



Parents and Friends' Federation of Western Australia Inc.

The Independent Voice of Parents of Children in Catholic Schools in WA since 1954

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The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education & Training
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

Re: Response to Inquiry -
Combining School and Work: Supporting Successful Youth Transitions

Vocational Education and Training delivered by education providers in Western Australian schools has for many years included both on and off the job training, subject to various Training Package requirements.

Schools have also promoted and supported Structured Workplace Learning (SWL), with students developing employability and specific job skills while spending generally one day per week with sponsoring employers.

The Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE), the Senior Secondary graduation certificate provided by the Curriculum Council of WA, includes recognition of a range of work-related experiences.

In commenting on the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry, we note that certificated studies include all Vocational and Education Training and related workplace training, school-based traineeships and apprenticeships, SWL as a school course, and any part time work or voluntary work recognised as an endorsed program.

Our responses also cover students who:-

Undertake work placements as part of an educational program, engage in full time study as well as part time or casual employment after hours, and those who study part time and work part time as part of their secondary studies.

Specific responses to Terms of Reference focal points:-

- Providing opportunities to recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students' part time or casual work:

Some of the ways in which WACE arrangements recognise work experiences as part of the process include VET and workplace learning as well as the Curriculum Council's Endorsed Programs, which can contribute up to 50% of the WACE requirements.

These approved programs and requirements include a log of skills and competencies acquired through part time or casual after hours work; work-specific Literacy & Numeracy programs; specific programs addressing employability skills and work readiness;

- Identifying more flexible, innovative and / or alternative approaches to attaining a senior secondary certificate which support students in combining work and study:

While schools recognise that increasingly more students are undertaking part time work, it is also obvious that the rigorous study required by tertiary bound students means that many are unable to participate and / or receive due recognition of SWL programs and school based training.

Where schools offer a mix of part time study and part time work, there are sometimes difficulties in ensuring the student's full time participation in the academic, spiritual and community aspects of school life. In the non-government sector there are also implications for State and Federal Government funding where students are attending schools part time.

Some schools in rural & remote areas or those with a re-engagement mission may adopt a four day a week study timetable, using the fifth day for part time work, student appointments and visiting speakers.

Most senior colleges have more flexible timetables to allow an effective mix of study and work, and it may also be advisable to spread secondary studies over more than the normal two years, e.g., a year thirteen, to complete study and work requirements.

- Support that may be required to assist young people combining work and study to stay engaged in their learning, especially where the work and study intersects with income support:

Many schools have developed effective programs to assist those students who generally benefit from a combination of school and work and are more likely to need significant support in the areas of literacy, numeracy, study skills & habits.

If work is to be encouraged as a legitimate aspect of education, government legislation in the areas of work and income support may have to be changed to ensure there are no unintended disincentives.

- The potential impact on educational attainment (including prospects for post-compulsory qualifications and workforce productivity):-
 - (i) For TAFE or employment bound students, any authentic workplace experience adds value both to the training program and a student's broader education, e.g., literacy and numeracy experiences are often specific to the workplace environment.

These students often have poorly developed study skills and organising skills, so it is imperative that an appropriate balance and models mixing school studies and work are adopted, i.e., to ensure that excessive work hours do not impact too heavily on school study time.

- (ii) 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.

On the other hand, at least limited exposure to a range of workplace experiences will also be useful in pursuing later job opportunities.

- 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):-

School based training programs are well established in WA schools and include:

Workplace learning providing units of competency, school-based traineeships and apprenticeships, specialised programs such as the School-Apprenticeship link, and various industry specific training programs.

Most students from schools in lower SES areas participate in such programs, which balance school with training and provide meaningful outcomes regarding transition to work or training. The new Trade Training Centres should provide a useful environment for these students where they can achieve improved outcomes.

An important aspect is the need to balance the support and security of school life with the experiences in workplace settings, and perhaps more could also be done to ensure the fuller participation of parents and carers in the overall process.

Thank you for the invitation to comment.

Yours sincerely



L.A. EASTWOOD
SECRETARY & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR