

12 January 2009

Submission Number: 19
Date Received: 16/01/09

The Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Education and Training
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Email: edt..reps@aph.gov.au



Dear Secretary,

Re: Combining School and Work: Supporting Successful Youth Transitions

As Australia's largest retailer, Woolworths employs in excess of 39,000 young Australians between the ages of 15 – 18. Many of these young people are working on a part time or casual basis whilst completing their school studies.

These young employees develop valuable skills whilst working at Woolworths which provides them with a sound grounding for further career development both within the Woolworths group and within other roles in any industry.

Each year we invest millions of dollars in training and education programmes to develop the skills of our workforce. Our young employees are able to take advantage of our induction training, as well as our Trainees and Apprenticeship Programmes and they regularly receive skills training and development through ongoing improvements to service, safety, the way we do business and new business initiatives that occur in each Business Unit.

Woolworths would support the expansion of recognition of skills gained by students as part of their part time or casual work.

As well as recognising that experience gained working part-time during school-years will generally improve a person's transition into post-school employment, Woolworths' has focused on school-based traineeships in various forms for over 7 years and would welcome a review into skill development and recognition at this level.

It is our view that the focus of any review into a school-based training scheme should look into the quality of delivery, the roles of the school and the employer in that scheme and the interaction between the stakeholders to ensure the program yields both flexibility and results. Woolworths would recommend a system which allows each stakeholder to support the program via their area of expertise as this is would have the greatest potential for success. The schools should play the role of theoretical principle based learning and assessment, and the employer and workplace should play the role of experiential learning, assessment and practical application of the theories.

As not all students would be participating in a school and work transition program, maintaining quality and consistent training as part of school based traineeships can be a

challenge. The sustainability of future programs can only be assured if they are flexible and attractive enough to enlist the participation of as many students as possible.

If a nationally consistent model was developed, based on the Federal competency based framework and with each State's board of studies applying it in the same way then this would allow national employers such as Woolworths to develop a program which supports students across Australia and which can be easily assessed.

In addition to developing a school-based training scheme, Woolworths also supports the recognition of other programs which assist in the successful transition from school to work. For a number of years, Woolworths has been working on a many of initiatives predominantly at a local level with young Australians from indigenous, remote and disadvantaged backgrounds, which have also provided young people with valuable skills which will assist them in gaining future employment.

Woolworths recently won the National Retailers Association, Training Excellence Award, sponsored by the Department of Education, Science and Training in recognition of the quality and scope of our training and development programmes. Woolworths would be happy to share its experiences and lessons learned in the development of training models if it would assist in the development of any future school and work transition scheme.

If you have any questions regarding the matters raised in the submission, please contact Nathalie Samia, Group Manager- Government Relations on 02 8885 3446 or nsamia@woolworths.com.au

Yours sincerely



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Woolworths Limited