

when I begin immediately after school and get home so late.

- Laura (NSW), 6-9 hrs per week.

Another thing would be to increase laws regarding how late kids work. School nights my work closes at 11.15pm and 11.45pm, this is hard as I get to sleep late and am unable to pay attention to school.

- Nicola (NSW), 9-12 hrs per week.

- 5.84 Some witnesses expressed caution against regulating the number of hours that students can work while still at school on the basis that it may encourage early school leaving for those dependent on the income from their part-time jobs. For example, Mrs Theresa Paxino from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, stated:

...you referred to the number of hours that students were working and to the idea of mandating the number of hours that they might be allowed to work while they are at school. Although that seems a protective thing for students, it concerns me that students who desperately need the income will leave school early rather than complete their education while they are working.⁸⁰

Committee comment

- 5.85 Not only are a significant number of students combining school and work, but the nature of that work has changed markedly. Whereas students' part-time jobs were once based around a Thursday night and Saturday morning shift, the number of hours students work today and the lateness of the hours worked are very different. This is largely a result of the extended weekend trading hours in the retail sector and the late-night trading in the fast-food industry.
- 5.86 The committee greatly appreciated hearing evidence from employer organisations, who were obviously concerned to be good employers of young people and outlined a range of policies and practices in place. However, when hearing directly from those young workers, it was evident that these policies may not always be translated into practice. Students recounted occasions where they were tasked with unrealistic demands from their supervisors, and often these supervisors were school-aged employees themselves. The Government's proposed *National Code of*

80 Mrs Theresa Paxino, Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Transcript of Evidence*, 22 April 2009, p. 17.

Practice for Young Workers should ensure the provision of appropriate adequate supervision for young workers, including appropriate training for young managers and supervisors.

- 5.87 Students who prove to be highly valuable employees can potentially be their own worst enemy because, at times, their employer may overlook the fact that they are essentially dealing with a young person who is trying to balance not only school and work along with other extra-curricular activities, but everything else that happens in their lives during adolescence. It is important that employers understand that there are certain responsibilities that come with taking on a school-aged employee, including recognition that most secondary students are already effectively working a 30-hour week by virtue of the fact that they are spend 30 hours each week at school.
- 5.88 The Government's proposed National Code of Practice seeks to provide information about employment issues and industrial relations to young people. While the Government acknowledged the Code will be voluntary, it proposes to address many of the issues raised in this chapter, such as rostering arrangements for student workers.
- 5.89 The proposed Code of Practice presents an ideal opportunity for a national scheme to recognise the contribution of model employers of young Australians. Drawing from the example of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency's (EOWA) *Employer of Choice for Women* citation, the Government should give consideration to a similar national scheme which recognises employers of choice for Australia's youth.
- 5.90 Through the Employer of Choice for Women scheme, women-friendly, non-government organisations who have received recognition as an 'EOWA Employer of Choice for Women' can then use this citation in recruitment, advertising and other company promotional material. This allows recognised organisations to 'differentiate themselves from their competitors and achieve public acknowledgement of their efforts in the area of equal opportunity for women.'⁸¹
- 5.91 To be an EOWA Employer of Choice for Women an organisation needs to be compliant with the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* and:
1. Have policies in place (across employment matters) that support women across the organisation;

81 Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, '*EOWA Employer of Choice for Women*', <http://www.eowa.gov.au/EOWA_Employer_Of_Choice_For_Women.asp>, accessed 9 September 2009.

2. Have effective processes (across employment matters) that are transparent;
 3. Have strategies in place that support a commitment to fully utilising and developing its people (including women);
 4. Educate its employees (including supervisors and managers) on their rights and obligations regarding sex-based harassment;
 5. Have an inclusive organisational culture that is championed by the CEO, driven by senior executives and holds line managers accountable;
 6. Deliver improved outcomes for women and the business.⁸²
- 5.92 Being branded as an Employer of Choice for Youth would indicate an employer has been assessed against a similar set of criteria which ensures they have sufficient policies and practices in place to promote a supportive environment for young workers. Employers of Choice for Youth would be required to comply with the proposed National Code of Practice for Young Workers and exhibit characteristics such as:
- a commitment to supporting and encouraging student workers in their schooling and pursuit of further educational opportunities;
 - a strong emphasis on training and development of young employees;
 - ensuring the provision of appropriate adequate supervision for young workers;
 - ensuring the provision of appropriate adequate supervision for young managers; and
 - ensuring that procedures and measures for workplace health and safety are always adhered to.
- 5.93 An Employer of Choice for Youth program would also have an educative role for employers in raising the issue of the importance of providing a supportive environment for young workers.

Recommendation 4

- 5.94 **That the Australian Government establishes a national Employer of Choice for Youth program to recognise the contribution of model employers of young workers.**

82 Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, 'EOWA Employer of Choice for Women', <http://www.eowa.gov.au/EOWA_Employer_Of_Choice_For_Women.asp>, accessed 9 September 2009.

- 5.95 Placing a cap on the number of hours a student can be asked to work during a school week has some appeal. However, the application and enforcement of such a regime would be problematic if introduced through legislation. While many young people are working for discretionary spending, a minority of students are working out of a necessity to support either themselves or their families financially.
- 5.96 The committee concurs with the views of the NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People, who suggested that it may be better to invest time and effort into an information and advisory service that is widely available to students, their parents and employers.
- 5.97 The Government's proposed Young Workers' Toolkit offers a mechanism for disseminating appropriate information about the rights and responsibilities of students and their employers in the workplace. It would also serve as a useful reference point for students to enhance their confidence when negotiating with their employer. The effectiveness of the Toolkit will be contingent on it being widely publicised and distributed, and easily accessible. The Government has indicated that the Toolkit will be distributed through organisations such as TAFE, Centrelink and Fair Work Australia. The Toolkit should be both promoted and made widely available to secondary students through their schools.

Recommendation 5

- 5.98 **That the Australian Government ensures the proposed National Toolkit for Young Workers is made available to students through circulation to all secondary schools in Australia.**
- 5.99 At present, regulations regarding the employment of young people administered by state and territory governments vary significantly across jurisdictions. Given these variations, concerns were raised about how much is known about these regimes within the community or across the business sector, including how widely they are complied with in practice.
- 5.100 There is a need for better co-ordination and legislative consistency between jurisdictions to make it simpler for employers to ensure that all young workers receive adequate protections.
- 5.101 While the Government has sought to improve consistency in the treatment of young employees through a National Code of Practice, there are limits

to how much a voluntary code of practice can achieve given the degree of inconsistency in regulation across jurisdictions.

- 5.102 The Minister, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, should encourage collaboration between jurisdictions with a view to achieving harmonisation of existing state-based legislation regarding employment of young people and national consistency of regulatory measures.
- 5.103 All Australian jurisdictions have established a Commissioner for Children and Young People or equivalent body which have varying functions (see Appendix E). At present, there is no National Commissioner and, as such, there is no advocate within the Australian Government to coordinate consistent standards in the regulation of young people's work. This is despite the idea receiving support in recent years from those in the community advocating a greater need for child protection and the recognition of children's rights. The establishment of a National Commissioner for Children and Young People was unanimously recommended by a Senate committee inquiry in 2005.⁸³
- 5.104 Under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*, an initiative of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), one of the strategies that governments and others have agreed to undertake is 'to explore the potential role for a National Children's Commissioner including the relationship with State and Territory Children's Commissioners.'⁸⁴
- 5.105 The Australian Education Union advocated the establishment of a National Commissioner to:
- ...provide national leadership, research, education and advocacy in relation to the welfare, interests and wellbeing of children and young people, to monitor and report on their welfare and status, and encourage the participation of children and young people in decision-making that affects their lives.⁸⁵

83 Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2005, *Protecting vulnerable children: A national challenge*, Second report on the inquiry into children in institutional or out-of-home care, Canberra, p. 192.

84 Council of Australian Governments, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, <http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-04-30/docs/child_protection_framework.pdf>. Accessed 24 September 2009.

85 Australian Education Union, *Submission no. 24*, p. 4.

- 5.106 The Government is encouraged to progress the establishment of a National Commissioner, with a view to facilitating harmonisation of existing regulation of employment of young people across jurisdictions, through promoting and co-ordinating a sharing of information and experiences across each of the states and territories.

Recommendation 6

- 5.107 **That, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, as a matter of priority, encourages collaboration between jurisdictions with a view to achieving harmonisation of existing state-based legislation regarding the employment of young people and national consistency of regulatory measures.**

Recommendation 7

- 5.108 **That the Australian Government progresses the establishment of a National Commissioner for Children and Young People as a matter of priority.**

Flexible senior secondary education settings and the effectiveness of school-based training pathways

Introduction

- 6.1 Secondary education institutions face an ongoing challenge to provide relevant learning to facilitate pathways into further education and work for the full cohort of students. This challenge has seen the recent development of a broad range of flexible alternative education settings to accommodate the diverse needs of the greatest number of students, including those who do not thrive in the traditional schooling environment. The range of settings varies widely from comprehensive changes to senior secondary certificate frameworks in some jurisdictions, to the introduction of more local, community-based approaches.
- 6.2 In April 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to bring forward the 90 per cent Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate target from 2020 to 2015. COAG agreed that the most appropriate measure of this target is:
- for 2015, the proportion of young people in the 20-24 year old age group who have achieved Year 12 or a Certificate II or above as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Education and Work; and

- for 2020, the proportion of young people in the 20-24 year old age group who have achieved Year 12 or a Certificate III or above as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Education and Work.¹
- 6.3 Achievement of the national attainment rate will be met by differential target rates across jurisdictions and the Commonwealth has agreed to provide competitive performance-based funding of \$100 million to the states to support delivery of this achievement.² It has been acknowledged that achieving the targets set by COAG will depend on the capacity of the school system to deliver programs that meet the needs of the full cohort of senior secondary students.³
- 6.4 The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) noted that while certificate frameworks across the school sector have remained relatively stable, there have been recent innovative developments in some states and territories in an effort to accommodate the needs of students seeking greater flexibility than that provided by more traditional approaches.⁴ South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania have all recently introduced new senior certificates of education with increased flexibility. Tasmania has also undertaken significant reforms which have seen the introduction of three new institutions for post-Year 10 education and training. In Victoria, enrolments in the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) – an accredited secondary certificate offered as an alternative to the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) for Year 11 and 12 students intending to pursue vocationally oriented pathways – have grown substantially since its introduction in 2003.⁵
- 6.5 Secondary schools across Australia are also increasingly offering Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) programs which allow students to combine vocational studies with the general senior secondary curriculum and gain practical business and industry experience. VETiS programs count towards a Year 12 certificate and an

1 Council of Australian Governments Meeting, Hobart, 30 April 2009, *Communique*, <http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-04-30/index.cfm>. Accessed 14 September 2009.

2 Council of Australian Governments Meeting, Hobart, 30 April 2009, *Communique*, <http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-04-30/index.cfm>. Accessed 14 September 2009.

3 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 34.

4 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 18.

5 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 18.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate, and may count towards university entrance.⁶

- 6.6 A range of programs and initiatives also exist at the state and local levels to offer increased flexibility to assist students to combine school and work, some examples of which are examined in this chapter. There were a significant number of examples and case studies presented in evidence about flexible approaches occurring in different communities across all jurisdictions. Not all initiatives presented in evidence are outlined in this section. Readers who are interested in finding out more about various practices occurring in schools, colleges and TAFEs which offer students greater flexibility are encouraged to access submissions from the committee website.⁷

Senior secondary certificate framework initiatives

Tasmania *Tomorrow*

- 6.7 The Tasmanian Government's Tasmania *Tomorrow* initiative established three new institutions for post-Year 10 education and training. Commencing in 2009, the Tasmanian Academy, the Tasmanian Skills Institute and the Tasmanian Polytechnic were formed to provide young people with a broader range of options to manage their pathways to a career.⁸ Ms Jules Carroll, Director, Learning and Teaching, Tasmanian Polytechnic, explained the rationale behind the initiative:

Essentially through the whole of the Tasmania *Tomorrow* project, what we were trying to do was improve the skills shortage situation and the retention completion and qualification level in Tasmania and, through doing both of those things, improve the productivity levels of the state.⁹

- 6.8 The Tasmanian Academy is focused on academic learning for students pursuing a pathway to tertiary education. The Tasmanian Skills Institute is focused on skills development of the workforce and specialises in working with employers and employees, including apprentices, trainees and

6 H. Coates, and S. Rothman, *Participation in VET in Schools*, LSAY Briefing Number 15, October 2008, p. 1.

7 <<http://www.apf.gov.au/edt>>

8 Tasmanian Government, *Submission no. 35*, p. 2.

9 Ms Jules Carroll, Tasmanian Polytechnic, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 March 2009, p. 1.

cadets. The Tasmanian Polytechnic is focused on practical learning and offers vocational education and training pathways for both Year 11 and 12 students and mature-age students in addition to Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) subjects to enable students to attain a senior secondary certificate with a vocational focus.¹⁰

6.9 FYA described the recent development of the Tasmanian Polytechnic as ‘the most adventurous’ among the introduction of specialist schools.¹¹ The Polytechnic provides students with:

- practical learning with pathways from certificate to diploma and links to university;
- pathways that lead to the new TCE; and
- real-life practical learning opportunities that take place both on campus and in the workplace.¹²

6.10 Both the Tasmanian Academy and Tasmanian Polytechnic offer courses that enable students to achieve the requirements of the TCE and many of the qualifications at the Tasmanian Skills Institute can also contribute to a TCE.

6.11 Successful completion of the new TCE requires students to meet requirements for standards in everyday adult literacy, numeracy and use of information and communication technology; requirements for amount and level of participation and achievement in education and training and requirements for pathway planning.

6.12 The TCE recognises a broad range of learning with flexibility as to how, when and where that learning occurs. Through a system of ‘credit points’, students can meet TCE requirements in many ways including through senior secondary TCE subjects, nationally recognised VET, through other qualifications recognised by the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority, or through a combination of these.¹³

10 Tasmanian Government, *Submission no. 35*, p. 2.

11 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 18.

12 Tasmanian Polytechnic, *Your Polytechnic – About us*, <http://www.polytechnic.tas.edu.au/polytechnic_about_us.html>, accessed 20 August 2009.

13 Tasmanian Qualifications Authority, *Tasmanian Certificate of Education*, <http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/4DCGI/_WWW_doc/008041/RND01/TCE_course.pdf>, accessed 20 August 2009.

Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

- 6.13 The introduction of VCAL was described as ‘the most radical innovation within the school sector’.¹⁴ VCAL accommodates integrated VET and other forms of workplace learning through its generally flexible approach to subject timetabling which enables students to design a study program which suits their interests and learning needs.¹⁵
- 6.14 Students select accredited VCE and VET modules and units from compulsory strands in literacy and numeracy skills, work related skills, industry specific skills and personal development skills. There is an option for students who start their VCAL and wish to complete a VCE to transfer between certificates.¹⁶
- 6.15 Since its inception in 2003, VCAL has grown to approximately 15,000 enrolments in 2008, which constitutes about 15 per cent of the upper secondary market. FYA stated that while its impact upon Year 12 retention rates is unclear, it seems likely that it has had a positive impact.¹⁷

New Queensland Certificate of Education

- 6.16 The recent¹⁸ introduction of the new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) establishes a framework for young people to combine education and training to attain a qualification over a period of up to nine years.
- 6.17 The QCE ‘offers flexibility in what is learnt, as well as where and when learning occurs’ and learning options include senior school subjects, VET, workplace and community learning, and university subjects undertaken while at school.¹⁹
- 6.18 Students are supported to plan their senior learning at the end of Year 10 and the development of a Senior Education and Training Plan (SET Plan) – which is agreed between the student, their parents and the school – which maps out how a student will work towards a Senior Certificate or Certificate III vocational qualification, and/or a viable work

14 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 18.

15 Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network, *Submission no. 17*, p. 2; and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 62.

16 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 62.

17 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 18.

18 The new QCE was awarded to Year 12 students for the first time in 2008.

19 Queensland Government, *Submission no. 41*, p. 9.

option. The SET Plan helps a student to structure their learning around their ability and areas of interest.²⁰

- 6.19 To be awarded a QCE, students must have a minimum of 20 credits in the required pattern, and fulfil literacy and numeracy requirements.

New South Australian Certificate of Education

- 6.20 Similar to the QCE, the new South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) is designed to improve flexibility and address literacy and numeracy issues. The SACE is being progressively introduced from 2009. Ms Tanya Rogers, South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, stated:

In particular we are working hard to raise a level and range of vocational education and training opportunities for young people in schools as part of their senior secondary curriculum so that it has parity of standing for those young people with other areas of the curriculum.²¹

- 6.21 Key components of the new SACE include:
- a compulsory Personal Learning Plan which requires students to plan their final two years of school and beyond with a focus on life, career and personal skills;
 - a points-based system that allocates credits for learning through school subjects, TAFE, community service and work experience;
 - a credit bank that allows students to store credits and return to the SACE if their learning is interrupted; and
 - five essential skills for life and employability that each student is expected to gain: communication, critical thinking, personal and social development, processing information and applying knowledge.²²

20 Queensland Government, *Submission no. 41*, p. 9.

21 Ms Tanya Rogers, S.A. Department of Education and Children's Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, pp. 12-13.

22 Hon Jane Lomax-Smith, Minister for Education and Children's Services, *New school to work 'passport' for SA students*, news release, 22 November 2006. Available online: <<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/curric/pages/NumeracySciences/SACE/>>, accessed 13 August 2009.

TAFE Directors Australia case studies

6.22 Through its membership, TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) provided some examples of state-based institutions which provide innovative and alternative approaches to attaining a secondary certificate and support students to combine work and study. TDA stated that 'these jurisdictions recognise the value of the workplace as a learning resource rather than a drain on students' school time.'²³ In addition to the Tasmanian Polytechnic, TDA's membership presented case studies which included Holmesglen Vocational College, Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) Vocational College and the TAFE NSW Sydney Institute's St George College.

Holmesglen Vocational College

6.23 Holmesglen Vocational College was established in 2007 with an enrolment of approximately 200 students and is situated on the Moorabbin campus of the Holmesglen Institute of TAFE in Melbourne, which provides students with access to a range of vocational training programs and the facilities of the TAFE Institute. The committee held a student forum at the Holmesglen Vocational College during its inquiry.

6.24 The college curriculum combines secondary school education with professional and personal development programs. Students undertake VCAL and all vocational programs have pathways with credit transfers into pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, certificate and diploma courses. Students also have the option of continuing at the college and completing a VCAL qualification over 12 months. This enables them to complete a pre-apprenticeship and benefit from the broader program of Literacy and Numeracy, Work Related Skills and Personal Development.²⁴

6.25 Mr Andrew Adamson commented on some of the underlying principles upon which the college was established:

...the key driving ideas behind it were that there were a lot of students sitting in school for whom the schools really did not supply what they needed in terms of learning programs. Even if they did not drop out, they mentally dropped out. The other part of it was that it was unrealistic to expect young people at that age to make choices about their future career that locked them into

23 TAFE Directors Australia, *Submission no. 29*, p. 18.

24 TAFE Directors Australia, *Submission no. 29*, p. 10.

particular career paths. I suppose a third leg to the stool is that we wanted to supply them with personal development programs.²⁵

CIT Vocational College

6.26 The Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) Vocational College was established as an entry point to VET which enables students to develop 'essential skills' including a Year 10 equivalent or Year 12 level secondary education while at the same time beginning to acquire vocational skills through accredited vocational courses. TDA noted that the college is able to achieve this through:

- working closely with other CIT teaching centres to design programs so students can participate in achievable components of vocational courses
- flexible curriculum design;
- incorporating elements of training packages into its general education courses;
- customising study programs to suit the individual needs of students, while employing flexible strategies such as timetabling, full-time and part-time options, work, self access print and online resources, tutorial support and access to drop-in support and individual tutorials; and
- supporting students' basic skills (language, literacy and numeracy, computing) while they are engaged in vocational programs and/or work.²⁶

6.27 Ms Kaye O'Hara from CIT, representing TDA, stated:

Traditionally, our ultimate goal with those people who came to us to get a year 10 certificate was to get them back into the schools system. Since establishing the vocational college, our goal now is to move them within the vocational college through CIT, mainly because it does not seem to have worked having them go back into the schools system. So what we have come up with is programs and offerings that move them into work, into apprenticeships, into our year 12 and into traineeships. It is offering them pathways with us. That is proving to be a much better option, a more successful option, for them.

25 Mr Andrew Adamson, Holmesglen Vocational College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 March 2009, p. 3.

26 TAFE Directors of Australia, *Submission no. 29*, p. 12.

...So we are balancing...the tensions in terms of fulfilling policy that is around full-time students and the client group who might need something more flexible, more part time and less attendance based.²⁷

- 6.28 CIT Vocational College provides extensive pastoral care and students have access to the full range of support services available in a tertiary education institution and staff with experience in supporting students combining full or part-time study with work. The college also employs dedicated youth workers and careers counsellors to support students in their learning and work.²⁸

St George College (NSW TAFE Sydney Institute)

- 6.29 St George College is a TAFE college in the southern part of metropolitan Sydney. The college commenced the St George Trade School in 2008. Trade schools are an initiative of the NSW Government, which offer secondary school students a broad range of vocational training opportunities including part-time apprenticeships and traineeships.
- 6.30 St George Trade School offers training in automotive, electrotechnology and nursing. These new programs embed the NSW Higher school Certificate (HSC) with off-the-job vocational training and work experience to give school-based students vocational units of competence and work skills which contribute to their HSC. TDA stated that this presents an opportunity for students, who are able to:
- combine paid part-time work, training and school;
 - receive their HSC;
 - attend off the job training at St George Trade School; and
 - have a minimum of 100 days of paid employment.²⁹
- 6.31 Apprentices can complete the equivalent of the first year of a Certificate III trade course and continue their training once they graduate from school, while trainees can complete their Certificate II and III qualifications while still at school.³⁰

27 Ms Kaye O'Hara, TAFE Directors Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 March 2009, p. 5.

28 TAFE Directors of Australia, *Submission no. 29*, p. 12.

29 TAFE Directors of Australia, *Submission no. 29*, p. 17.

30 TAFE Directors of Australia, *Submission no. 29*, p. 17.

Brisbane-North District

- 6.32 The Australian National Schools Network (ANSN) also noted work being done in the Brisbane-North District under the Queensland Government's *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* agenda, where collaboration between schools, industries and employers has helped to address skills shortages, particularly through the *Healthy Futures* program which is focused on the health and aged care industry.³¹
- 6.33 Mr Tom Robertson from the Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts explained how the program had evolved from a scan of the local area which identified employment opportunities in the health industry in the region where there were no skilled industry partnerships in existence.
- 6.34 Mr Robertson noted that prior to the initiative, most students did not tend to consider a career path in the aged care industry, and similarly the industry, which was experiencing an ageing workforce, had not previously been active in targeting students.³² Ms Judi Buckley, also from the Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts, explained that having pathways embedded in the curriculum made them 'more meaningful'. With respect to the Healthy Futures program, she stated:

...the students eventually, after a strong preparation phase, are enrolled in a certificate III. This could be in allied health or as a nurse care assistant or some other certificate course where the organisation has identified it wants students in a particular area. The students... use this experience to build their portfolio and, because of the relationships we are building up with the universities, they can now articulate straight to [university]. We are trying to break the barrier down between VET and academic learning because it is really just different types of learning, and students are getting exposed to those different learning styles and what is possible.³³

31 Australian National Schools Network, *Submission no. 13*, p. 6.

32 Mr Tom Robertson, Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 11.

33 Ms Judi Buckley, Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 51.

Flexible schooling models: 'No one size fits all'

Often students are forced into particular learning paths by timetables, by what competencies or interests or qualifications particular teachers have in that area and what the school has traditionally offered. I think that across the state there are communities that still think that way: the student has to fit in with the school rather than the school fit in with the student.³⁴

- 6.35 There was recognition from inquiry participants that the changing nature of the senior secondary landscape, including the increasing number of students combining school and work, requires that schools offer more flexibility in their timetabling arrangements. It was argued that the current education system still lacks flexibility in accommodating the learning needs of students, despite it being clear that a 'one size fits all' approach is no longer sufficient to meet these needs. Nevertheless, there are successful flexible schooling models in place which facilitate local solutions in order to respond to the particular needs of communities. Case studies suggest that flexible schooling models are most effective where there is an emphasis on individual case management. ANSN stated:

Flexible timetables, opportunities for extended completion of year 12, and second chance options are available. Individual students are engaged in a dialogue about the curriculum, and individual case management often plays a key role. The programs are diverse and even within each program, the diversity of the students is respected. There is no assumption that 'one size fits all'. Yet despite the complexity and diversity of these settings, they are becoming repositories of systematic knowledge about 'what works' for young people whose lives involve messy combinations of study and work.³⁵

- 6.36 The Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools Queensland noted that despite encouragement to be more community oriented, school operations are still designed around a 9am-3pm timetable, limiting the options available to students beyond the classroom.³⁶
- 6.37 However, there are also schools which are offering alternative schooling hours to accommodate the changing needs of their students, such as

34 Gwydir Learning Region, *Submission no. 48, Attachment B*, p. 52.

35 Australian National Schools Network, *Submission no. 13*, p. 7.

36 Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools Qld, *Submission no. 32*, p. 3.

extending the school day to 5pm and only requiring students to attend four days a week, thereby giving them an additional day to participate in part-time work.³⁷

- 6.38 The Australian Industry Group, for example, noted some instructive examples of flexibility which include:
- split timetables to assist those participating in part-time work;
 - on-line delivery of some program elements;
 - after traditional school hours mentoring/tutoring support;
 - schools responding to the special needs of students.³⁸
- 6.39 The Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA suggested that better use of school facilities after hours may also be an option to support students to combine work and study.³⁹
- 6.40 Bendigo Senior Secondary College (BSSC) advised that it is currently developing online learning programs for some VCE subjects so that they can be delivered to students in rural and remote locations. BSSC suggested that once this initiative has been set up, it could potentially be applied for those students who combine school and work, who could complete course work online and therefore free up time during the school day for part-time work or work placements. In a student survey run by BSSC, 38 per cent of students indicated they were very interested in completing some of their study online, with only 20 per cent indicating they were not interested at all.⁴⁰
- 6.41 As part of its proposal for an Intergenerational Youth Compact, ANSN promoted some pilot sites which offer flexible schooling options. The sites identified by ANSN are located in communities with low socio-economic indicators and seek to improve pathways for disadvantaged students.
- 6.42 At Mount Gambier High School in South Australia, many students take three years to complete Years 11 and 12 and the whole school is structured to support part-time students. In 2006, over one-third of all senior students at Mount Gambier High were part-time. Dr Katherine Hodgetts, Research Fellow, University of South Australia, explained that teachers at the school meet with the students individually before the school year begins to discuss both their schooling commitments and their working arrangements or extra-curricular activities, in an effort to establish how

37 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Submission no. 27*, p. 8,.

38 Australian Industry Group, *Submission no. 37*, p. 4.

39 Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA, *Submission no. 30*, p. 8.

40 Bendigo Senior Secondary College, *Submission no. 55*, p. 4.

much time they can apply to study while maintaining their wellbeing.⁴¹ The school invites local employers in so the relevant parties can engage in a discussion about what employers' peak trading periods and what the school's peak assessment times are so that, where possible, school timetables and employers' rosters could be adjusted to avoid conflict.⁴²

- 6.43 The inquiry heard that the part-time flexibility supported by Mount Gambier is essential in supporting completion for those students who cannot attend school full-time due to work commitments or the costs of public transport. Dr Hodgetts added:

One particular hallmark of Mount Gambier and other proactive part-time schools is the emphasis on individual case management – teachers brokering in- and out-of-school learning and acting as advocates for their students in relation to employers. This takes time and resources. A half-time student does not need half the resources of a full-time student; often they need more in the way of counselling and case management because they are negotiating much more complex lives. Also hugely important is the training and time given to mentor teachers and case managers to do the work that keeps part-time students connected to school, which would also mean networking these teachers across schools in order that they keep abreast of best practice.⁴³

- 6.44 Professor Marie Brennan and Dr Hodgetts from the School of Education at the University of South Australia, described the results after the school implemented these changes as 'amazing', and reported that:

...the number of As went from 1.8% total enrolments to 29.6%.
Merit Certificates went from 0 in 1997 to 40 in 2004/2005.
Retention rates went from 31% to 83%. Failures at Stage 1 went from 7 times the state average to 0.8% below.⁴⁴

- 6.45 Another pilot site identified by ANSN is Illawarra Senior College in Port Kembla, where the committee conducted a hearing and student forum. Illawarra Senior College is unique in catering for post-compulsory continuing and re-entry students from a wide range of backgrounds in course levels ranging from Years 10 to 12. The college's student body

41 Dr Katherine Hodgetts, University of South Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 14.

42 Prof Margaret Vickers, Australian National Schools Network, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 8.

43 Dr Katherine Hodgetts, University of South Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 14.

44 Prof. Marie Brennan and Dr Katherine Hodgetts, *Submission no. 39*, pp. 7-8.

consists of 30 per cent mature-age students, and includes around 180 part-time students. The current age range of students is 15 to 79.⁴⁵ Around 50 to 60 per cent of the college's intake are re-entry students who have left education previously and come back to study after a break. The Principal, Mr Mark Webster, indicated that this can be a very long break, sometimes 20 or 30 years.⁴⁶ The college offers a Year 10 program to both normal and mature-age students and was the first school in the state to deliver an alternative Year 10 Certificate, which follows the one-year TAFE Certificate program rather than the Year 10 Certificate that other schools in NSW follow. The college has a strong careers program and, as with Mount Gambier High School, each student is case-managed. The college is open for extended hours from Monday to Thursday and is closed on Friday, which enhances the part-time employability of students as they are available to work all day on Fridays.

Part-time senior secondary study: 'a largely unexplored policy challenge'

- 6.46 Senior secondary certificate frameworks across state and territory jurisdictions have freed up 'previously rigid time limits' for completion of accreditation requirements and facilitated the phenomenon of the part-time senior secondary student. Professor Eleanor Ramsay has argued that 'there is an urgency to better understand the causes and educational implications of this significant shift from previously dominant patterns of senior schooling'.⁴⁷
- 6.47 Professor Ramsay has suggested that dominant assumptions about full-time study being the norm for senior secondary students may be a factor in the policy and research neglect of part-time study:

Despite the policy and practice emphasis on increased flexibility and broadening pathways, including different combinations of learning and earning, current approaches to defining part-time secondary study and measuring part-time students (in all their permutations) tend to normalise full-time study and assume a lock-step engagement with schooling. These approaches no longer

45 Mr Mark Webster, Principal, Illawarra Senior College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 23.

46 Mr Mark Webster, Principal, Illawarra Senior College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 23.

47 E. Ramsay, *The "Absent Presence" of Part-Time Senior Secondary Study: A Research and Policy Challenge*, *The Australian Educational Researcher*, Volume 35, Number 2, August 2008, p. 39. Available online at: <<http://www.aare.edu.au/aer/online/0802c.pdf>>, accessed 7 September 2009.

reflect the more fluid realities of senior secondary engagement and are ill-fitted to identify the extent and nature of secondary engagement no longer conforming to the assumed norm. Nor can they communicate the multiplicity of ways in which Australian students are actually engaging with their senior secondary education.⁴⁸

- 6.48 Analysis of changing patterns of senior secondary engagement is also affected by definitional and statistical complexities. For example, it was suggested that the counting of part-time students is complicated by different definitions of what constitutes 'part-time' for different purposes and agencies. It was also suggested that analysis can be affected by some schools' reluctance or inability to define students as part-time at census time because of resource implications.⁴⁹
- 6.49 Professor Brennan and Dr Hodgetts' submission presented findings from an Australian Research Council Linkage Project which investigated why a relatively high proportion of South Australian students undertake their senior-secondary studies part-time. *Pathways or cul de sacs? The causes, impact and implications of part-time senior secondary study, 2005-2007* (the Pathways Project) involved interviews and surveys with staff and students from 14 South Australian schools.
- 6.50 The Pathways Project found that schools were using the option of part-time study as part of either a *reactive* or *proactive* strategy. Schools offering part-time study as a reactive strategy offered part-time schooling as a last resort option for failing students or those at risk of non-completion. Schools which supported proactive part-time school engagement encouraged a reduction in study load as an option for balancing school commitments with out-of-school commitments (particularly in relation to part-time work or caring responsibilities).⁵⁰
- 6.51 Professor Brennan and Dr Hodgetts reported that the Pathway Project's findings suggest that proactive part-time engagement supports achievement and completion in school contexts which are characterised by:

48 E. Ramsay, *The "Absent Presence" of Part-Time Senior Secondary Study: A Research and Policy Challenge*, The Australian Educational Researcher, Volume 35, Number 2, August 2008, p. 39. Available online at: <<http://www.aare.edu.au/aer/online/0802c.pdf>>, accessed 7 September 2009.

49 Prof. Marie Brennan and Dr Katherine Hodgetts, *Submission no. 39*, p. 3.

50 Prof. Marie Brennan and Dr Katherine Hodgetts, *Submission no. 39*, pp. 3-4.

- flexible timetables (eg. offering condensed classes with longer lessons on a single day, offering classes after hours);
- innovative communication strategies (eg. SMS dissemination of notices and digital information displays on school grounds);
- communication between students and school staff;
- communication between schools and employers;
- flexibility around attendance; and
- flexible assessment options (eg. enabling students to submit assessments via email or online portals, although it was noted that this may create accessibility issues, particularly in isolated regions or areas of low socio-economic status).⁵¹

6.52 Perhaps the most important finding of the Pathways study for the purposes of this inquiry is the statistic that 28 per cent of part-time student respondents believed they would not be able to remain engaged with school if the option of part-time enrolment was not available to them. Professor Brennan and Dr Hodgetts stated:

Given the documented health, social and economic benefits associated with school completion it therefore seems imperative to support and resource part-time provision as a means of supporting school retention.⁵²

Committee comment

- 6.53 In investigating options for increasing the flexibility schools offer to students, it is important not to overlook that the fundamental purpose of schools is to provide an education for students.
- 6.54 While this chapter has demonstrated existing examples of highly flexible senior schooling programs based around individual case management, many schools, particularly smaller schools, would find it impossible to implement this degree of flexibility.
- 6.55 Nevertheless, it is clear that achieving COAG targets for Year 12 retention and thus improving the post-school outcomes for young Australians is not going to be achieved through traditional schooling models alone.
-

51 Prof. Marie Brennan and Dr Katherine Hodgetts, *Submission no. 39*, pp. 4-5.

52 Prof. Marie Brennan and Dr Katherine Hodgetts, *Submission no. 39*, p. 7.

Education systems across the country will be required to cater more effectively for the full cohort of students, including those who are not academically oriented.

- 6.56 Some of the case studies presented in this chapter have achieved outstanding results in terms of outcomes for students. The effectiveness of some of the new senior secondary certificates which have been introduced in various jurisdictions is still too early to assess. The Foundation for Young Australians highlighted the opportunities available from the range of innovations in provision of across the country and suggested that 'these innovations should be thoroughly evaluated so that critical success factors and conditions can be identified and transferred to other initiatives.'⁵³

Recommendation 8

- 6.57 **That the Australian Government evaluate recent initiatives in senior secondary provision across the states and territories, including secondary schools, specialist colleges, vocational colleges and polytechnics, in order to identify key areas of success and best practice models, and possible limitations.**
- 6.58 While definitional inconsistencies make it difficult to assess the number of students undertaking senior secondary study part time, evidence suggests that the proportion of part-time students has increased significantly. The number of part-time students is only likely to increase further with changes to senior secondary certificate frameworks which allow students to attain a qualification over much longer periods of time than the traditional two years. Given the increasing phenomenon of part-time senior secondary study, the Government needs to assess the quality of outcome for students pursuing this option.

Recommendation 9

- 6.59 **That the Australian Government, in consultation with the states and territories, establish a consistent national definition for what constitutes engagement in part-time senior secondary study and part-time work for statistical and reporting purposes.**

53 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p.43.

Recommendation 10

- 6.60 **That the Australian Government undertake research to quantify the number of students engaged in senior secondary schooling as part-time students, and to assess their experiences and outcomes from part-time study. Research should focus on arrangements in schools which support positive outcomes and successful completion for part-time students and identify any limitations.**

Vocational education and training in schools

- 6.61 In 2004, a predecessor of this committee presented a comprehensive report on vocational education in schools which included 41 recommendations mainly aimed at longer term strategies relating to VETiS.⁵⁴ While there have been some significant developments with regards to VETiS since that report, many of the issues raised continue to pose a challenge for all Australian governments.
- 6.62 This inquiry focused on the large cohort of secondary students combining school with paid part-time work and therefore issues around VETiS were explored only in passing during hearings. However, a significant body of written evidence was received on the effectiveness of school-based training pathways.
- 6.63 The development of policies and programs for VETiS is currently a joint responsibility of the Australian and state/territory governments, while the nature and delivery of VETiS is the responsibility of the states and territories.⁵⁵
- 6.64 VETiS must be provided by a registered training organisation (RTO), which may be a TAFE institution, private provider, community-based provider or a school. Generally, a period of structured workplace learning is involved.⁵⁶ LSAY data shows that over the past 10 years, the broad profile of VETiS participants has remained constant in that they tend to

54 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training (2004), *Learning to work: Report on the inquiry into vocational education in schools*, House of Representatives, Canberra.

55 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 42.

56 H. Coates and S. Rothman, *Participation in VET in Schools*, LSAY Briefing Number 15, October 2008, p. 1.

have lower levels of achievement and to be from more disadvantaged backgrounds.⁵⁷

- 6.65 Submitters were generally supportive of VETiS, acknowledging that if delivered as a quality product, it can be effective in providing alternative pathways to further education, training and employment for young people. It was also suggested that participation in VETiS can enhance student well-being by building self-confidence and improving social engagement.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that there remains significant scope for improvement, and VETiS continues to face challenges with respect to its credibility within industry due to concerns over quality assurance.

Australian Government VETiS initiatives

- 6.66 DEEWR provided details on a range of national programs and initiatives to assist VETiS students to make successful transitions through school and from school to further education, training and employment. Many of these are being implemented under the banner of *Career Advice Australia* – the Australian Government’s national career and transition support network for 13-19 year-olds. Programs and initiatives offering assistance to VETiS students include:

- Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) which assist young people in their transition through school by providing connections with schools, professional career practitioners, parents, other youth service providers and business to improve access to quality career information, career development and experiential learning opportunities. LCPs are supported by a network of regional industry career advisers who provide locally based career information and advice, and national industry career specialists who provide industry sector-specific information. In 2007 LCPs supported approximately 79,000 young people through structured workplace learning placements, with a similar number expected for 2008 and 2009.
- Provision for VETiS students to gain vocational experience through an increase in the availability and quality of structured on-the-job training opportunities through the Government’s *On-the-Job Training Initiative*. The initiative is being implemented through state and territory education authorities. From 1 January 2010, it will form a component of

57 H. Coates and S. Rothman, *Participation in VET in Schools*, LSAY Briefing Number 15, October 2008, p. 1.

58 Australian Council of Trade Unions, *Submission no. 21*, p. 12.

the proposed National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions.

- Establishing Trade Training Centres to help increase the proportion of students achieving Year 12 or an equivalent qualification and to help address skill shortages in traditional trades and emerging industries. Under the *Trade Training Centres in Schools* program, schools will have an opportunity to apply for funding to build new, or upgrade, trade or vocational education and training facilities and purchase trade-related equipment, giving students access to trade training facilities that meet industry needs.
- Facilitating opportunities for recently retired professionals and tradespeople to pass on their knowledge and skills to VETiS students through the *Mentors for our Students* pilot program. The pilot aims to improve retention rates and the transition of young people from school, by sparking their interest in those occupations experiencing skills shortages in their local communities. 25 LCPs have been selected to pilot the program, which is expected to support up to 750 mentors across Australia mentoring some 2250 secondary school students in years 9 to 12. LCPs will work with their local secondary schools and TAFEs to coordinate mentoring; select mentors and provide them with relevant training; and match mentors with students.
- The *Australian Vocational Student Prize* recognises and rewards senior secondary students who demonstrate exceptional skills, commitment and achievement while undertaking a vocational education and training program or an Australian School-based Apprenticeship. Each year, the prize recognises up to 500 Year 12 students, with the winner receiving \$2,000 and a certificate.⁵⁹

6.67 Under COAG's *National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions*, full responsibility for VETiS placements will be transferred to the states and territories and each jurisdiction will be provided with facilitation funding to support a range of reforms related to the youth and transitions agenda with flexibility to address individual state needs.⁶⁰

59 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 42. Further details about some of these initiatives are included in Appendix B of DEEWR's submission.

60 Council of Australian Governments, *Fact Sheet: National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development*, <http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/docs/20081129_skills_workforce_development_fact_sheet.pdf>, accessed 3 August 2009.

- 6.68 DEEWR's website advises that the department will be developing implementation plans with the states and territories, through which the jurisdictions will outline how they will allocate their share of funding.

VETiS arrangements

- 6.69 In 2005, 95 per cent of secondary schools offered VETiS programs, an increase in 25 per cent in 1997.⁶¹ The number of students enrolling in VET subjects also continued to rise (see Figure 6.1).
- 6.70 In 2006, one-third of all school students enrolled in a senior secondary certificate were participating in VET.⁶² In most cases, this involved one subject and predominantly at Year 11 level. For example, in Victoria, only 15.9 per cent of Year 12 students were participating in VETiS.⁶³
- 6.71 There are two main options under the VETiS arrangement. Students can undertake school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBATs) or VET subjects and courses (often referred to as 'other VET in Schools programs').⁶⁴
- 6.72 In 2006, 12,900 or 7.5 per cent of all VETiS students were undertaking a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship, with 158,700 (92.5 per cent) students enrolled in other VETiS programs.⁶⁵
- 6.73 SBATs provide students, typically Years 10-12 students, with the opportunity to attain a nationally recognised VET qualification as well as their senior certificate or equivalent, and gain valuable work skills and experience through paid employment.

61 H. Coates and S. Rothman, *Participation in VET in Schools*, LSAY Briefing Number 15, October 2008, p. 1.

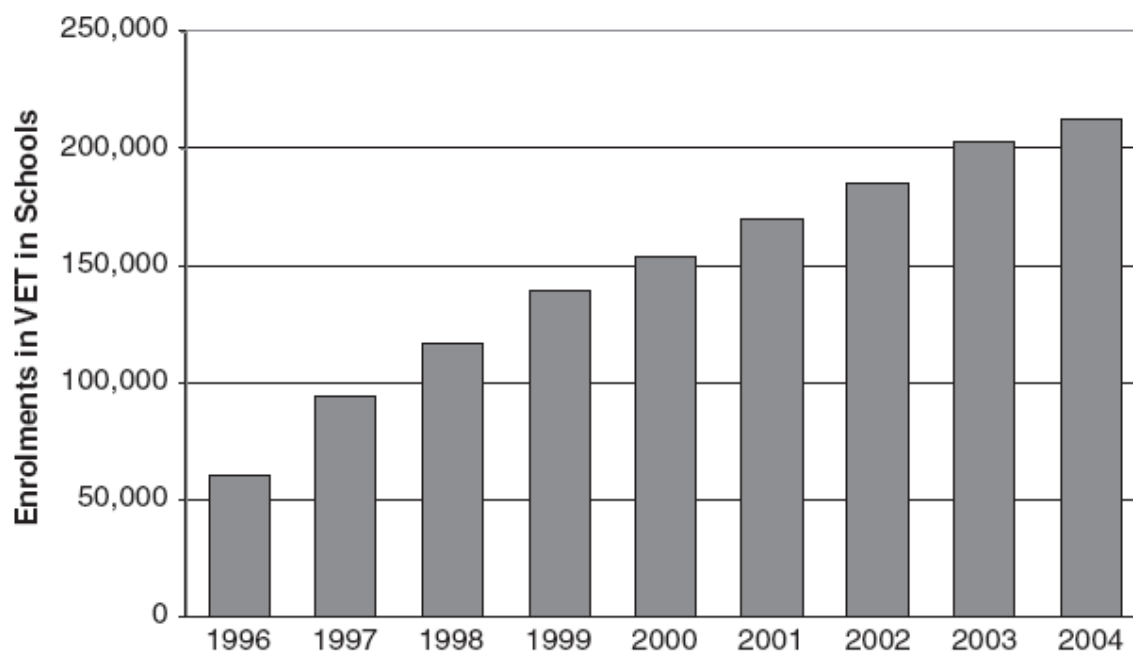
62 National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2009), *Australian vocational education and training statistics: VET in Schools 2006*, p. 5.

63 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 31.

64 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual national report of the Australian vocational education and training system 2007*, p. 34.

65 National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2009), *Australian vocational education and training statistics: VET in Schools 2006*, p. 5.

Figure 6.1 Year 11 and 12 student enrolments in VET in Schools, 1996 to 2004



Source: H. Coates, and S. Rothman, *Participation in VET in Schools*, LSAY Briefing Number 15, October 2008, p. 1.

6.74 While the proportion of apprentices and trainees undertaking SBATs is relatively small, student enrolments are increasing at a rapid rate (see Table 6.1). SBATs are concentrated in the retail and hospitality sectors and are more likely to be at certificates I and II level than at certificate III and above level.

Table 6.1 School-based apprentice and trainee commencements by state and territory, 2002-07

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
New South Wales	255	759	869	911	773	1 404
Victoria	4 063	3 562	2 696	5 109	5 206	6 497
Queensland	4 722	5 293	6 044	6 419	6 956	7 973
South Australia	763	1 029	1 537	1 602	1 926	1 336
Western Australia	300	961	1 121	1 156	1 397	1 166
Tasmania	2	13	81	102	96	242
Northern Territory	15	147	141	114	179	155
Australian Capital Territory	292	465	363	369	326	335
Australia	10 411	12 230	12 853	15 782	16 861	19 110

Notes: Data are the sum of the first revisions of each quarterly estimate of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.
School based information introduced 1 January 2002.

Source: NCVET, National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, various collections (using the first revision), in T. Karmel and P. Mlotkowski, *School-based apprenticeships and traineeships*, Occasional Paper, 2008, p. 9.

Impact of VETiS on completion and retention

- 6.75 A 2006 LSAY report which examined the impact of various models of VET provision on school completion rates and post-school outcomes found that a higher proportion of VETiS participants than non-participants changed their mind about completing Year 12 between Years 9 and 12.⁶⁶
- 6.76 A study by NCVER found that participation in VETiS positively effected retention from Year 10 to Year 11, but had a negative effect on retention from Year 11 to Year 12.⁶⁷ With respect to transitions to further work or study, the report found that for those students who leave school after Year 11, the transition is smoother for VETiS students than for those who do not participate in VETiS programs. For students who complete Year 12, the report found no benefit in transition from participation in VETiS programs.⁶⁸
- 6.77 While these findings were based on research conducted during a relatively early phase of VETiS programs, DEEWR suggested that more recent research appears to show positive effects for students with poor academic achievement. However DEEWR suggested that ongoing research is required as VETiS programs are developed further.⁶⁹
- 6.78 NCVER research shows that completion rates for SBAT participants are a little higher than for comparative non-school VET participants at the certificates I and II level, but lower for certificate III level. The lowest certificate III completion rates for SBATs are in the trades.⁷⁰
- 6.79 TDA stated that combinations of school and work are being particularly tested in the context of SBATs. Where students see their workplace as offering greater benefits than their schooling may lead to increased rates of non-completion. Yet TDA noted that research shows the employment gained through SBATs is 'usually insecure and poorly paid, unless it is within the context of a contract of training.'⁷¹

66 H. Coates, and S. Rothman, *Participation in VET in Schools*, LSAY Briefing Number 15, October 2008, p. 4.

67 A. Anlezark, T. Karmel and K. Ong, *Have school vocational and education programs been successful?*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2006, p. 6.

68 A. Anlezark, T. Karmel and K. Ong, *Have school vocational and education programs been successful?*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2006, pp. 6-8.

69 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 45.

70 National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Submission no. 4*, p. 3.

71 TAFE Directors Australia, *Submission no. 29*, p. 20.

6.80 TDA suggested that the most successful SBAT models are those which are flexible and based on strong relationships between the employers, schools and an RTO.⁷²

6.81 SBATs were endorsed in submissions for their effectiveness in engaging students at risk of leaving school. For example, Ms Kerrie Parkinson who works for a Local Community Partnership in NSW, stated:

We have had many success stories with students who were going to leave school, but instead undertook a SBAT and have had amazing success.⁷³

Industry concerns over the credibility of VETiS

6.82 The growth in VETiS has created some challenges for schools, one of which is sourcing suitable work placements for students.

6.83 The Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA) suggested that employers are favouring students who have completed their VET qualification post-school over those who achieve a comparative qualification through VETiS program; 'for VETiS to have broad industry support this fundamental problem must be addressed.'⁷⁴

6.84 Industry concerns over the credibility of VETiS can largely be attributed to the variability and inconsistency between programs offered across jurisdictions. According to Service Skills Australia:

...there are no common standards around the approval, regulation, resourcing, administration, monitoring and delivery of VET in Schools programs across jurisdictions.⁷⁵

6.85 Despite the view from industry that successful completion of training package qualifications requires integrated on and off-the-job learning, evidence suggested that there remains a lack of appropriate structured workplace learning in some programs.⁷⁶

6.86 Structured workplace learning provides students with structured work placements in real or simulated work environments, where they are given the opportunity to develop their technical and employability skills and direct experience of the working world. Structured workplace learning is

72 TAFE Directors Australia, *Submission no. 29*, p. 20.

73 Ms Kerrie Parkinson, *Submission no. 1*, pp. 1-2.

74 Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, *Submission no. 8*, p. 1.

75 Service Skills Australia, *Submission no. 14*, p. 4.

76 Service Skills Australia, *Submission no. 14*, p. 5.

implemented in a variety of forms across state and territory jurisdictions, with different models of coordination in place.⁷⁷ A representative from DEEWR stated:

From a VET perspective, the policy push is absolutely for more people to do the on-the-job training component. Often training packages will prescribe whether or not you have to do an on-the-job training component. In some packages you can do the VET component in the classroom and you do not have to go out into a work environment. However, from a policy perspective, we know – and certainly employers and industry prefer and believe – that there is a rounding out of the quality of the VET course if you go and do the on-the-job component.

In states like New South Wales, they have made the on-the-job work placement, the structured workplace learning, a compulsory part of doing all VET in schools. Other states and territories tend to let the mandating in the training package make those decisions, but there has definitely been a push over time to move towards more of the on-the-job placements as part of the vocational opportunities rather than fewer.⁷⁸

- 6.87 Figure 6.2, based on LSAY data from 2000 and 2001, shows the variable levels of participation in workplace learning across secondary schools, with 10 per cent of schools offering VETiS not including a workplace learning component and just 12 per cent of schools incorporating a workplace learning component in all of their VETiS programs. The authors responsible for compiling this data noted that these patterns may have changed in intervening years as VETiS has become more fully incorporated into school programs.⁷⁹
- 6.88 LSAY data suggests that where schools offer a strong VET program with high levels of workplace learning, students are more likely to enter further VET study and are less likely to be unemployed.⁸⁰

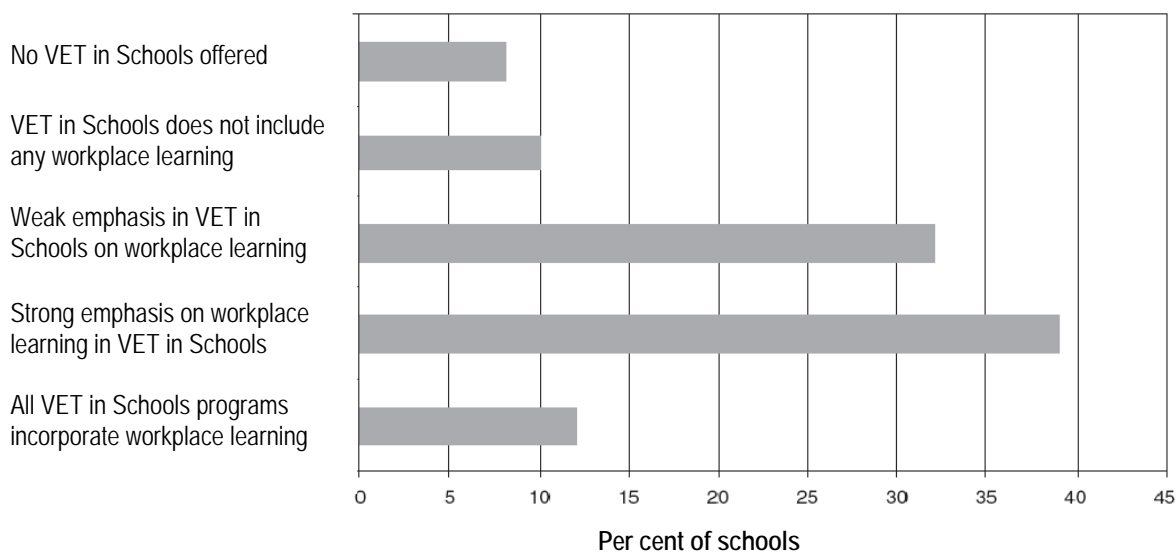
77 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 43.

78 Ms Renae Houston, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 14 May 2009, p. 3.

79 H. Coates and S. Rothman, *Participation in VET in Schools*, LSAY Briefing Number 15, October 2008, p. 3.

80 H. Coates and S. Rothman, *Participation in VET in Schools*, LSAY Briefing Number 15, October 2008, p. 4.

Figure 6.2 Emphasis on workplace learning



Source: H. Coates, and S. Rothman, *Participation in VET in Schools*, LSAY Briefing Number 15, October 2008, p. 3.

6.89 SDA noted that schools can often struggle to convince employers to provide structured workplace opportunities, and even where they do there can often be a lack of adequate supervision, mentoring and appropriate on-the-job training. While sometimes this is due to a lack of commitment from employers, it is also often the case that employers lack awareness of their obligations because they have not been properly briefed by schools, or provided with appropriate support mechanisms.⁸¹

6.90 The ACTU noted that:

...placements can vary in quality, ranging from “work experience” programs – where little structured learning or assessment takes place and having in some cases little direct connection to the VET course being undertaken – to structured experiences of work including specific on-the-job training and assessment which is fully integrated into the VET course.⁸²

6.91 The South-East Local Learning and Employment Network was similarly critical of VETiS programs which lack a structured workplace learning component:

It is our strongly held view that [structured workplace learning] ought to be a required component of all VETiS programs. It seems ludicrous that a program with the avowed aim of work skills

81 Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, *Submission no. 8*, p. 4.

82 Australian Council of Trade Unions, *Submission no. 21*, p. 15.

development does not, in most cases, require any work place attendance. A young person might secure a – say – Certificate II in Automotive Technology without ever having stepped into a workshop to have some direct workplace experience in plying that trade.⁸³

- 6.92 TAFE institutes warned against attempting to engage students too early in their schooling in VET programs that have no credibility with employers.⁸⁴ Both the ACTU and SDA suggested that because schools operate independently, there is little control over the decisions they make regarding VETiS even where these decisions appear not to be in the best interests of students, or the needs of the labour market. It was argued that programs are offered on the basis of existing facilities or the availability of teachers who can deliver the curriculum. SDA stated:

Currently there is little willingness by the Departments of Education to intervene in arrangements which schools make in VETiS programs, even when sometimes they are obviously not in the best interests of the students and are contrary to industry desires.⁸⁵

Negative perceptions of vocational education pathways

- 6.93 Despite the growth of school-based training pathways through VETiS, there remains a common view that VET is an appropriate option only for students who struggle to achieve academically. Consequently, it was argued that the traditional, academic approach to prepare senior secondary students for university has dictated school structures, staffing and timetabling, while alternative approaches are ‘accorded lesser status at the periphery.’⁸⁶ This approach has also seen academically oriented subjects given greater status in certification than vocationally oriented areas.⁸⁷
- 6.94 While VETiS programs have been integrated into senior secondary certificates in various ways, FYA stated that ‘they remain essentially minor elements’ of secondary provision. FYA acknowledged that the separation between the schools and VET sector is:

83 South East Local Learning and Employment Network Inc., *Submission no. 23*, p. 8.

84 TAFE Directors Australia, *Submission no. 29*, p. 33.

85 Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, *Submission no. 8*, p. 3.

86 Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Submission no. 12*, pp. 4-5.

87 Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools Queensland, *Submission no. 32*, p. 3.

related to the respective traditions of the strong links between the secondary curriculum and university studies and the industrial training culture in Australia.⁸⁸

- 6.95 Group Training Australia CEO, Mr James Barron, stated that ‘we still have a long way to go to effectively promote the alternative pathways in a lot of school systems.’⁸⁹ SDA added:

Under the current arrangements, we are on the way to creating a two tier education system. Under such a scenario, this is and will continue to increase the division between [private] schools which have low levels of VETIS participation and government schools.⁹⁰

- 6.96 The Australian College of Educators (ACE) suggested that there is a lack of recognition amongst staff in secondary schools about the importance of the work and skills agenda and the range of new pathways available to students, meaning that students may not be receiving appropriate advice. ACE stated that secondary school staff:

...continue to believe that if the skills agenda suits any students at all, then it suits students who are uncooperative or whose academic achievements of themselves mean they are likely to drop out. There is still a perception that troublesome students are those best suited to VET courses, but failing that, should leave school and get a job – they have no real idea of what that really means for the life chances of those students.

With insufficient accurate information about the school to work and training agenda, teachers are simply unable to positively influence students or their parents about beneficial and more relevant pathways that may lead to further study through ongoing skills development through a range of reputable and recognised training bodies.⁹¹

- 6.97 The provision of inappropriate advice from careers advisers in secondary schools about vocational pathways was highlighted by Mr Ian Blandthorn from SDA:

I think back to one of my children a few years ago when he was struggling a little bit at the time at school. I suggested he look at an option in the TAFE system. The career advice that he got at that

88 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 36.

89 Mr. James Barron, Group Training Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 47.

90 Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, *Submission no. 8*, p. 6.

91 Australian College of Educators, *Submission no. 49*, p. 2.

particular school effectively led him to conclude, 'If I go to TAFE, Dad, everyone will think that I'm dumb.'⁹²

- 6.98 The Gwydir Learning Region (GLR) argued that boards of vocational education and boards of studies should be amalgamated so that the secondary school system's focus is on a 'Life and Work Ready Certification'. GLR stated:

This may seem fanciful but until something of this magnitude occurs the VocEd qualifications will carry the stigma of being of lesser value than the Higher School Certificate, which is of very little genuine use to the very great majority of students within the school environment.⁹³

- 6.99 Through COAG, the Australian Government and state and territory governments have agreed (as at 2 July 2009) to undertake a communications strategy which supports reforms outlined in the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions. States and territories will have responsibility for communications specific to their jurisdiction regarding the importance of increasing attainment and engagement of young people aged 15-24 in education, training and employment. The communications strategy will have multiple targets which include:

- young people aged 15-24;
- parents and guardians of young people aged 15-24;
- education and training providers; and
- employers and potential employers of young people aged 15-24.⁹⁴

Committee comment

- 6.100 The first section of this chapter highlighted instances of the increasing flexibility being applied to senior secondary education certificates to assist students to navigate between a variety of pathways where both academic and vocational courses can contribute credit towards a qualification.

92 Mr Ian Blandthorn, Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 17.

93 Gwydir Learning Region, *Submission no. 48*, p. 3.

94 Council of Australian Governments, *National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions*, <http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-07-02/docs/NP_youth_attainment_transitions.pdf>, accessed 21 September 2009.

- 6.101 VETiS plays an important role in supporting successful youth transitions and building Australia's productivity through its capacity to enhance student engagement. Given the extent to which issues around VETiS have been researched and reported on in recent years (including inquiries by a predecessor of this committee and the committee's Senate counterpart) the current inquiry focused primarily on school and part-time work balance.
- 6.102 Notwithstanding, there was a clear message through submissions that suggested many of the concerns with VETiS identified in previous reviews and reports persist. A concerted effort to enhance the quantity and quality of VETiS is required if COAG targets are to be realised. Continuing to broaden the options available to senior secondary students will be essential for improving Year 12 completion rates.
- 6.103 The greatest cause for concern over VETiS are inconsistencies in the product being delivered through institutional based VET compared to VET delivered in the workplace. Specifically, the absence of a required structured workplace learning component through VETiS programs continues to be identified as a major concern for industry.
- 6.104 Following COAG's National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions, specific arrangements with respect to VETiS will be decisions for the relevant state or territory governments, including decisions on whether to invest Australian Government funding to support structured workplace learning.⁹⁵
- 6.105 The Australian Government should continue to support an expansion of structured workplace learning opportunities to improve the quality of student outcomes for VETiS participants.

Recommendation 11

- 6.106 **That the Australian Government work with state and territory governments to develop a plan to ensure that structured workplace opportunities are available to all students participating in school-based vocational education and training.**

95 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Attainment and Transitions – Frequently Asked Questions*, <<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Documents/FAQ.pdf>>, accessed 24 September 2009.

6.107 The changing nature of senior secondary certificates of education has opened doors for an increasing cohort of students to pursue vocational pathways which provide credit towards a Year 12 qualification. There is still much work to be done in promoting vocational pathways so that they are seen as an equal first choice option and more accurately reflect the significant proportion of Australian secondary students who do not go on to study at university. The new senior secondary certificate frameworks provide a platform to further build the profile of VET as a viable pathway for secondary students.

Figure 6.3 Case study: Heavy vehicle driving

Heavy Vehicle Driving: An unexploited pathway

Representatives from the Transport Workers Union (TWU), Ron Finemore Transport Pty Ltd and the Transport Industry Skills Centre presented evidence on the challenge the road transport industry faces due to pending shortages of heavy-vehicle drivers and a tight labour market.

The TWU stated that there is an expectation that in the next 10 years, the industry will double in size, creating an opportunity to absorb large numbers of entrants if an effective transition program were to be put in place.

However, there are barriers to attracting new entrants which are making it difficult to capitalise on the tight labour market for drivers, even in a time of growing unemployment.⁹⁶ The barriers identified by the TWU include:

- strong client control of trucking industry market pricing;
- current traineeship initiatives which are ‘largely ineffective in attracting new entrants’; and
- the length of time it takes to move through the graduated licensing system can mean school age entrants are lost to other occupations immediately after leaving school. Trucking can then become the second-choice occupation once other careers don’t work.

Existing traineeships, which can be school-based (although this option is not provided by all states), through *Certificates I and II in Transport and Logistics (Road Transport)* are restrictive due to age and time-based restrictions on heavy vehicle licensing.

96 Transport Workers Union, *Submission no. 59*, p. 2.

Licensing requirements which determine progression through the various truck licensing categories means that an employer may have to fund a school age recruit for two years before they can drive an articulated vehicle and often three years for a multi-combination vehicle. TWU argued that this made school-age recruitment to the truck driving profession 'extremely difficult, if not virtually impossible.'⁹⁷

Evidence suggested that the trucking industry is well-positioned to offer a viable school-to-work transition for a significant number of young Australians, provided governments and industry stakeholders are prepared to work collaboratively to take advantage of this opportunity.

Witnesses promoting the need for a more direct career pathway for young people expressed the importance of a strong emphasis on a workplace culture which promotes safety and provides appropriate mentoring and training in any effort to attract young people as new entrants to the industry. TWU Federal Secretary, Mr Tony Sheldon, stated that 'only companies with a good safety record and a protective culture should be allowed to access young people.'⁹⁸

The committee encourages the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government to work with state and territory transport ministers, in consultation with key stakeholders in the transport industry, to investigate the development of a national truck driving apprenticeship scheme that facilitates a more direct career pathway from secondary school to truck driving as an occupation than currently prevails.

97 Mr Tony Sheldon, Transport Workers Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 4 June 2009, p. 3.

98 Mr Tony Sheldon, Transport Workers Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 4 June 2009, p. 3.

Support for students at risk

...we also need to consider those students in the small rural communities and remote communities where only one in five is likely to complete Year 12 anyway. Add to that that they get no opportunity to be involved in part-time work that perhaps builds a pathway. So we really need to look very carefully at those groups that they do not increasingly suffer disadvantage purely because of where they live and the nature of the communities that they are in.¹

Introduction

- 7.1 Chapters five and six canvassed protections and flexibilities that education systems should endeavour to deliver to students who seek to combine school and work. However, not all young people have equal access to opportunities to participate in part-time work. A significant minority among those students who do work also work out of financial necessity rather than for discretionary spending. The circumstances of these two groups of students provide further obstacles to successful transitioning that require additional support.

¹ Ms Cheryl O'Connor, Australian College of Educators, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 21.

- 7.2 Students from lower-income households are less likely to engage in paid work than those from higher income households² and those in metropolitan areas tend to have greater access to work than those in regional, remote and isolated communities.³ Students from disadvantaged backgrounds also have disproportionately high rates of early school leaving.⁴ Indigenous students, young carers, students with a disability, young migrants and homeless youth were also identified as groups who are more likely to face multiple disadvantages with regard to accessing part-time work.
- 7.3 Individuals at risk of low achievement, disengagement and early school leaving can experience significant difficulty in navigating pathways to progress their learning.
- 7.4 The Australian National Schools Network (ANSN) emphasised that no single program and policy can meet the diverse needs of these groups. Instead, these young people:
- ...must be supported through programs that are crafted and integrated locally, resourced both locally and centrally, and designed to meet their needs.⁵
- 7.5 DEEWR also acknowledged the role of local communities in keeping students engaged in their learning:
- Families, business and local community agencies have an important role to play in supporting schools to keep students engaged and manage their needs, especially those at risk of disengaging. Facilitating connections between relevant players in the local community have been widely recognised as a valuable approach to achieving this.⁶
- 7.6 ANSN suggested that the major problem with Australia's provision of transition support is that too many disadvantaged young people are completely missing out.⁷
- 7.7 Chapter six presented some case studies regarding flexible senior secondary programs and re-entry or 'second chance' colleges, but it was acknowledged that there are many regions where there is no access to

2 Australian Council of Trade Unions, *Submission no. 21*, p. 7.

3 Australian College of Educators, *Submission no. 49*, p. 1.

4 The Smith Family, *Submission no. 50*, p. 2.

5 Australian National Schools Network, *Submission no. 13*, p. 4.

6 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 19.

7 Australian National Schools Network, *Submission no. 13*, p. 4.

such opportunities. Even where some of these options do exist, often little is known about them outside their immediate contexts.⁸

- 7.8 This chapter attends particularly to opportunities for disadvantaged students to gain exposure to the workforce while staying engaged in their education.

Income support policies encouraging work and study

- 7.9 The provision of government student income support is administered through programs including Youth Allowance, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Study Assistance Scheme and Family Tax Benefit payments.

- Youth Allowance provides assistance for young people from 16 to 24 years of age (or 15 years of age if considered independent) with three streams for full-time students or students undertaking an Australian Apprenticeship [Youth Allowance (student)], and unemployed youth [Youth Allowance (other)]. For students under 18 years of age, Youth Allowance payments are usually paid to a nominated parent.⁹
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Study (ABSTUDY) assistance scheme assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to stay at school or go on to further studies.
- Family Tax Benefit (FTB) is an Australian Government payment that assists families with the costs of dependent children, particularly while children are at school or in full-time tertiary education.¹⁰

- 7.10 At June 2009, of 97,296 Youth Allowance recipients in the school sector (86 per cent of whom were aged 16 or 17), 21,984 or 23 per cent had earnings as at June 2008.¹¹

- 7.11 Of those 21,984 students, 11,528 or 52 per cent resided in a major city, 6,561 or 30 per cent resided in inner regional areas, 3,425 or 16 per cent resided in outer regional areas, and 470 or 2 per cent resided in remote or very remote areas or in unidentified locations.¹²

8 Australian National Schools Network, *Submission no. 13*, p. 4.

9 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, pp. 22-23.

10 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, pp. 22-24.

11 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission 53.1*, p. 1.

12 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission 53.1*, p. 1.

- 7.12 DEEWR reported that, in total, approximately 18 per cent of young people receiving Youth Allowance (student) combine work and study throughout the school year. Eligibility for Youth Allowance (student) for those who have not completed Year 12 or equivalent is dependent upon their participation in full time education or training (with exemptions available where it is unreasonable to expect the young person to undertake full time study).¹³
- 7.13 ABSTUDY recipients combining work and study are significantly fewer than those on Youth Allowance (student) with 10 per cent Indigenous females and 5 per cent Indigenous males combining work and study.¹⁴
- 7.14 An analysis which investigated the long-term outcomes of young people who receive Youth Allowance or ABSTUDY and combine school and work found that young people combining school and work make better transition off income support and into employment.¹⁵ However DEEWR noted difficulties in establishing causality and suggested that the data did not necessarily indicate that working while studying is the reason for better outcomes. For example, young people combining study and work 'may be more self-motivated and have other inherent characteristics that affect long-term outcomes.'¹⁶
- 7.15 A package of reforms to student income support arrangements is currently being considered by the Parliament.

Improving access to work for disadvantaged students

- 7.16 Students experiencing disadvantage can face a series of barriers to part-time work opportunities. The benefits to students from participation in part-time work which were described in chapter three highlight the importance of access to work opportunities for those at risk of not making successful transitions. The NSW Commission for Children and Young People stated:

Given the benefits that work has for children and young people's present and future well-being we need to develop ways to support those who want to work to find work. For those children and young people from low socio economic areas, the long term

13 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 71.

14 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 25.

15 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 28.

16 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 28.

benefits of part-time work are even more salient in order to break the cycle of disadvantage. As research has shown, access to education, employment or training are key factors in reducing the risk of unsuccessful transitions from education to full-time work and a life of disadvantage.¹⁷

- 7.17 The Australian Council of Trade Unions suggested that any move to formally recognise the employability skills of senior secondary students should be complemented by initiatives to facilitate paid work opportunities for those students who would otherwise struggle to find paid casual employment.¹⁸
- 7.18 Accessing paid part-time work can be an issue where vocationally-oriented students are competing for the same paid work opportunities as students pursuing a university pathway. For example, during a hearing in Burnie, the Tasmanian Academy presented findings from a survey of senior-secondary students on the Hellyer Campus of the Tasmanian Academy and the Tasmanian Polytechnic. The survey showed 'a clear bias by employers for Academy students', with a much higher percentage of Academy students engaged in paid part-time work than in the Polytechnic, despite the observation that 'many Polytechnic students would be in work rather than education if they could obtain it.'¹⁹
- 7.19 The survey also found that Polytechnic students are more likely to be independent and working to pay for rent and living costs than Academy students, who are more likely to be working for discretionary spending. Ms Kathy Cameron from the Tasmanian Academy stated:
- ...there are a lot of polytechnic students who would like part-time work and would see that as a pathway into full-time work. But they miss out on a lot of the jobs that are taken by Academy students. We have been aware of that anecdotally for some time.²⁰
- 7.20 The difficulties that the more vulnerable students face with regards to accessing paid part-time work opportunities were also noted by Ms Julie Harcourt from the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, who stated that young people at greatest risk of disengaging with their education:

17 NSW Commission for Children and Young People, *Submission no. 33.1*, p. 5.

18 Australian Council of Trade Unions, *Submission no. 21*, p. 8.

19 Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus), *Submission no. 58*, p. 3.

20 Ms Kathy Cameron, Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus), *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 April 2009, p. 27.

...are probably not even the prime employees of fast-food outlets, because you have to have certain skills, presentation and sociability.²¹

7.21 Stakeholders noted the lack of opportunities available to students in rural and remote communities with respect to participation in part-time or casual work – including through school-managed and/or local employment programs – compared to their counterparts in metropolitan areas.²² Mrs Lesley Tobin from the Dusseldorp Skills Forum noted, for example, that:

...the young people in our schools who probably most need access to part-time employment opportunities are not the ones who are getting those employment opportunities.²³

7.22 Mrs Tobin also noted that the proportion of Indigenous young people in part-time employment is much lower than for non-Indigenous Australians.²⁴

7.23 Access to work opportunities for students, particularly those in rural and remote communities, can be significantly affected by a lack of transport options.²⁵

7.24 It was suggested that the lack of experienced staff in many schools in rural areas can affect the access to opportunities which arise through relationships developed with other schools, training providers and employers, often resulting in parents seeking out suitable placements on students' behalf.²⁶

7.25 The Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools Queensland suggested that one possible way of enhancing access to work opportunities for students in isolated communities is through the formation of relationships between metropolitan and rural/remote

21 Ms Julie Harcourt, Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2009, p. 11.

22 See, for example, Australian College of Educators, *Submission no. 29*, p. 1; Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, *Submission no. 40*, p. 4; Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools Queensland, *Submission no. 32*, p. 4; Careers Education Association Victoria, *Submission no. 52*, p. 2; Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA, *Submission no. 30*, p. 5.

23 Mrs Lesley Tobin, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 17.

24 Mrs Lesley Tobin, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 February 2009, p. 17.

25 See Ms Gillian Calvert, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2009, p. 3.

26 Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools Queensland, *Submission no. 32*, p. 4.

schools which facilitate short exchanges allowing remote students to experience 'real life' employment opportunities.²⁷

- 7.26 The Queensland Government advocated enhancing opportunities to combine school and work for Indigenous students through the provision of 'out of community' schooling through residential colleges:

"Out of community" schooling options include a matrix of low cost to high cost residential options ranging from share houses, dormitory accommodation, twin and single room accommodation and low to high cost student support ranging from minimal support to provision of house parents, case managers and tutorial support, i.e. from hostel to educational residential accommodation.²⁸

- 7.27 Various case studies indicated that the provision of mentoring programs which connect young students to their local community is a vital component of strategies to assist disadvantaged groups.²⁹ Dr Scott Phillips suggested that if mentors are linked to the part-time work and study arrangements of young people, it is more likely to result in successful transitions.³⁰

- 7.28 Mission Australia conducted a review of local initiatives aimed at enhancing the social and economic participation of young people and identified effective models for students at risk. According to Mission Australia:

...these models tend to be intensive, comprehensive and highly flexible but are generally local (rather than systemic) initiatives that rely heavily on philanthropic funding, often making them financially fragile and vulnerable to closure.³¹

- 7.29 The Australian College of Educators (ACE) acknowledged that the associated costs of local provision for disadvantaged students are 'hard to avoid', with students at risk of disengaging from education often requiring considerable assistance due to issues such as low literacy and numeracy and poor social and organisational skills.³² However ACE

27 Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools Queensland, *Submission no. 32*, p. 5.

28 Queensland Government, *Submission no. 41*, p. 10.

29 See, for example, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Submission no. 27*, p. 10, Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission no. 18*, p. 5. Also see case studies in this chapter on the Gwydir Learning Initiative and V Tracks.

30 Dr Scott Phillips, *Submission no. 11*, p. 2.

31 Mission Australia, *Submission no. 42*, p. 3.

32 Australian College of Educations, *Submission no. 49*, pp. 3-4.

suggested that supporting students to acquire education and employment skills outside their local communities 'has in fact led to long term fracturing of those communities.'³³

7.30 Ms Michelle Scott, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA also reinforced the need for the provision of local training in rural/remote communities where possible:

...a number of remote communities are looking to their students to take on key roles in their towns such as rangers and lifesavers. In these areas, sustainability is paramount. On a recent trip I undertook to a remote community, the new local swimming pool was closed due to a lack of suitably qualified staff. In these circumstances, offering local training would be better placed to ensure sustainability and improved outcomes for children and young people.³⁴

7.31 The following case studies offer examples of two initiatives which target disadvantaged students through community-based approaches.

Figure 7.1 Case study: V Tracks

Case Study: *V Tracks*: an early intervention program for Aboriginal secondary students on the NSW North Coast

V Tracks is a program developed by the North Coast Aboriginal Learning Partnerships (NCALP) team at North Coast Institute in NSW which seeks to provide Aboriginal students with opportunities to participate in combinations of: TAFE-based delivery; school based planning, delivery and reflections; work placement and cultural mentoring.

The program aims to minimise disengagement from education, training and work for Aboriginal students and to support the career choices of students through collaborative partnerships between TAFE and schools, and between these sectors and Industry and Aboriginal community organisations. Through TAFE taster programs and school-based vocational learning, students are provided with 'opportunities to taste, think about, choose and plan school and vocational pathways whilst exploring individual, workplace, educational and cultural values.'

33 Australian College of Educations, *Submission no. 49*, p. 4.

34 Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, *Submission no. 40*, p. 4.

In its first year (2008), V Tracks provided vocational learning opportunities to over 700 Aboriginal school students on the North Coast of NSW. An evaluation of the program sponsored by the National Centre for Vocational Educational Research identified positive outcomes of the program for learners which included:

- Greater insight into education, training and employment pathways including future: study options at school; study options at TAFE; career and job options; and skills needed for work.
- Improved attendance and engagement in school including increased appreciation of: school programs and their relevance to further education, training and employment; the importance of completing the NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC); their relationships with school staff.
- Increased self-esteem and confidence in: gaining new skills; recognising their abilities and interests; seeing a 'future pathway'; and taking on part or full time work.³⁵

North Coast TAFE/NCALP acknowledged that while V Tracks had 'demonstrated significant success' in its first year, there were opportunities to build on this success and further expand the program.

Figure 7.2 Case study: Gwydir Learning Region initiative

Case study: Gwydir Learning Region Initiative

The Gwydir Learning Region (GLR) initiative was presented as an example of what can be achieved in a socially disadvantaged rural area 'through a collaborative partnership of stakeholders from education, local council, business and the local community', who are committed to achieving positive outcomes for each individual student.³⁶

The GLR initiative is the Gwydir Shire Council's 'policy response to the general lack of educational achievement within the Shire and the need to up-skill our population in order to provide, as far as possible, a skilled workforce to meet the employment market demands that exist.'³⁷

The GLR's key mission is to coordinate all learning in the region to ensure educational needs are met which will foster community capacity building and regeneration into a sustainable geographical region in northern NSW.

35 North Coast TAFE, North Coast Aboriginal Learning Partnerships, *Submission no. 57*, p. 11.

36 Gwydir Learning Region, *Submission no. 48*, Attachment B, p. 3.

37 Gwydir Learning Region, *Submission no. 48*, p. 2.

A feature of the GLR initiative is its commitment to developing individual learning programs for every student as a pathway to successful transition into further education or work.

The GLR provides an environment where nearly all students in Years 11 and 12 are individually case managed, and there is a strong emphasis on mentoring and support. As a majority of the students do not immediately progress onto university studies the focus becomes a vocational education pathway.

The GLR advised that of the 184 students who emerged from Year 12 between 2002 and 2006, 22% went on to university, 29% to further training, and 37% to a job, a total success rate of 88%. During the same period, 92% of the 38 mature aged students gained employment (68%) or went on to further education (24%).³⁸

In its submission, the GLR stated that 'the model developed within the GLR with the close involvement of local government should be encouraged within rural areas across Australia to ensure that the available resources are firmly focussed on achieving the best possible outcome for each student and the broader community.'³⁹

Young carers

7.32 Young carers were identified as an 'at risk' group who often slip 'under the radar'. Carers Australia presented the following statistics to demonstrate that young primary carers are at much greater risk than the general youth population of not making successful transitions:

- only 4 per cent of primary carers between the ages of 15-25 years are still in education compared to 23 per cent of the general population in that age group.
- 60 per cent of young primary carers aged 15-25 are unemployed or not in the paid workforce compared to 38 per cent of the general population of the same age group.⁴⁰

7.33 The Australian Government's *Young Carers Respite and Information Services Program* targets young carers (up to 25 years old). The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs' website explains that the program:

- provides support to young carers who are at risk of not completing secondary education or vocational equivalent due to the demands of their caring role;

38 Gwydir Learning Region, *Submission no. 48, Attachment A*, p. 9.

39 Gwydir Learning Region, *Submission no. 48*, p. 6.

40 Carers Australia, *Young Carers Research Project – Background Papers*, 2001, Canberra.

- assists young carers to better manage their educational and caring responsibilities;
 - enables young carers to access age appropriate support and respite services to undertake activities such as studying for exams, to attend education, training or recreation; and
 - provides a range of information, advice and referral services, including referral to counselling, to support young carers in managing the challenges they face as part of their caring role.⁴¹
- 7.34 DEEWR noted that the program was allocated \$7.6 million in funding to provide assistance to 3,100 young carers in 2008-09, having provided assistance for 2,500 young carers in 2007-08.⁴² \$7.7 million has been allocated for 2009-10. Carers Australia argued that the program is 'seriously under-funded and (does) not meet the needs of all young carers.'⁴³
- 7.35 In April 2009, the House of Representative Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth tabled a report on its inquiry into better support for carers. The report made a number of recommendations which sought to improve the situation for young carers. Recommendation 44, for example, called for the development of flexible policies to make it easier for students to combine education with caring.⁴⁴
- 7.36 The report also noted that certain aspects of the carer income support system may compromise the capacity for young carers to participate in education. The Family, Community, Housing and Youth Committee recommended that restrictions on the number of hours that those on Carer Payment can work, volunteer or study should be eased.⁴⁵ Recommendations which assist young carers to combine school with their caring role are supported by the committee. The Government is currently preparing its response to the report.

41 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Young Carers Respite and Information Services, <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/carers/progserv/Documents/Young_Carers.pdf>, accessed 21 September 2009.

42 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 21.

43 Carers Australia, *Submission no. 45*, p. 9.

44 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth, *Who cares? Report on the inquiry into better support for carers*, April 2009, Canberra. P. 230.

45 See Recommendation 43, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth, *Who cares? Report on the inquiry into better support for carers*, April 2009, Canberra. P. 226.

Students working out of financial necessity

7.37 Not all students undertake part-time work as a source of discretionary income for technological commodities, socialising or maintaining a car. A significant proportion of students, estimated to be around 10 per cent, are working to meet personal living expenses, pay for their education or to supplement the family income.⁴⁶

7.38 The incidence of students working out of economic necessity was reflected in evidence from McCarthy Catholic College, which stated:

It is true that for many families it is a necessity for their school aged children to work part time, or at least to relieve some of the financial burden of supplying discretionary funding to their offspring. We do have a minority of students living out of home and attempting to obtain their HSC or School Certificate qualifications who are also working, some for considerable hours per week.⁴⁷

7.39 Some respondents to the committee's student survey also indicated that their part-time work was borne out of economic circumstances and despite its impact upon their study, did not feel that quitting their job was an option:

I am the main earner in my family because most of my mother's [salary] goes on rent and bills. I buy food and pay board every fortnight, to support my family. Without me doing a traineeship or having a job we would go hungry.

– Caitlyn (Qld), 9-12 hrs per week.

I feel that having a part time job is disadvantaging my HSC due to the amount of hours I study or have time and energy to study. I have no choice but to take up a part time job, given that I do not receive any payments from Centrelink nor my family. I have to pay board weekly, which has left me with no choice but to get a part time job... Centrelink's policies are not right, where if the child is under the age of 18 they are not to receive any payments if their parents earn over \$60 000 a year which is not fair. I don't see my parents nor live with them and I'm struggling to study, pay school fees and manage my doctor bills if I become sick or unwell and find time to complete school work to my full potential due to

46 L. Robinson, *School students and part-time work*, LSAY Research Report no. 2, ACER, Melbourne, 1996, p. v.

47 McCarthy Catholic College, *Submission no. 51*, p. 1.

the amount of hours I have to work.

– Emma (NSW), 15-20 hrs per week.

- 7.40 Some individuals stated that they lived independently, but did not have direct access to government income support, and therefore paid employment constituted an essential source of income. A former student from Adelaide explained how she had moved out of home at a young age and was supporting herself financially through two jobs while still at school. When questioned as to whether she was eligible for Youth Allowance, she responded:

No, I was not, because I think my mum was earning too much, but I did not understand it as a child because I was out fighting against the odds trying to keep my head above water. My mum was not supporting me, and neither was my father. They would not help me out in any way, so I had to go out and work for that to keep surviving. That is one thing I did find difficult. I was out there trying my hardest to keep my head above water, and I had no help.⁴⁸

- 7.41 A consistent theme in submissions was that young people's participation in secondary schooling should not be dependent on the income derived from their part-time work. The Australian Education Union, for example, stated:

The key rationale that should inform policy related to youth transitions, pathways and education overall, should be to create a society where all young people receive the opportunity and support to achieve satisfying and full adult lives, socially, culturally and economically. Fundamental to this is the principle that all young people have the right to access a complete secondary education and its equivalent in training or employment...When students miss out on educational opportunities, or have their level of achievement affected because they are forced to work for economic reasons or reasons related to their social background it negates this principle.⁴⁹

- 7.42 Yet there was evidence from some students who were devoting in excess of 60 hours a week in total between attendance at school and their part-time jobs – before taking into account time spent doing homework or further study. While these may be isolated cases, such arrangements are clearly unsustainable and should not have to be faced by any student.

48 Nikita, former student, Para Hills High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 April 2009, p. 56.

49 Australian Education Union, *Submission no. 24*, p. 3.

- 7.43 DEEWR acknowledged that where a student moves out of the care and control of the parent, it is not appropriate that the parent continue to receive income support benefits. However, 'how that information comes to Centrelink's attention is really an issue.'⁵⁰ Ms Robyn Shannon from DEEWR's Income Support Policy Branch, added:

The parent actually has a requirement under law to notify of a change of circumstances, so there is actually an onus on the parent to report that within 14 days. But I guess the reality is that that kind of investigation into a change of circumstances within that family is usually triggered by the young person going into Centrelink to seek financial support in their own right.

...Generally, youth allowance is not payable to young people under the age of 16. It can be paid to some 15-year-olds if they are independent and generally have reached the school-leaving age in their state or territory... There is policy tension between making youth allowance widely available to young people as independents at a very early age and the concern that this may potentially create more pressure around family break-up. Usually what happens in those circumstances is that, because it is an 'unable to live at home' assessment, a Centrelink social worker will be involved. In those circumstances, one would hope that the social worker would not only be trying to give advice about financial support that the young person might be able to receive but also be trying to use their local networks to connect that young person into other appropriate programs. In that sense, it is actually a professional contact that occurs with the young person.⁵¹

- 7.44 The Queensland Catholic Education Commission suggested that students reliant on income from their part-time jobs to support themselves need special care and mentoring if they are to complete their schooling.⁵²

Supporting engagement, attainment and successful transitions for students at risk

- 7.45 The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) noted that social disadvantage promotes lower rates of attainment for some groups of
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50 Ms Robyn Shannon, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 14 May 2009, p. 5.

51 Ms Robyn Shannon, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 14 May 2009, p. 5.

52 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission no. 18*, p. 4.

young Australians. Drawing on data from the its 2008 *How Young People Are Faring* (HYPAF) report, FYA stated that:

Broadly, indigenous students and students from rural and remote regions, and low socio economic status regions and households are less likely to complete Year 12 and enter post school education and are more likely to face unemployment and patterns of contingent employment.

Table 7.1 Proportions of 19 and 24 year-olds who have completed Year 12 or equivalent, by selected background characteristics

	19 year-olds	24 year-olds
	%	%
SEX		
Male	66.3	72.6
Female	76.2	78.4
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS		
Low	58.3	64.4
Lower middle	66.9	70.0
Upper middle	73.8	75.9
High	84.4	86.2
ACHIEVEMENT AT YEAR 9		
Low	51.5	57.4
Lower middle	67.9	71.7
Upper middle	78.7	83.8
High	90.1	92.7
LOCATION		
Urban	73.0	75.5
Rural	65.7	70.0
Remote	67.6	69.8

Source: Foundation for Young Australians, *How Young People are Faring 2008*, p. 32.

7.46 FYA suggested that HYPAF data indicated where efforts would need to be made if COAG targets for Year 12 or equivalent retention are to be realised. For example, the report found that:

- teenagers living in areas of high socio-economic status are twice as likely to be in full time education compared with those living in areas of social disadvantage; and

- almost every second 19 year old who lives in a major city is engaged in full-time education, compared with less than one in five in regional areas and barely one in 20 in remote areas.⁵³

7.47 FYA suggested that ‘the patterns and balance of private and public investment in schooling over the past decade have not been directed at these locations and these groups.’⁵⁴ Although FYA did acknowledge that governments are subject to sets of constraints in responding to transition needs of young Australians – including ‘financial and logistical restraints and the capacity for some initiatives to generate high levels of contestation.’⁵⁵

Australian Government initiatives

7.48 DEEWR provided examples of two initiatives, through Career Advice Australia, by which the Australian Government provides support for young people who have disconnected, or are at risk of disconnecting from their education:

- *Youth Pathways* is an early intervention program which offers personalised support to over 25,000 participants each year to help young people at risk of disengaging with their education to attain Year 12 or equivalent qualifications and make a successful transition through to further education, training or work. DEEWR reported that:

In 2007, approximately 90 per cent of Youth Pathways participants for whom a known outcome was recorded at the end of their participation, were engaged in some form of productive activity, such as education, training or work.⁵⁶

- *Connections* targets early school-leavers and provides them with another chance at learning through flexible accredited education and training options delivered in supportive community settings for approximately 3,000 young people each year. Preliminary analysis of 2008 Connections participant data suggests approximately 70 per cent of participants achieved desired program outcomes.⁵⁷

53 Foundation for Young Australians (2008) *Major research shows one in five young Australians are not engaged in either full-time learning or earning*, media release, 15 October 2008. Available online at: <<http://www.fya.org.au/media/15-october-2008-how-young-people-are-faring-report-2008/>>.

54 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, p. 31.

55 Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission no. 26*, pp. 41-42.

56 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 21.

57 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission no. 53*, p. 21.

7.49 It should be noted that these initiatives are among a range of youth, career and transition programs currently funded by the Australian Government which are set to be consolidated under new program arrangements after 2009 following COAG's National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions agreement.⁵⁸ Existing programs are to be restructured into targeted programs to be developed in consultation with the states and territories. Two new elements which target students at risk of disengaging include School Business Community Partnership Brokers and Youth Connections:

School Business Community Partnership Brokers will broker partnerships and improve community and business engagement with schools. This program will assist schools to extend learning beyond the classroom, increase student engagement, lift attainment and improve educational outcomes.

Youth Connections will provide an improved safety net for young people who have disconnected from education or their community, or are at risk of disengaging. It will be flexible, offering a combination of case-managed support as well as linkages with wider community activities to help young people to re-connect with education or training and build resilience, skills and attributes that promote positive choices and wellbeing.

Committee comment

7.50 Disadvantaged students can face an increased risk of disengaging with their education where they are denied access to opportunities to develop skills through formal and informal work placements.

7.51 Evidence suggests that opportunities to access paid part-time work tend to be greater for higher socio-economic status students. These students are generally seen by employers as a more attractive prospect in terms of presentation, self-confidence, and so on, while those who would arguably obtain the most benefit from paid work opportunities are finding access difficult.

58 Further details about changes to the Government's Youth, Career and Transitions programs are available from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' website at: <<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/Home.aspx>>.

- 7.52 While some barriers are faced by disadvantaged people with respect to accessing work opportunities, the inquiry was presented a diverse range of programs, pilot sites and flexible schooling models where local and community-based approaches focused on building and maintaining collaborative links between schools, parents, business and communities are well-established. Some of these programs have been presented in this and the previous chapter.
- 7.53 Local strategies which give disadvantaged students exposure to work opportunities while being responsive to the needs of the community can be effective in helping young people to remain engaged in their learning. Local, community-based approaches were widely considered to be the most effective for developing pathways for disadvantaged students.
- 7.54 While there are a wide variety of local programs in place to cater to the needs of disadvantaged students, whose needs can vary from community to community, the costs of maintaining these programs can be significant.
- 7.55 Frustratingly, there appears to be a lack of information available about outcomes achieved from many of these programs targeting disadvantaged students. Further evaluation of the aspects of these programs that provide positive outcomes for young people who are disadvantaged is needed. Ongoing review and evaluation of programs would highlight elements of successful strategies which could potentially be replicated or adapted to local conditions and implemented at a national level.

Recommendation 12

- 7.56 **That the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, encourage evaluation and reporting on outcomes from local programs targeting disadvantaged students with a view to highlighting positive aspects of programs which could potentially be replicated.**
- 7.57 Some of the scenarios which were presented in evidence about students working excessively long hours to support their living arrangements also reinforced the need for mechanisms to better inform students about potential ways in which they could gain support. Feedback from students via public forums and responses to the committee's student survey suggested that students are misinformed about their eligibility for benefits

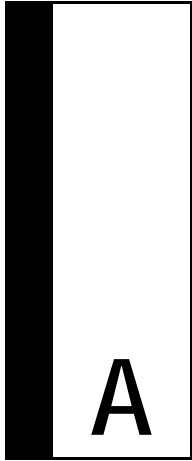
or other entitlements, who payments are made to and for what purposes. While Centrelink has a comprehensive repository of information available online, students' lack of awareness of the options available to them indicate that more could be done to convey information to students to help them to understand and navigate access to government income support benefits and services. This is particularly important for those secondary students who may be living independently.

Recommendation 13

- 7.58 **That the Australian Government increase the provision of promotional material and information in secondary schools regarding access to government income support benefits and services for students.**

Sharon Bird MP
Chair

22 October 2009



Appendix A – List of submissions

- 1 Ms Kerrie Parkinson
- 2 Mr Robert Penglaze
- 3 Parents and Friends Federation of Western Australia Inc.
- 4 National Centre for Vocational Education Research
- 5 Catholic Education Commission NSW
- 6 Mr Ian Palmer
- 7 Great Southern TAFE
- 8 Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association
- 9 Professor Erica Smith
- 9.1 Professor Erica Smith SUPPLEMENTARY (to Submission No. 9)
- 10 Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council Inc.
- 11 Dr Scott Phillips
- 12 Brotherhood of St Laurence
- 13 Australian National Schools Network
- 14 Service Skills Australia
- 15 Glenelg and Southern Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc.
- 16 Australian Council for Private Education and Training
- 17 Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network (BGK LLEN)
- 18 Queensland Catholic Education Commission

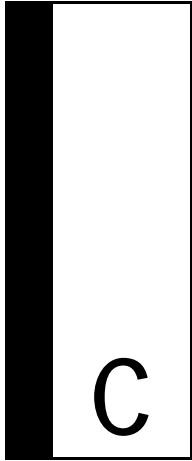
- 19 Woolworths Limited
- 20 Hon Dr Bob Such
- 21 Australian Council of Trade Unions
- 22 NSW Teachers Federation
- 23 South East Local Learning and Employment Network Inc.
- 24 Australian Education Union
- 25 Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce
- 26 Foundation for Young Australians
- 27 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- 28 Ms Helen Mower
- 29 TAFE Directors Australia
- 30 Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia
- 31 Australian Technical College – Adelaide South
- 32 The Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools Queensland
- 33 The Commission for Children and Young People NSW
- 33.1 The Commission for Children and Young People NSW SUPPLEMENTARY (to Submission No. 33)
- 34 VETnetwork Australia
- 35 Tasmanian Government
- 36 Central TAFE (Perth Campus)
- 37 Australian Industry Group
- 38 Western Australian Department of Education and Training
- 39 Dr Katherine Hodgetts and Professor Marie Brennan PhD
- 40 Commission for Children and Young People WA
- 41 Queensland Government
- 42 Mission Australia
- 43 Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network / Peninsula Local Community Partnership

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- 44 Career Industry Council of Australia
 - 45 Carers Australia
 - 46 The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian
 - 47 Victorian TAFE Association
 - 48 Gwydir Learning Region
 - 49 Australian College of Educators
 - 50 The Smith Family
 - 51 McCarthy Catholic College
 - 52 Career Education Association Victoria
 - 53 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
 - 53.1 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations SUPPLEMENTARY (to Submission No. 53)
 - 54 Australian Technical College – Sunshine
 - 55 Bendigo Senior Secondary College
 - 56 Gundagai High School
 - 57 North Coast TAFE, North Coast Aboriginal Learning Partnerships (NCALP)
 - 58 Tasmanian Academy
 - 59 Transport Workers’ Union



Appendix B – List of exhibits

- 1 Commission for Children and Young People WA
Making the working world work better for kids
(Related to Submission No. 40)
- 2 Mission Australia
Working for Renewal
(Related to Submission No. 42)
- 3 Mission Australia
National Survey of Young Australians 2008
(Related to Submission No. 42)
- 4 Nhulunbuy High School
- 5 Mr Adrian Egginton
School Performance and Flexible Timetabling in WA
- 6 The Commission for Children and Young People NSW
Ask The Children: I Want To Work
- 7 The Commission for Children and Young People NSW
Ask The Children: Children Speak About Being At School
- 8 Committee's student survey responses
Responses from 2,765 secondary students.



Appendix C – List of witnesses

Monday, 2 February 2009 - Canberra

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Mr Stephen Bolton, National Manager, Education and Training Advisors

Ms Mary Hicks, Director, Employment Education and Training

Australian College of Educators

Mrs Geraldine McNulty, Program Manager

Ms Cheryl O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer

Australian Council for Education Research

Dr Phillip McKenzie, Research Director, Transitions and Post-School
Education and Training

Australian Council for Private Education and Training

Mrs Rosemary Potter, National Manager, Policy and Research

Australian Council of State School Organisations

Mr Mark O'Neill, Vice President

Australian Council of Trade Unions

Ms Michelle Bissett, Senior Industrial Officer

Australian Education Union

Ms Sally Edsall, Research Officer, NSW Teachers Federation

Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Federal President

Australian National Schools Network

Ms Susan French, Board Chair

Mr Graeham Kennedy

Professor Margaret Vickers, Board member

Australian Secondary Principals Association Inc.

Mr Brian Burgess, Executive Member (State President)

Business Council of Australia

Mr Patrick Coleman, Director, Policy

Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia

Ms Tanya Rogers, Curriculum Director, Learning and Work

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria

Mr Edmund Misson, General Manager, Youth Transitions Division

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Ms Rebecca Cross, Group Manager, Schooling and COAG, Lifting Educational Outcomes Group

Ms Renae Houston, Director, Youth Transitions Policy Section, Careers and Transitions Branch, Lifting Educational Outcomes Group

Mr Malcolm Greening, Branch Manager, Economic, Labour Market and Education Analysis Branch, Research Analysis and Evaluation Group

Ms Louise McDonough, Branch Manager

Mr Mark Roddam, Branch Manager

Ms Robyn Shannon, Branch Manager, Participation Policy Families, Social Inclusion and Participation Group

Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Queensland

Ms Judi Buckley, Senior Phase Project Manager

Mr Tom Robertson, Executive Director (Schools), Brisbane North District

Department of Education and Training, ACT

Mr Tim McNevin, Manager, Transitions, Careers and Vocational Learning

Ms Melanie Ryder, Careers and Transitions Officer

Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory

Ms Lesley Bannan, Manager, School to Work Programs, Teaching, Learning and Standards Division

Department of Education and Training, NSW

Mr Desmond Gorman, A/g General Manager, Learning and Development
Mr Michael Hyam, Director, Vocational Education and Training

Dusseldorp Skills Forum

Ms Oona Nielssen, Executive Director
Mrs Lesley Tobin, Project Manager

Foundation for Young Australians

Professor Jack Keating, Associate Director, Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning, University of Melbourne
Dr Lucas Walsh, Director of Research

Group Training Australia

Mr James Barron, Chief Executive Officer

Independent Schools Council of Australia

Ms Valerie Gould, Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia

Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union

Mr Troy Burton, Assistant National Secretary

National Catholic Education Commission

Dr Bill Griffiths, Chief Executive Officer

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Ms Alison Anlezark, Manager, LSAY Branch
Ms Francesca Beddie, Manager, Research Management

Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association

Mr Ian Blandthorn, National Assistant Secretary

Skills Australia

Mr Philip Bullock, Chair

Mr Peter Glynn, Secretariat

TAFE Directors Australia

Ms Kaye O'Hara, TDA Secretariat

Tasmanian Polytechnic

Ms Jules Carroll, Director, Learning and Teaching

University of South Australia

Dr Katherine Hodgetts, Research Fellow

VETnetwork Australia

Mr Mike Frost, Vice Chair

Thursday, 12 March 2009 - Canberra**TAFE Directors Australia**

Mr Andrew Adamson, Associate Director, Centre for Youth, Employment Services and Educational Development, Holmesglen

Ms Jules Carroll, Director, Learning and Teaching, Tasmanian Polytechnic

Mrs Diane Craven, Member

Ms Kaye O'Hara, Member

Tuesday, 7 April 2009 - Adelaide**Individuals**

Professor Marie Brennan

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Ms Alison Anlezark, Manager, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth

Ms Francesca Beddie, Acting General Manager, Research

Para Hills High School

Mr Con Apostolopoulos, Assistant Principal/VET/Senior School

Ms Helen Bruce, Coordinator

Mr Craig Kennedy, Coordinator Counsellor

Ms Filomena Mercurio, Assistant Principal

Ms Janette Scott, Principal

Mrs Annemarie Webber, School Services Officer

Student/parent forum participants

Bob, parent

Bradley, student, Para Hills High School

Cade, student, Para Hills High School

Chandal, former student

David, student, Smithfield Plains High School

Dianne, parent

Eleanor, student, Smithfield Plains High School

Elizabeth, student, Smithfield Plains High School

Emma, student, Craigmore High School

Garreth, student, Paralowie R-12 School

James, student, Salisbury High School

Jonathon, student, Craigmore High School

Joshua, student, Paralowie R-12 School

Lea, parent

Nicholas, student, Paralowie R-12 School

Nikita, former student

Nikola, student, Para Hills High School

Owen, student, Craigmore High School

Rebecca, student, Smithfield Plains High School

Renee, student, Salisbury High School

Stephanie, student, Salisbury High School

Tamara, student, Para Hills High School

Thuy, student, Paralowie R-12 School

Wednesday, 8 April 2009 - Perth

Individuals

Mrs Jo-Anne Fletcher

Mrs Marie Hill

Mr Christopher Purdy

Mrs Joanne Purdy

Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA

Miss Sarah Djulbic, Business Development Assistant

Ms Anne Griffiths, Policy Adviser, Education and Training

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

Ms Louise Atherton, Senior Policy Officer

Ms Helen Shurven, Manager, Legal, Policy and Research

Hungry Jack's Pty Limited

Ms Suzana Ioannidis, WA & NT Traineeship Manager

Leeming Senior High School

Mr Rod Guthrie, Deputy Principal

Mr Ross Morcombe, Principal

Mrs Elaine Murray, Executive Officer, Parents and Citizens Committee

Mrs Carolyn Pobjoy, Business Manager

Mrs Deborah Richardson, President, Parents and Citizens Committee

Ms Judith Semple, Deputy Principal

Mr Ian States, Deputy Principal

Mr Steve Wright, VET Coordinator

Parents and Friends Federation of Western Australia Inc.

Mr Laurie Eastwood, Secretary and Executive Director

Department of Education and Training, WA

Mr Peter Jones, Program Manager

Ms Shirley Parer, Principal Consultant, Secondary Directorate

Student forum participants

Alex, student

Ben, student

Brianna, student

Chris, student

Claudia, student

Emily, student

Gerard, student

Hannah, student

Jackson, student

Lachlan, student

Laura, student

Lauren, student

Luke, student

Marnie, student

Michelle, student

Rachel, student

Sanja, student

Tara, student

Tuesday, 21 April 2009 - Burnie**Burnie Chamber of Commerce**

Mr Alan Berechree, Vice President

Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus)

Mr Jeffrey Beddows, Careers Adviser/Teacher

Dr Mark Briggs, Board Research Officer/Teacher

Mrs Kathy Cameron, Principal

Student forum participants**Latrobe High School**

Ms Jennifer Jago, Pathways Planning Officer

Anna, student

Jacob, student

Sam, student

Penguin High School

Ms Andrea Harding, Teacher

Georgie, student

Jeremy, student

Megan, student

Reece High School

Mr Timothy Wilson, Grade 10 Coordinator

Belinda, student

Carlie, student

Trent, student

Tasmanian Academy (Hellyer Campus)

Brett, student

Heath, student

Jessica, student

Keith, student

Lauren, student

Luke, student

Melissa, student

Wednesday, 22 April 2009 - Melbourne**Bayside City Council**

Ms Elisabeth Brough, Youth Planning and Development Officer

Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network

Ms Helen Cridland, Executive Officer

**Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network/
Beaumaris Bay Group**

Mr Antony Falkingham

Chisholm Institute

Ms Cathy Nelson, Schools Program Coordinator, Community Networks
and Apprenticeship Liaison

Ms Suzanne Wells, Unit Coordinator - Community Networks and
Apprenticeship Liaison

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria
(Southern Metropolitan Regional Office)**

Mrs Theresa Paxino, Program Planning and Development Officer – Later
Years

Foundation for Young Australians

Dr Lucas Walsh, Director of Research

Holmesglen Vocational College

Mr Andrew Adamson, Associate Director, Centre for Youth, Employment
Services and Educational Development

Ms Lisa Ellis, Counsellor

Ms Jan Lambert, Principal

Ms Trudy McNally, Manager, Youth Sector Relationships

Mrs Lilly Smolenskaya, Coordinator

Sandringham College

Ms Jennifer Marks, VET Manager

Southern Suburbs Group Training

Mr David Edgar, Chief Executive Officer

Youth Connect

Mr Danny Schwarz, Chief Executive Officer

Student forum participants**Cheltenham Secondary College**

Alexandra, student

Angelo, student

Yasemin, student

Parkdale Secondary College

Amy, student

Lena, student

Maddie, student

Renaë, student

Rikaya, student

Theodore, student

Sandringham College

Alex, student

Ashley, student

Courtney, student

Daniel A, student

Daniel R, student

Jessica, student

Megan, student

Olivia, student

Holmesglen Vocational College

Torby, TAFE student

Wednesday, 29 April 2009 - Brisbane**Craigslea State High School**

Mr Andrew Blight, Head of Department, Middle and Senior Schooling

Ms Lisa Cameron, Guidance Officer

Mr John Greedy, Head, Special Education

Mrs Gail Hay, Vocational Education Coordinator

Mrs Catherine Kraatz, Member, Parents and Citizens' Association

Ms Genevieve Milne, Teacher

Mrs Sharon Pickering-Smith, Member, Parents and Citizens' Association

Ethan, President, Student Representative Council

Amelia, student

Leah, student

Luke, student

Monica, student

Stephanie, student

Department of Education and Training, Queensland

Ms Sharon Mullins, A/g Executive Director, School Innovation

Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Mrs Mandy Anderson, Executive Officer Education

Ms Theresa Creagh, Assistant Director Education

Mr John Percy, Executive Officer Education

**The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian,
Queensland**

Ms Susan Dwyer, Senior Policy Officer, Strategic Policy and Research Program

Ms Vicki Hall, Manager, Strategic Policy and Research Program

Ms Julie Harcourt, Director, Strategic Policy and Research Program

**The Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools
Queensland**

Mr Paul Dickie, Executive Officer

Mrs Carmel Nash, Assistant Executive Officer

Student forum participants

Australian Technical College, North Brisbane

Mr David McDonald, Cabinet Making and Teacher Training

Adam, student

Mitchell, student

Tomas, student

Grace Lutheran College

Ms Judith Niebling, Year 12 Coordinator

Hannah, student

Maddison, student

Matthew, student

Paige, student

Southern Cross Catholic College

Mr Stephen Tilley, Year 12 Coordinator

Ashlee, student

Lincoln, student

Nick, student

Zuzanna, student

Thursday, 30 April 2009 - Port Kembla

Catholic Education Commission NSW

Mrs Cynthia McCammon, Professional Officer, Pastoral Care and Personal
Growth

Mr Paul Rodney, State Coordinator, Vocational Education and Training

Ms Patricia Strauss, Senior Project Officer, Vocational Education and Training

Illawarra Business Chamber

Mr Gregory Fisher, Chief Executive Officer

Illawarra Senior College

Mr Robert Cheadle, Deputy Principal

Mr Dennis Fogarty, Head Teacher of English

Mrs Patricia House, Class Teacher and Year 11 Co-ordinator

Ms Lynne Lear, District Guidance Officer

Mr Mark Webster, Principal

NSW Teachers Federation

Ms Nicole Calnan, Organiser

Ms Sally Edsall, Research Officer

Regional Development Australia, Illawarra

Mr John Grace, Executive Officer

The Commission for Children and Young People NSW

Ms Gillian Calvert, Commissioner

Workplace Learning Illawarra

Mr Gerard McLean, Manager

Student forum participants

Smith's Hill High School

Caterina, student

James L, student

Stephanie, student

Warrawong High School

Andrew, student

Ivana, student

Edmund Rice College

Jaison, student

James C, student

Cristian, student

Riste, student

St Mary Star of the Sea College

Brittany, student

Isabella, student

Janaya, student

Katherine, student

St Joseph's Catholic High School

Ben, student

Bianca, student

Erin, student

Mah, student

Steve, student

Albion Park High School

Ms Cheryl Burling, Careers Adviser

Illawarra Senior College

Adam, student

Alex, student

Allison G, student

Helen A, student

Jessica, student

Kye, student

Lauren B, student

Madeleine, student

Michelle, student

Stacey, student

Trisha, student

Illawarra Sports High School

Dr Peter Bailey, Principal

Alysha, student

Renee, student

Thomas, student

Woonona High School

Mrs Karen Peetz

Ammy, student

Elissa, student

Lauren P, student

Tahleea, student

Thursday, 14 May 2009 - Canberra**Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations**

Ms Renae Houston, Director, Youth Transitions Policy Section, Careers and Transitions Branch, Lifting Educational Outcomes Group

Ms Wendy Macpherson, Director, Youth and Transitions Section, Labour Market and Education Analysis Branch

Ms Louise McDonough, Branch Manager

Mr Mark Roddam, Branch Manager

Ms Robyn Shannon, Branch Manager, Income Support Policy Branch, Social Inclusion and Participation Group

Thursday, 4 June 2009 - Canberra**Ron Finemore Transport Pty Ltd**

Mr Ronald Finemore AO, Executive Chairman

Transport Training ACT

Mr Robert Waldron, Chief Executive Officer

Transport Workers Union

Mr Robert Hood, Delegate

Mr Anthony Sheldon, Federal Secretary

Thursday, 18 June 2009 - Canberra

New South Wales Teachers Federation

Ms Sally Edsall, Research Officer

Mr John Irving, General Secretary

Thursday, 25 June 2009 - Canberra

The Commission for Children and Young People NSW

Ms Gillian Calvert, Commissioner

Monday, 17 August 2009 - Canberra

Student Forum Participants

Canberra Girls' Grammar School

Ms Deanne Reynolds, Careers Adviser

Hacey, student

Hannah, student

Maxine, student

Vanessa, student

Canberra Institute of Technology, Bruce Campus

Ms Gillian Sinclair, Acting Education Manager

Andrew, student

Natasha, student

Stephen, student

Marist College Canberra

Mrs Janet Williamson, Careers Adviser/Vocational Education
Coordinator

Ethan, student

Tim S, student

Melba Copland Secondary School

Mr Michael Battenally, Principal

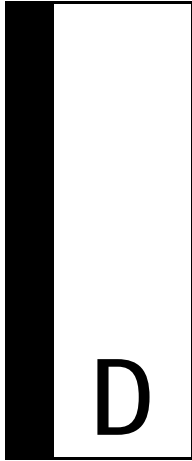
Fiona, student

Tim N, student

St Clare's College

Mrs Judy McDonald, VET Coordinator/Careers Adviser

Tabitha, student



Appendix D – Committee’s student survey



DEPARTMENT of the HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE on EDUCATION and TRAINING

YEARS 10 TO 12 SURVEY - BALANCING WORK AND STUDY

Inquiry into combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions

The Committee wants to find out about the experiences of Australian students in Years 10 to 12 in combining school with part-time or casual work. We are particularly interested in hearing your ideas about how schools and employers can help you to balance your study and work needs. The information you provide will assist the committee to prepare recommendations to help students succeed in their transition from school to the workforce.

While the Committee may use the information you provide via this survey, we will not identify individuals in any report or other publication without first notifying you. We ask that you provide us with your name, school and postcode so that we can get an idea of trends across the country. For more information about how we protect your privacy, please read our Privacy Statement on our website at www.aph.gov.au/privacy.htm or contact the Committee Secretariat at edt.reps@aph.gov.au.

Please send your completed survey to **Standing Committee on Education and Training, PO Box 6021, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600** or by **fax to (02) 6277 4773**. This survey can also be completed online at www.aph.gov.au/edt. The committee will continue to accept responses to its student survey until its final report has been prepared. For further information, please contact the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4573.

Part A : Personal Information

Please note: fields marked * are mandatory fields

First name:*	Last name:*
Email address:*	
School/TAFE:*	Postcode:* <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>

Part B: About your work and study

► **What type of work do you do (eg. retail, hospitality, child minding)?**

► **On average, how many hours of paid work do you do a week?** Please choose from the list below.

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 - 3 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 - 6 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 - 9 hours per week
<input type="checkbox"/> 9 - 12 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/> 12 - 15 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 - 20 hours per week
<input type="checkbox"/> 20 - 25 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 30 hours per week	<input type="checkbox"/> more than 30 hours per week

► **Do you intend to complete year 12?** Yes No

► **What opportunities do you hope to gain through completing year 12?**

Part C: Balancing work and study

▶ Does your work affect the amount of time you have to study? Yes No

If yes, please explain how.

▶ Do you think that your work experience will help you find a job when you leave school? Yes No

If yes, please explain how.

▶ Does your employer provide flexibility to help you meet study requirements, for instance, when assignments are due or at exam time?

Yes No

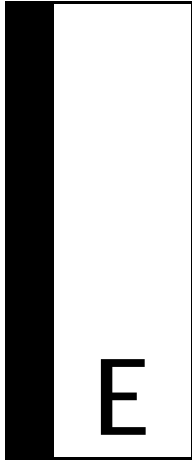
If you answered yes, can you give examples of how your employer provides this flexibility?

▶ Does your school provide any flexibility to enable you to work while meeting study requirements? Yes No

If you answered yes, can you give examples of how your school provides this flexibility?

▶ Is there anything that could be done to make combining work and school easier?

▶ Do you wish to make any other comments?



Appendix E – Role of Australian Commissioners for Children and Child Guardians

Role of Australian Commissioners for Children and Child Guardians



State/ Territory	Australian Capital Territory	New South Wales (NSW)	Northern Territory	Queensland	South Australia	Tasmania	Victoria	Western Australia (WA)
Name	ACT Children & Young People Commissioner	NSW Commission for Children and Young People	Children's Commissioner	Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian	Guardian for Children and Young People	Commissioner for Children Tasmania	Child Safety Commissioner Victoria	WA Commissioner for Children and Young People
Legislative base	<i>Human Rights Commission Act 2005</i> , and <i>Human Rights Act 2004</i>	<i>Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998</i>	<i>Care and Protection of Children Act 2007</i>	<i>Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000</i>	<i>Children's Protection Act 1993</i>	<i>Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997</i>	<i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i>	<i>Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006</i>
Independence	Reports to the Minister	Reports to Parliamentary Joint Committee	Reports to the Minister	Reports to a Parliamentary Joint Committee	Reports to the Minister	Reports to the Minister	Reports to the Minister	Reports to a Parliamentary Joint Committee
Reporting to Parliament	Required to table an annual report to Parliament Can table special reports to Parliament	Required to table an annual report to Parliament Can table special reports to Parliament	Required to table an annual report to Parliament Can table special reports to Parliament	Required to table an annual report to Parliament Can table special reports to Parliament	Required to table an annual report to Parliament Can table special reports to Parliament	Required to table an annual report to Parliament Can table special reports to Parliament	Required to table an annual report to Parliament Can table special reports to Parliament	Required to table an annual report to Parliament Can table special reports to Parliament
Appointment	The Commissioner is an independent statutory officer appointed by the Executive	The Commissioner is an independent statutory officer appointed by the NSW Governor	The Commissioner is an independent statutory officer appointed by the Administrator	The Commissioner/Guardian is an independent statutory officer appointed by the Queensland Governor	The Guardian is an independent officer appointed by the Governor of South Australia	The Commissioner is an independent statutory officer appointed by the Governor of Tasmania	The Commissioner is appointed by the Premier	The Commissioner is an independent statutory officer appointed by the Governor of Western Australia

State/ Territory	Australian Capital Territory	New South Wales (NSW)	Northern Territory	Queensland	South Australia	Tasmania	Victoria	Western Australia (WA)
Name	ACT Children & Young People Commissioner	NSW Commission for Children and Young People	Children's Commissioner	Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian	Guardian for Children and Young People	Commissioner for Children Tasmania	Child Safety Commissioner Victoria	WA Commissioner for Children and Young People
Grounds for dismissal and who can dismiss	The Commissioner may be removed from office by the Executive for contravening a law, misbehaviour, bankruptcy, or conviction of certain offences	The Commissioner may be removed from office by the Governor for misbehaviour, incapacity or incompetence	The Commissioner may be removed by resolution of Parliament on grounds of misbehaviour or incapacity or bankruptcy	The Commissioner/ Guardian may be removed from office for incapacity or misbehaviour as defined in the Act.	The Guardian may be removed from office by the Governor for neglect of duty, incapacity or any other sufficient reason. They must be removed if convicted of an indictable offence	The Commissioner may be removed from office by the Governor on the recommendation of the Minister for any sufficient reason	The Commissioner may be removed from office by the Premier	The Commissioner may be removed from office by the Governor for incapacity or inability to perform functions, misconduct or other reasons under the Act
Advisory Committees	May establish advisory committees pursuant to the <i>Human Rights Commission Act</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required to establish an Expert Advisory Committee Can establish other advisory committees – Young People's Reference Group established 	No	May establish youth, expert or other advisory committees under the Act	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and Young Persons Consultative Council Children and Young Persons Advisory Council 	May establish advisory committees	May establish advisory committees consisting of children and young people and may establish other advisory committees

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Name	ACT Children & Young People Commissioner	NSW Commission for Children and Young People	NSW Office for Children – the Children’s Guardian	Children’s Commissioner	Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian	Guardian for Children and Young People	Commissioner for Children Tasmania	Child Safety Commissioner Victoria	WA Commissioner for Children and Young People
Role	Mandate to promote and protect the rights and well-being of all Australian Capital Territory children and young people	Mandate to promote the well-being of all New South Wales children and young people	Mandate to promote the best interests of New South Wales children and young people in out-of-home care and accredit agencies providing out-of-home care	Mandate to promote the well-being of Northern Territory “protected and otherwise vulnerable” children and monitor key government decisions	Mandate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote and protect the rights, interests and well-being of all Queensland children and young people fulfill particular responsibilities for vulnerable children as defined in its Act systemically monitor and report on outcomes for children and young people in the child protection and juvenile justice systems 	Mandate to promote the well-being of South Australian children in out-of-home care	Mandate to promote the well-being of all Tasmanian children and young people	Broad mandate to promote the safety and well-being of all Victorian children and conduct inquiries as requested by the Minister.	Mandate to promote the well-being of all West Australian children and young people

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Functions: Advocacy	Broad advocacy functions through providing advice to Executive Government and non-government organisations	Broad advocacy functions through research, policy, community education and public awareness, special inquiries, releasing public reports and making recommendations to Parliament, Executive Government, non-government organisations and business corporations.	Contributes to the development of out-of-home care policy and legislation through providing advice to Executive Government and non Government organisations	Provides advice to Executive Government and broad education functions	Broad advocacy function for all children through research, complaints, policy advice, education and public reports to Parliament, Executive Government and non-government organisations. Specific advocacy function for children in alternative care, government, residential support facilities and juvenile detention through community visitor program	Broad advocacy for children and young people through policy, inquiries and advice to Executive Government. Limited individual advocacy role.	Broad advocacy provided through policy comment, research activity, community education and advice to the Minister	Broad advocacy functions through policy, research, monitoring, special inquiries, public awareness and recommendations to Executive Government and non-government organisations	
Functions: Complaints	Can investigate and decide on individual complaints	Cannot act on individual complaints Monitors trends in complaints	Cannot act on individual complaints Monitors the accreditation of out-of-home care	Can investigate individual complaints relating to “protected and otherwise vulnerable” children	Can investigate individual complaints Can investigate systemic concerns Can seek judicial review of decisions made by statutory child protection decision maker	Monitors systemic complaints	Can respond to individual complaints at the discretion of the Commissioner Monitors systemic complaints	Cannot act on individual complaints Monitors government agencies systems for dealing with complaints made by children and young people and trends in complaints received	

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Functions: Employment Screening	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages organisations to be child-safe and child-friendly Conducts and monitors employment screening for volunteers, students, paid staff and self employed in child-related employment 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires providers in regulated service environments to comply with risk management regulations Conducts and monitors employment screening for volunteers and paid staff in child-related employment Monitors and undertakes targeted audits of agency and individual compliance with legislation 	No	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually reviews the administration of the Victorian employment screening system Promotes the Victorian employment screening system 	Not yet proclaimed
Functions: Accreditation	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
		Administers the out-of-home care accreditation and quality improvement program and Adoption Service Providers (by delegation)						

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Functions: Child Death Review mechanisms	No	Chairs independent Child Death Review Team to identify trends and patterns in child deaths, maintains register of all child deaths of NSW children, conducts research and publishes statutory annual reports and special reports	Chairs the Review and Prevention Committee	Chairs independent committee to review deaths known to child protection system within 3 years prior to their death; maintains register of all deaths of Queensland children, conducts research and publishes statutory annual reports, promotes prevention activities	No	No	Conducts inquiries into the deaths of children known to the child protection system Reports findings to the independent Victorian Child Death Review Committee and Executive Government	No
Functions: Other				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts monthly visits to all children in care, detention and residential facilities funded by Queensland Government Surveys all children in state care, detention and residential facilities biennially and reports their views on safety, well-being and adequacy of support 	Monitors information sharing on individual children	Advocates for and visits the youth detention centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes out of home care services that encourage the participation of children Advises Executive Government on the performance of out of home care services At the request of the Minister can investigate and report on an out of home care service 	

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Children: Age	0–17 years	0–17 years	0–17 years	0–17 years	0–17 years	0–17 years	0–17 years	0–17 years	0–17 years
Children: Target Group	All children and young people	All children and young people	Children and young people in out of home care. Children and young people under 15 employed in entertainment, exhibition, still photography, door-to-door sales and under 16 in modeling	Protected and otherwise vulnerable children	All children and young people with particular focus given to children in out-of-home care and the juvenile justice system	Children and young people in out-of-home care	All children and young people with a particular focus given to vulnerable children, particularly those in the child protection or juvenile justice system	All children and young people with a particular focus on those who are most vulnerable	All children and young people with special regard for the interests and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and vulnerable or disadvantaged children and young people
Children: Population	75,481	1,569,177		56,539	973,140	341,895	114,503	1,152,362	481,840
Year established	2006	1998	1998	2008	1996	2006	2000	2005	2007
Commissioner/ Guardian	Alasdair Roy	Gaye Phillips	Kerryn Boland	Howard Bath	Elizabeth Fraser	Pam Simmons	Paul Mason	Bernie Geary	Michelle Scott
Website	www.hrc.act.gov.au	www.kids.nsw.gov.au	www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au	Not available yet	www.ccyjpcg.qld.gov.au	www.gcyp.sa.gov.au	www.childcomm.tas.gov.au	www.ocsc.vic.gov.au	www.ccyjpw.wa.gov.au

