

Dr Brendan Nelson, MP.
Chairman
Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations,
Suite R1 116
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600.

Dear Dr Nelson,

I have over the last five years been assisting young Australian student-athletes gain scholarships to American universities and colleges. As part of this involvement I have had contact with many universities in the United States of America and have been impressed by some of the aspects of their system, which I believe could be adopted and adapted to the Australian situation.

As this relates to the educational I believe there is the potential for residential institutions to be established that are civilian in management by military in ethos. For example the New Mexico Military Institute in New Mexico is based along the lines of a Military Academy however the only thing military is the uniform students wear at all times and the fact that there is a military hierarchy and military discipline.

Those students who attend NMMI do so to achieve one or both of two goals. The first being an education to a level that will enable them to move into a regular University and/or secondly some military style training which enables them to move straight into either a Military Academy which is run by the Armed Forces or into the Armed Forces as a recruit.

I believe there is an opportunity in Australia to establish one or more similar institutions. These could quite easily provide an avenue for young Australians who may well have left school at an early age and have decided that they made a mistake and they really want to obtain their high school certificate. Secondly there is the opportunity for those that have already completed their year 12 at high school and think that a military career is something that they would enjoy but they are not prepared to make a long-term commitment to the Defense Forces upfront.

This institution will give them the opportunity to obtain a diploma of some kind. They would have two years of study that would have value at any other Territory institution plus being a credential that they could take into the Defense Force.

It would therefore be possible for a student to enter this institution up to the age of 22 or 23 having finished high school grade 10 and moving to the community and perhaps not taken advantage of all that was available to them at that point in their lives.

This would then mean that this individual would be able to attend this institution for say a four-year period comprising HSC studies for grades 11 and 12 and then say a two-year diploma course to provide them with the knowledge and skills they would require to move into a University or into the Defense Force.

Students who have completed year 12 and who perhaps spent more time on things other than studies and now know that they would be quite capable of achieving better results and having found that they were unable to find employment or improve their situation may wish to go to an institution which has a very strict disciplinary background enabling them to get their lives back into shape.

I see a combined approach being part of the Education Department, the Department of Employment, the Defense Force and various State Welfare organisations where they could put together a situation where under-utilised Defense Force infrastructure, such as the hostel in which the Kosovar refugees were housed could be converted into a school. Retired members of the Defence Force or serving members of the Defence Force reserve could be recruited as teachers or instructors. The staff members would operate in a military style but without the authority of the Defense Force behind them.

I firmly believe that boys today are not receiving the guidance required as a male by adult males and that the environment of say a military style institution would assist these young men through the rites of passage which may have been missing in their lives. There is absolutely no reason why young women could not also take advantage of this style of education and environment

The opportunity for young people who may have strayed from the straight and narrow to be taken into an institution where they can receive an education plus some guidance for the future, in an environment where they are not seen to be different to anybody else, would be I believe a great boost for their self-esteem. The fact that all cadets are treated the same and that everybody has to do the same work to achieve the same goals means that the students can be there in anonymity. Any confidences that need to be maintained by the staff can be part of the ethos of the place.

I believe that there is a need for this type of institution in Australia, not being a glorified Boys Town or correctional institution but a quality transitional educational institution between high school and university with a TAFE curriculum but a military ethos.

Yours sincerely,

John C. Hocknull J.P. (Qual)
P.O. Box 1 Beaudesert
QLD 4285