



# **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**Reference: Role of institutes of TAFE**

**PERTH**

**Wednesday, 18 February 1998**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**CANBERRA**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Members:

Dr Nelson (Chair)

Mr Barresi	Mr Latham
Mr Bartlett	Mr Marek
Mr Brough	Mr Mossfield
Mr Dargavel	Mr Neville
Mrs Elson	Mr Pyne
Mr Martin Ferguson	Mr Sawford
Mrs Gash	

The Committee is to inquire into and report on:

the appropriate roles of institutues of technical and further education; and

the extent to which those roles should overlap with universities.

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

*Role of institutes of TAFE*

**PERTH**

Wednesday, 18 February 1998

Present

Dr Nelson (Chair)

Mr Marek

Mr Sawford

Mr Mossfield

The committee met at 10.39 a.m.

Dr Nelson took the chair.

**CHAIR**—I declare open this first public meeting for the inquiry into the roles of institutes of TAFE, and the extent to which those roles should overlap with universities.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Sawford**, seconded by **Mr Mossfield**):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by paragraph (o) of standing order 28B and its resolution of appointment, the committee receive as evidence exhibit No. 22 to the inquiry into the roles of TAFE and receive as evidence and authorise publication of submissions numbered 81 to 95, as listed on the schedule circulated to the committee.

**CHAIR**—The committee has received over 90 submissions and is now embarking on a series of public hearings, intended to give business and the wider community, TAFE itself and the university sector an opportunity to participate directly in the inquiry. The purpose of the inquiry is to clearly identify the appropriate roles for institutes of TAFE, and the extent to which they should overlap with universities. The committee aims to produce recommendations for government action that will enhance TAFE's capacity to meet community expectations in relation to those roles. Matters raised in submissions so far include the importance of TAFE's community service and vocational education and training roles, the effect of competition on TAFE's traditional activities, the appropriateness of TAFE's current administrative and financial structure, and the funding anomalies between TAFE and higher education which affect both students and institutions.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the issues to be considered, nor an indication of where the committee's final recommendations might lie. The committee welcomes additional input from all parties. A vital means for the committee to gather information is through public hearings. Today the committee will hear evidence from the higher education sector, including two dual sector institutions, and the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I would like to thank publicly the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, which has generously agreed to host the committee's public hearings today.

**ORD, Mr Duncan, Acting Director, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University, 2 Bradford Street, Mount Lawley, Western Australia**

**CHAIR**—Just before you make an opening statement, I will just introduce us. My name is Brendan Nelson. I represent a metropolitan Sydney seat for the Liberal Party. On my right is Mr Rod Sawford, who is the member for Port Adelaide, and deputy chair of the committee. On his right is Mr Paul Marek, who is the member for Capricornia in Far North Queensland, and on my far left is Mr Frank Mossfield, who represents a seat in the western suburbs of Sydney. Mr Rees is our inquiry secretary. Perhaps you would make an opening statement. We have received and read your submission. Perhaps you would give us five to 10 minutes covering what you think are the important points, and then we will enter into question and answer.

**Mr Ord**—Firstly, thank you for the opportunity of addressing you today. The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts represents I think a microcosm of the issues that you will be looking into, and we are obviously delighted that the committee chose to come and look at an institution in an area of industry that is perhaps a bit more colourful than some you may be dealing with. The response that we forwarded to you highlighted I think the academy's unique role within this university, of being a multi-sector institution. Its history, of course, was bound up in being created by the Western Australian government, originally placed within a college of advanced education. It became a university by a state act some time after the academy was created, and we have lived with in fact three parents, although the academy has primarily stayed the same over that period of time. There has been change in the central organisation as it has evolved from a teachers college through a CAE to a university.

Through that transition, the academy has been able to maintain and develop its status as a vocational training institution, I think with a national and increasingly international recognition, and at the same time develop fairly successfully its role within the university sector as a place of learning, and beginning now to evolve into a place with an interest in research and development, although I would like to touch on that issue within the confines of the role of TAFE and higher ed. I would just like to specifically address the points that were raised here, to do with the seamless nature of our training, which may be of interest to you as to how that actually does take place.

Firstly, we begin with the staff. The staff are recruited primarily from the arts industry, so we put a weighting on their particular experience, as opposed to academic qualifications or qualifications as a teacher, and they are certainly different criteria from those used overall by the universities. We have allowances in our selection processes to weight towards the vocational nature of the training that goes on here. That staff are appointed under the academic award of the university, and therefore they are paid in

accordance with the university and higher ed sector pay and conditions. That is at a higher rate than TAFE would pay the staff to do the same job if they were within a TAFE only institution. That has been accepted by the state government and the department of training as being an equitable way of allowing staff to move between their role in perhaps teaching within higher ed on one occasion and teaching within vocational programs on another. So there has been flexibility agreed between the state on that matter.

The seamless nature means that the staff are deployed according to their capabilities across programs that may be from certificate level through to advanced diploma level courses, through to bachelor undergraduate courses—and in fact this year we have introduced masters degrees; where capable, they may be involved in working on the masters program as well. So there is no division in the application of staff to any of the levels of training. They adapt primarily to the different type of student by the dictates of the curricula that are established.

I will give you an example: a program in acting, which is an advanced diploma level three-year course. We also have a bachelors program in musical theatre. The focus in the acting program is entirely weighted towards the acquisition of skills. In the BA musical theatre course it has a large component of skills acquisition, but it also includes the traditional elements of elective study and study in certain theoretical units that would define its bachelor level studies.

To be honest with you, there is considerable crossover in the nature of that training and education, and if you could honestly say that there is a total distinction, I could not honestly say there is. As we have blended the TAFE level courses with higher education courses, we have come up with hybrid models which I think are unique. Interestingly, in terms of student entry, they apply for and enter courses quite specifically, and we apply, in the case of the higher education courses, the normal TEE entry requirements of the university, with a slight exception clause of up to 10 per cent extraordinary entry based on their audition and interview, so every student is actually personally interviewed and auditioned for the institution, regardless of which sector they are in, although we do use the TE entry and the gatekeeper, if you like, for higher ed courses.

With the state programs, we do not apply any criteria of that kind. It is solely based on audition. We have found that there is no particular correlation in success between the two, that in fact the personal audition-interview is essentially a very effective means of screening likely success in their training. So in terms of the students there is a differentiation in what they have to do to get into either program, but not a differentiation primarily once they are into the course and the nature of the education and training they get here.

The seamless nature of our training has been improved in recent times in creating some top-up awards at the end of diploma studies for those who wish to add more advanced levels to the skills they may have gained in their diploma studies. This has primarily come not from the university, but actually from industry feedback, from the

Industry Training Council, which at our last accreditation indicated that what the arts and entertainment industry were most concerned about was the development of entrepreneurial and managerial skills. Our focus has primarily been on the acquisition of performing technical skills; we realised that the need to create more autonomous artists with the added skills was important, and so we built programs for students who wished to add, if you like, more theoretical entrepreneurial management skills to their diploma studies, a one-year transition BA award, so they are able to now do the three years of advanced diploma, and then go into a more theoretical and management project-based year and exit with a degree.

Essentially, we took some leadership from the AQF in that, and the reason I raise that for you is that we do make a comment that we find the AQF, with its, if you like, vertical progression, a bit of a concern, although we have taken advantage of it in this case that I have just indicated to you. The reason for our concern about the vertical progression was that we felt that our advanced diploma programs have always been at the highest level. They have very high contact hours. They are well tested in terms of the industry compatibility, work outcomes and other things, and a student who studies an advanced diploma level course here and graduates with that should not see their award as less than a three-year degree award in a similar institution, where in fact contact hours and experience may be considerably less, but that the award is perceived to be of less value by the nature of the AQF.

We have no concern that our students are meeting any employment resistance. It is more the notional structure. Essentially, it is the institution's imprimatur, the name of the institution, which carries the greatest clout with employers, rather than the piece of paper that they ultimately exit with, but we are concerned that people are now coming into cycles of employment where they will change their careers over the lifetime of their working life; that they are likely to want to revisit education training at a later date; and that by weighting, if you like, the advanced diploma at a lower level than the BA, then with their abilities to, say, enter into postgraduate studies, they are considerably disadvantaged by the structure—more than they would have been if there had been an equivalence given to advanced diploma studies at the sort of level we deliver them at.

That is our primary concern. Essentially, although we are delivering the same program that, for instance, the Victorian College for the Arts or the National Institute of Dramatic Arts is—there is virtually no difference in the training—those students get a degree and our students get a diploma because ours are funded through the vocational training sector. If our students wanted a degree, they would need to do a fourth year of study currently.

**CHAIR**—Thanks very much, Mr Ord.

**Mr Ord**—I think that touches on some of the issues we have raised.



**CHAIR**—I appreciate that. Just on your final point there, the students who do the diploma are given credit for that in order to go on to do the degree, are they?

**Mr Ord**—Yes. We are essentially giving them a two-year credit against a three-year BA studies. The justification for that is primarily that there are bachelor programs around Australia with identical layouts, and they would get that sort of credit in other institutions.

**CHAIR**—Your industrial situation seems to be just a little bit unique here. Do you think it would be possible to run the system you do if your staff were being paid under the VET program instead of the higher education sector?

**Mr Ord**—No, I would not see that it would be possible. If we attempted to split them up in such a way that they taught only within the sectors—and I assume that if they were on different award conditions that would be the requirement of the staff association—our efficiencies would collapse overnight. By the state, if you like, paying a higher rate, they gain by the deployment of the staff across two sectors. Obviously we employ a large number of specialists here to teach 23 courses to 1,000 students, so the student-staff ratio is low. That means we need to be as efficient as we can, and we gain the efficiency, in effect, by agreeing to work at the higher level of the two awards.

**CHAIR**—The students at the moment, I understand, do not pay fees?

**Mr Ord**—In the VET sector they have not paid fees. We have a one-year period of grace from the state government before the introduction of up-front fees, which will apply to all students in the state awards from 1999, in accordance with the normal rates that have been set by the state for VET courses.

**CHAIR**—Do you think there is a place in the sector for some kind of loan scheme, perhaps like the HECS program, for your students in VET?

**Mr Ord**—Yes. Certainly I am concerned, given the ability to defer HECS, that students, in requiring to make an up-front fee and having to meet the full half of those up-front fees before starting their studies, have little time often after finding out that they have gained a place in an institution—and competition is quite fierce; we have maybe 600 applicants, for instance, in the acting course for 18 places around Australia. Suddenly, within a period of something like six weeks, they would have to be able to relocate, many of them relocating themselves to Western Australia, and meet the up-front charges. Certainly I would like some capacity to see them be able to enter into a deferred situation or at least a loan situation.

**CHAIR**—The VET sector generally—the marketplace, if you like—is the private sector, and the industries into which the graduates are going. What involvement does the marketplace have with your programs? Obviously theatres, production companies and

television—

**Mr Ord**—Considerable, and I think this is something we have brought to the university by being actually so allied to the VET sector. As they have evolved, I think probably since maybe the Dawkins-Beazley reforms in education, to put a much greater emphasis on industry involvement in VET education, our direct interface with industry has increased enormously. They of course are represented in that we have a separate board for the academy, and that board answers to council but also answers to the state government, as a TAFE board would. That includes a high level of industry representation on that. We have advisory committees for particular courses, which again provides opportunity for industry input, and in line with VET practices we have a very well-developed secondment program, so that many of our students spend portion of their studies in the workplace.

In most technical courses, approximately two months of their final year is spent in workplace situations in Australia, and in fact they have even placed them in workplaces internationally, where they want to pick up a particular speciality. The Lucas studios in Hollywood and the Royal National Theatre in London are two instances of that. While education traditionally in universities has placed students into the workplace situation, it is not common across many higher ed programs yet for that sort of interface.

**CHAIR**—Just coming back to the Australian qualification framework, what sort of changes would you like to see made to it—what sort of modifications?

**Mr Ord**—I think I would like to see sort of a paralleling, I suppose, certainly with the ability for articulation across the sectors, but with some recognition that at the highest level of TAFE there would be an equivalence to undergraduate studies at university and therefore the opportunity for students that may have completed an advanced diploma at TAFE to in fact go into a kind of postgraduate area, because I think the challenge in Australia is going to be in dealing with lifelong learning issues and people coming back for their second round.

If they have completed an advanced diploma, in any industry sector I suspect, and if TAFE maintains its standards—and I think the TAFE sector in Australia is fantastic; I am a great fan of the sector—then I think there is no reason why there should be an artificial penalty applied to those people who may have had years of industry experience and an advanced diploma for then topping up their next round of education in a postgraduate sense. There are certainly allowances in a lot of postgraduate studies for life experience, but it is certainly not as easy to gain those allowances compared to those that have been, if you like, through the system at university.

**CHAIR**—We know.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Duncan, you have mentioned several advantages of the seamless sector, the dual sector. Would you like to point out some disadvantages?

**Mr Ord**—I think from the desk of suddenly being an acting director, it is the duplication of reportage that is a major problem. The two sectors have been heading in quite different directions in terms of the way that the sectors are managed. We have had to increase our administration to cope with a dual reportage system. One is to the university and to DEETYA. We went through all the quality assurance processes that DEETYA was setting up, which were not prescribed quality assurance but rather a sort of auditing process and encouragement to bring in quality management practices in universities. That took us on an entire journey of creating evidence that we had quality processes. There is a whole set of performance indicators being developed for that sector which are different from the VET.

The VET in this state has developed its whole QETO—quality endorsed training organisation—with a customer focus and with enormous potential impact on us in terms of how we again collect evidence for the VET sector. So essentially, for an institution with relatively small numbers of students, it is a bookkeeping nightmare to in fact keep track of the way that the two sectors are wanting to get their evidence, and there is no allowance; it is just accepted that if you are a multi-sector institution you just have to do things twice. That concerns me. I would like to see, for us, some rationalisation; if there is a series of multi-sector institutions in Australia, that there is some agreement on how those perform, and one set of reportage and guidelines and that sort of thing.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are there any non-administrative disadvantages?

**Mr Ord**—No. I actually believe in it. I think that it has got a lot of advantages in being multi-sector here, and I cannot imagine we would be a better institution if we resided in one or other. Certainly if we resided in the universities, given teacher funding models and indices and various historical prejudices against our areas—not prejudice from the universities, just from the sector—I think that we would be a vastly inferior institution. If we resided solely in the TAFE sector, I think that TAFE understand our practices more closely, but there would be disadvantages in what students gain from in fact, if you like, being challenged slightly beyond their level. I have seen students who have come in at very marginal levels of literacy with great ability just simply growing from the ambience that is created within a place of higher learning.

I would have to say that I think the multi-sector model is a very good model for Australia—not in every area of course, but in the margins where this was sensibly created in the past I think that it is a very good model for Australia and one that I certainly would hate to see fall between stools as the two sectors may develop their own specialisations.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Dr Gibbs mentioned to us this morning that when performing arts was established you had a staff of three, and there was a battle in creating same wages and conditions. What do you think would happen in a scenario of the 70 staff and the 100 part-time staff being established—in other words, a complete unit?

**Mr Ord**—I would see it being extremely difficult to bring it about. I would imagine that the TAFE sector would be alarmed if there was a wholesale move to higher payments in new marriages because of the ramifications of the people remaining behind saying, ‘Well, why isn’t there just one set of conditions that apply across both sectors?’ That is probably way outside of my depth, to give you defined answers as to why there is such differentiation in rates of remuneration and conditions between the two sectors. I think TAFE has enormous potential to actually be very effective as an industry R&D, and if you start factoring that into Australian education, where research is not so much the domain solely of the traditional universities, then you would open up all sorts of possibilities for rethinking the way that the two sectors are funded and the way the awards would work.

But in areas of, for instance, new industries and technologies where it is becoming increasingly hard to find the capital to keep ahead of technology or certainly keep abreast of technology, then unique partnerships between industry, TAFE and higher ed which may create multi-sector specialised areas of education I think would be sensible, in that I cannot see where the money will come from these days to set up, for instance, the high-tech media industries.

Most of the universities, as we move into the digital era, will become technologically backward institutions, and I cannot see where the money is going to come from to upgrade that huge infrastructure that exists that currently supports the analog media industry. It may be that it happens in partnership, so as the networks in media cross over to digital you may find that that will provide the sort of forum for industry, TAFE, higher sector collaboration and the creation of more academy-type ventures.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is the major reason the dual sector works in this set-up because basically the university gets more out of it than what you provide back? I mean they get more. This is actually a VET area, isn’t it?

**Mr Ord**—For a developing university—Edith Cowan—it has given them something of a national-international significance, and I think the university has appreciated being able to say, ‘We have a centre of excellence as part of our university.’ It is in the arts area and their strength is in social sciences and service industry, so they are able to draw the parallels between what they have achieved at the academy and what they may be able to achieve and will hopefully achieve in other sectors. So I think, yes, the universities have a great advantage from maintaining—

**Mr SAWFORD**—And that would not be so in all cases. This is a very special situation here.

**Mr Ord**—It is a special situation, yes.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Just a question on competency-based training. Generally

speaking, the VET system has accepted this in general terms, but we did hear from Dr Gibbs that it is not appropriate for your industry. Is that the general view, and could you expand on it?

**Mr Ord**—I believe that we have thought of it before it became a fad. We have always been about competency and above training because, being a performance-based institution, it has not been simply about teaching the skills in isolation, of being able to see whether they could then put those together and literally putting them on the stage to be evaluated and reviewed. So our cycle is the perfect competency cycle. We train, we get them to do the task, we put it to industry and the public, we have it reviewed, we correct it if they are not up to scratch, they do it again, and when they come out they can move seamlessly into the industry and perform as professionals. That, I think, is the whole objective of competency-based training.

Our objective was to define a common set of competencies in areas where we are attempting to create individualism in arts practice. If every actor or dancer or musician was the same, it would be a very boring industry, so of course our training is much more about trying to provoke and promote the individual to achieve excellence, and we saw a rigid curriculum that was about competencies actually diminishing that task. So our opposition is not to the concept that the government and industry should know that people are capable of doing certain tasks.

We have taken some of the principles. For instance, in part of the competency process there is recognition of prior learning and we have adopted that. We have adopted the fact that students now need to be exposed to areas like occupational health and safety. So we have built those things in so that you can see that the dancers are taught a safe dance curriculum; they understand their need to manage injuries and prevent injuries and things like that. So we have taken the elements that we know may not have been in the prior curriculum and built them into our current ones, but it would be a massive cost to us to go back and rewrite all our curriculum into a competency format simply to meet an edict when in fact we were doing competency training in the first place.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—You accept it in practice.

**Mr Ord**—And we have won that argument with the State Training Board, in that they audited our curriculum and gave us accreditation for five years on the basis of our current delivery. We have agreed to move towards competency-based assessment processes where they are applicable in our industry. As regards technical courses, if you are hanging lights or flying scenery you need to be competent to do that and we are quite happy to introduce competency standards in those areas, but we would not welcome them being developed in the more aesthetic areas of dance, acting and music. We cannot perceive there would be any advantage to the Australian industry and it would be a bureaucratic nightmare.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Could I just ask one on a different issue altogether. What about people with disabilities? Have you got any people with disabilities in any of the courses you are running?

**Mr Ord**—Yes, we do. We have had people with substantial disabilities. Clearly the elitist nature of the institution in terms of how its image is projected in the community probably in fact acts as a disincentive for people with disabilities to come forward. We do not actively advertise that we promote people with disabilities to come here, but if a person applies then we actively pursue their enrolment if it is at all practicable. The university equity office has recognised the endeavours we have made to facilitate enrolment of people with disabilities. In fact, the arts industry has always said to us that our role, as they see it, is to provide them with a diverse range of talents. Now, that also includes artists with disabilities, it includes obviously a broad representation of our multicultural society, and it involves our active involvement in the indigenous education which we pursue.

At the same time, we are faced with the reality that maybe the secondary education system is not as connected to that. In this state, for instance, the arts specialist high schools are all in white middle-class suburbs because that is where the parents have campaigned to have drama and dance and music on the curriculum, so of course they are the students who tend to want to get into the institutions. To change the profile at our end, you need to start way back in the other parts of education. I know this state is addressing that by moving to the eight learning areas and I think we will see quite a lot of change.

**CHAIR**—Just before Mr Marek asks a question, could I just be clear about this: at the moment are you grading the students? I do not know much about dance, but in the dance-artistic area it is pretty hard to apply a competency-based assessment. At the moment are you grading the students against one another or is it just a pass, fail, or—

**Mr Ord**—It varies. We use three grading systems here—pass, fail. For instance, if they do a play, if someone happens to be playing the waiter it would be very unfortunate to say, ‘You’re a wonderful waiter; you get 70 per cent,’ and the person playing the lead role, who has slugged through and dropped three lines, gets a 50 pass. So they are meant to meet the expectations of the total ensemble and we do not give differentiated passes. In, for instance, our technical areas we grade them in a satisfactory, competent, highly competent format, so they get a grading based on achieving a level of competency, then above, and we find that acts as a positive incentive for them to achieve above what you would call competency level. And then we do use an empirical grading system in other areas of the academy where it is applicable. So we have the flexibility to match that sort of grading with the unit being taught, and we apply it regardless of the sector.

**CHAIR**—I understand.

**Mr MAREK**—Just going back a bit, do you consider that there should be a

greater push to move more quickly towards this seamless overlap between TAFE and universities, not just in the arts but in other areas as well?

**Mr Ord**—Yes. I think competition between the sectors can be at times healthy, but at the same time I have become a little cynical. I am not an educationalist—I came from the arts industry—and I have been a bit shocked since I came into the universities to see how much of a sort of body count the whole thing is, as opposed to imagining what the nation may want, what is good for the country's economy and things.

**Mr MAREK**—So do you consider that there should be a greater push?

**Mr Ord**—It is such a rare resource—education—and what it represents. Sitting down the road is Central Metropolitan College of TAFE, with some of the most outstanding broadcasting facilities in the state. They are locked away for a group of students studying broadcasting, camera work and various things. They never get to work with any live talent because they are all up here. Now, clearly, if you are going to increase the skills acquisition of Australians, then access to resources, whether they are human or physical, has to be maximised. I think artificial constraints that divide TAFE and higher ed probably militates against the effective use of those resources.

**Mr MAREK**—You have only looked at it, I guess, in the line of arts in unis and TAFE.

**Mr Ord**—No, I think it applies in—

**Mr MAREK**—Trades, traineeships.

**Mr Ord**—For instance, the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centre, which is a fantastic state facility for new technologies, works collaboratively with the computer science area here. They have now created a joint degree where they do two years at the AMTC and then they do two years here, and it is not like two years there and then they come off; it actually goes on a sort of 45-degree angle where they do all of, I think, first year, then half, and it dribbles off. It is using expertise in staff and programming and facilities. They are much higher in facilities at their part of the institution and there is a greater theoretical and research expertise here. I actually think that is a very sensible collaboration.

**Mr MAREK**—In other words, you are saying it is a good idea that they should have pushed?

**Mr Ord**—Yes.

**Mr MAREK**—Do you feel that TAFE have the same opinion? That is coming from the university sector going back to TAFE. Would you be aware that TAFE feel the

same way about joining up—the same process?

**Mr Ord**—I think if I was heading a TAFE college I would probably be quite fearful of the universities with their, I suppose, greater status wanting to pick up TAFE colleges to make up for shortfalls or cutbacks in government funding. I would be a bit alarmed.

**Mr MAREK**—Yes. I can see where TAFE would probably be a bit concerned. They are probably looking at trying to teach more diploma and degree type courses, and the university is saying, ‘Well, hang on a tick. No, you’re not going to take that stuff off us. In fact, because we’re probably higher powered and higher funded, we’ll take everything you’ve got.’

As you have said before, you have come across clients or students with poor literacy skills. If TAFE now responds to those students’ requirements, could those kids or those students who do not have very good literacy skills find themselves being disenfranchised and not make the educational literacy level, and ultimately drop out of the system? Whether you can read and write or not, if you can do it, more often than not you can get through it. Do you know what I mean?

**Mr Ord**—Yes.

**Mr MAREK**—Whereas what I am saying now is this: if the university role takes a greater role, is there the possibility that that student may now not end up making a pass?

**Mr Ord**—I think it is highly unlikely. I think where the overlap is occurring is mostly the higher end, whether it is business or medical services or high-technology areas. I doubt whether universities are going to be particularly interested in delivering mechanics and bricklaying. Do you know what I mean?

**Mr MAREK**—Yes.

**Mr Ord**—So I think the sectoral collaborations will be fairly obvious in where the overlaps take place. I think there is a need for two sectors.

**Mr MAREK**—The only thing is, coming back to what you are saying, that there has to be a balance. If you take too much away from the TAFE, then all of a sudden TAFE is going to have nothing, or you will not have the very clever and not so clever students. What happens if you take all the elite or all the top ones off? Then all of a sudden there is no competition.

**Mr Ord**—Yes. You would not want to diminish TAFE. I think it is a balance of partnership between the two sectors recognising that each in itself is—



**Mr MAREK**—I just wanted to know how you felt about it all. That is all right. Thanks.

**CHAIR**—Thanks very much, Mr Ord. We appreciate you taking the time and effort to both produce and present a submission, and also to speak to us, and if you think education is a body count, you ought to try politics.

**Mr Ord**—Indeed. Thank you very much for giving me a hearing. It is appreciated.

[11.23 a.m.]

**BIRMAN, Mr Jon, Deputy Director—Operations, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia (Inc.), 190 Hay Street, East Perth, Western Australia 6004**

**COLLINS, Mr Gary, Manager, Training Projects, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia (Inc.), 190 Hay Street, East Perth, Western Australia 6004**

**CHAIR**—Good morning, Mr Birman and Mr Collins. Thank you also for the interest shown, which is understandable, by your organisation in this inquiry. We have received and read your submission—I am sure, whatever our perspective, with some interest. Perhaps you would just like to give us a five-minute, maximum 10-minute, overview, and then we will engage in some dialogue.

**Mr Birman**—Thank you, Mr Chairman, and I thank the committee for the invitation to address you today. I would like to make a couple of opening points, and then talk for five minutes or so. Then we would be pleased to answer questions. You probably note from our submission that we have concentrated fairly heavily on the VET side of it, but I might say from the outset, while it is accepted that the role of education is to provide the capacity for lifelong learning, we are not quite so sure that you should delineate between the terms ‘training’ and ‘education’ on the basis of VET and higher education as where the line is. In a general sense, we do not see a need for any delineation between what the VET sector as it is currently understood does, and what the higher ed sector does. In fact, overlaps should not be driven by institutional pressure, or the lack of overlap should not be driven by institutional pressure.

By way of background on the CCI itself, it is the largest employer association in Western Australia. We have some 5,000-odd or 5½ thousand members. Of those members, some 65 per cent employ under 20 people. It covers the broad family of business activities, ranging through health care, engineering, manufacturing, retail, service sector, mining, and construction, and we also pick up the top 200 companies in this state. About 98 per cent of them are CCI members. The CCI sees its core competencies as information, coordination and influence. Our policy activities take us through a variety of areas, with impact on the business community, from tax to education and training, industrial relations, environment, industry policy and infrastructure.

In terms of the activities of education and training, we see clear links between education and training, the industrial relations framework, Australian industry participation, or local content, if you like, and infrastructure. We do not see them as separate issues or separate agendas. We see them as working together to build a better business environ-

ment, more employment, and a stronger economy. So in that sense we are very involved in education and training and development.

What I would like just to take you through is an analogy or a story about the CCI in the area of VET. Traditionally, most employer associations offer generalist short-course type training that ranges to things like their industrial relations strengths, management, supervision, occupational safety and health, and the like. In 1989, CCI became heavily involved in the national training reform agenda, both as a critic and a participant in certain aspects of it, that saw in our manufacturing areas some significant changes in the VET method of delivery, in particular, a change from block-based training to competency-based training, and introduction of a new curriculum. We were charged in this state as part of that national agenda to oversee its implementation through the VET-TAFE system, in which we moved into the standard employer approach of bringing in all the stakeholders and trying to convince them to deliver the new system.

The response out of the TAFE system at that stage was not as positive as industry would have liked, and in fact it took some years to get the changes into the system. In 1991, there was the recession in Western Australia, and that saw a lot of our members in the manufacturing area shedding trainees for the future, particularly apprentices in that area. At that stage, the board of the CCI took a decision to sponsor the creation of a group training company to pick up suspended apprentices and to take the risk away from industry for four-year indentures. We now employ in excess of 500 apprentices, principally in engineering and manufacturing, but also in horticulture and some other areas, and that has grown from 12 in the middle of 1992 to in excess of 500 today.

That helped us influence the direction of training, but did not actually help us change the culture inside VET. In 1996, CCI launched its own training centre in competition with the TAFE system, and it was unfunded. Therefore we were charging to train apprentices as opposed to a TAFE system that was operating their training centres, subject to government subsidy. With the implementation of user choice this year, that has obviously changed, but we found ourselves competitive in a business where we were charging \$6,000 a head to companies to send their apprentices to us, where the same companies could send their apprentices to a TAFE college five kilometres away from our business, and we had a business that was growing.

We entered in 1997 into CCI's RTA training services, and CCI is now a deliverer of training in the retail area to AQF2. In the engineering manufacturing area, we deliver to AQF4. We currently have some 150-odd apprentices running through our existing training centre in Kwinana and in excess of 100 or more running through our RTA training services arm. Currently, on behalf of our health care members, we are looking at this question of overlap, as a result of the problems faced by a lot of our private hospital members with nurse education and the shortage of nurses. Whilst I hasten to say that issues relating to health care and nurses is not restricted to education, it is an issue that we believe should be addressed.

So it has seen the chamber take a fairly active role in what is going on in certainly VET, and now with where we are going in health care there is a very active interest in the overlap between some of the concepts that apply in VET and some of the concepts that apply in higher education, and how they can be married together to get an outcome that benefits industry and any individuals who want to take courses. The principles that we believe are very important for this community to consider are the concept of user choice—that is, a demand driven system, even if it is driven solely by the individual voucher. I hate to use the word ‘voucher’, or use it with some trepidation, but it is individual driven. We believe the concept of overlap is somewhat irrelevant, and while I accept the argument that some institutions have higher standing historically, people who are looking for outcomes from their education that place them in a competitive position in the employment market will soon make a choice to go to the provider that does that for them, and things do change.

We also believe there ought to be a great deal of autonomy. There has been autonomy in this state in the VET sector, and that should continue to allow the colleges to operate in as competitive a framework as they possibly can, without centralised control. The divorce of the purchaser of training from the provider of training has to be very clear, and the purchaser of training should not be allowed to control the providers of training other than by performance mechanisms. We would argue to this committee that the concept of VET is alive and well in the universities, as it is in the TAFE colleges, as it seems to us that the courses of highest demand in the universities are in fact VET courses that provides professional outcomes, and that’s why I made the point at the beginning. This delineation between the terms ‘training’ and ‘education’ and then ‘TAFE’ and ‘university’ is, we believe, somewhat of a misnomer.

**CHAIR**—Thanks, Mr Birman. Perhaps the first thing is this. What is the problem? Why are your members—which is terrific—paying \$6,000 for VET, and bypassing a publicly funded institution? I have got an idea, but would you like to flesh that out a bit for us? Obviously that is a lot of money, and they see value in what you are doing. What are you doing that you are doing better or that is not offered by a traditional TAFE set-up?

**Mr Collins**—I think we are doing a couple of things that traditionally do not happen in the public VET provided in the TAFE system. We listen very closely to what our clients are telling us in terms of the outcomes they expect from their apprentices; and we deliver training that satisfies those needs, and we deliver the training in a way that maximises the apprentices’ ability to operate in a productive way in the workplace. We link the training we deliver in our centre very closely with the outcomes expected in the workplace, and we probably can do that for a number of reasons. Because we are the industry association, we can listen very closely to our members, and we have very close contact with them. And there is also the way we have structured our training arrangements: we use our training centre as a place of work, if you like, so we do not delineate between the apprentice in the workplace and the apprentice in the college setting as being

any different. People come to our training centre, it is a place of work and they are expected to perform as if it was a place of work. That flows in then to what they do when they go back into the workplace. There is a quality issue in terms of how we provide our training, and we are responsive in terms of the way we provide training to the employers who send their people to us. I suppose it is difficult for TAFE colleges to actually be as responsive as we can be in those areas.

**CHAIR**—Is it a correct interpretation of your view that private providers or anyone who wants to provide VET ought to be able to use TAFE infrastructure or facilities? Is that the kind of model you are suggesting, amongst other things?

**Mr Birman**—Yes. There is no reason why private providers should not be able to use existing infrastructure. In fact, the chamber spent just over \$3 million building the engineering training centre. It received a grant of \$1.2 million from ANTA, but the rest of the money was underwritten by the chamber itself. Prior to actually building the CCI training services in Kwinana, we approached the WA department of training for access to infrastructure, running the argument that capital for education and training institutions is pretty rare, and we ought to use the physical institutions that exist the best possible way we can. We got a pat on the head and ‘Good idea, boys,’ and were sent on our way. So innovation prevailed. We were lucky in that we were in the business and had an idea, but for other private providers to come in and service niche markets, there is a very strong argument that the public resources ought to be available in a fair and commercial manner to get maximum utility out of the public dollar that has been spent creating them.

**CHAIR**—Where do you see in your model people having a second chance at education or, perhaps in a broader sense, do you feel that community service obligations of the VET sector are likely to be met in a purely market-driven approach?

**Mr Birman**—I guess the answer to that is that community service obligations should be met and they should be transparently met through a funding process.

**Mr Collins**—Many courses that provide that second chance are being tendered now through competitive tendering through the various state training authorities, and lots of private providers in Western Australia have taken on that challenge in providing those sorts of programs in a very effective way.

**CHAIR**—I suppose it is understandable from the point of view of the chamber, but you mentioned universities, for example, and the most attractive courses are, in a sense, VET, engineering, medicine, dentistry, I suppose. Does the chamber see higher education as serving a purely utilitarian role and not perhaps see that arts and things like this are things that are not—

**Mr Birman**—I will leave it at that. I have got an arts degree. The short answer is no. The universities obviously have got broad roles to play, but equally one needs to meet

the expectations of individuals, and most individuals enrolling in any course do have some sort of vocational objective at the end of it.

**Mr Collins**—I have got an arts degree and a trade certificate, and my view is that most people enter university with the expectation that they will get some form of job at the end of their program, just like most people enter the VET sector with the expectation that they will pick up a job at the end of their training, and they both provide very clear vocational outcomes.

**Mr Birman**—The link in all of this is—and this is the exercise that we are looking at in the health care industry at the moment—how we can make the best of both systems. Having seen a number of the VET systems in other countries, I am firmly of the view that Australia has a world-class VET system, if not the best. That does not mean it can remain stagnant. It should always be rising to the challenges. If there are good things in the VET system that higher ed can learn from, and vice versa, and we can provide outcomes to individuals and industry by matching the two, then that is a benefit. I was most interested in the previous speaker and some of the frustrations he expressed or revelations that he saw in number-driven courses and the like, and the mix of that course between VET and higher ed. That is a good model. It might work in the academy of arts. We believe it certainly would work in health care, and I am sure there are other areas.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Forgive the ideological questions, but I have got to ask them. Perhaps you will know where I am coming from. We have had internationally almost 20 years—not in Australia, but internationally 20 years—of the principle that private good is better than public good, and moral good can be replaced by the principle of user pays. Some of the original gurus, particularly those from the Federal Reserve in the United States, people like Ethan Kapstein and so on, have now turned around and said, ‘Hey, hang on a minute. This is not working the way we said it would.’ You make a lot of use in your submission of user choice, user choice, user choice. It is everywhere. What do you mean by user choice in a sense of the student, not the private provider or the public provider? For example, how many students at a secondary school are well informed enough about making the choice whether in fact the private provider or the public provider are any damn good anyway?

**Mr Birman**—I will give you the moral answer and I am sure Gary will give you the technical answer. I do not think you should underestimate how smart the youth of today are, and you should not underestimate how they talk to each other when they communicate. They know, because they have got big brothers, big sisters, and friends who are involved in courses at TAFE, university and all the rest of them, and they also know where the jobs come at the end of those programs. To underestimate their ability to find that out is to make a tragic error.

We have examples in our own training area where we know that we have kids who have come to us because they have gone to their bosses and said, ‘We want to go there,’

and they have influenced the decision. So I have a lot of faith in the youth of today to actually identify the better providers of both VET and higher ed.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes. I do not want to use the names of the companies—some are international companies—but Qantas stuffed up its training. There is a whole range of companies who have left students out there in the lurch, paying a lot of money, and no return whatsoever.

**Mr Birman**—Yes. Is that provider-driven?

**Mr SAWFORD**—Provider. They contract out to providers.

**Mr Birman**—I do not know a lot about the Qantas decision, and I do not want to use your term ‘left out in the lurch’, but, for whatever reason, the decision was made to discontinue that apprenticeship training. I do not know whether that decision was made because they did not like the training provider or they had other reasons that had nothing to do with the training provider but just did not want to be in the business of training apprentices any more. If they had made the decision just not to be in the business of training apprentices any more, it would not matter whether the provider was public or private.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can I just simply point out that I have been involved in education for 25 years and I have a great deal of faith in young people too—more faith in young people than I have in the adult community—but nevertheless I know that the advice that they receive in secondary schools is appalling. Counselling services in a typical high school, public or private, often have a part-time person to sometimes 1,000 students. That is just an impossibility.

When you talk about the word of mouth from big brothers or big sisters, let me make it quite clear that I believe quite strongly that often the impression out there in the community about a particular institution, public or private, is five years out of date, highly biased and highly individualised. For example, schools have reputations and institutions have reputations that are not deserved. People within the system know that is true. You know that is true. And there are other organisations who often have a very poor public image that actually provide a very good service. So the picture is totally mixed.

What I am asking about the user choice is this. The user choice comes through in here as almost an ideological statement rather than one from the student’s point of view in providing the information. I did not see any references—and forgive me if there was one—to the counselling services that are available to students before they make a choice about private or public. I do not have a problem with private or public. What I do have a problem with is the TAFE system making statements that the student has the available information—that is clearly not true—and the private system doing exactly the same thing: ‘The student has the information.’ They clearly do not.

**Mr Birman**—We are probably on common ground in running an argument that the more information that is provided to the person demanding the service the better the system will operate.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What does your organisation do in terms of secondary schools?

**Mr Collins**—We do a number of things. One of the things that we currently do is this. We are running one of only two school-based traineeships in Western Australia. We have got a group of 20 students from Kwinana Senior High School and a number of senior high schools in that southern metropolitan area who have become part-time employees of the chamber through our group scheme. They spend a number of days in our training centre, a number of days in the TAFE college and the remainder of their time in their high schools, and then they do block programs with selected employers, so at the end of their two-year period they will have three-quarters of an engineering apprenticeship. That is an initiative that we took to try and encourage the involvement of the school sector in the VET arrangements.

But we have also got an excellence in education compact where we encourage partnerships between schools and local business and we try to facilitate those partnerships. So we do quite a number of things in trying to get the message across to students, particularly in those areas where there is some disadvantage, particularly down through the Kwinana-Rockingham area where there are good employment opportunities in things like engineering and so on.

**Mr Birman**—That is done through the Kwinana Industries Council, which is an incorporated body to which CCI provides a management strategy.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And they have always had a strong record.

**Mr Birman**—Yes. I might just say to you that the VET experience in school to work is a major challenge for everybody involved and, while we very strongly believe in it, the mechanisms have to be significantly improved to provide that seamless transition. For instance, one example is that if people are doing VET in schools and a significant amount of it, there is no reason in our view why that should not carry forward towards their secondary certificate.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is right.

**Mr Birman**—That needs to be addressed. There is a very strong argument, certainly in our view, that teachers in the school system are not competent, at this stage in any case, to deliver any medium- to high-level VET training, that the kids need to go out of the schools and into the TAFE colleges or into the VET providers to get the right sort of people teaching them and to work in the right sort of conditions, because we have found that the least safe conditions are actually in the schools. This needs to be addressed,



and we are looking at different mechanisms of doing it. It has also got to be done in an economical way, and currently the cost of the pilots could not be transferred across the community. It just would not stack up financially.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Just a clarification question to Gary. In your training operations do you employ particular people for liaison with schools who go out to schools on a regular basis?

**Mr Collins**—No. That is our school centre people down at Kwinana. It is their responsibility to make the connections with the schools.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But the same with the local school system?

**Mr Collins**—Yes, the local school system.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So in terms of Western Australia, your organisation does not have a deliberate program?

**Mr Collins**—We have an education coordinator who is based in our head office in East Perth whose job is to go out and speak to schools about a whole range of educational issues and talk about career education and—

**Mr SAWFORD**—But you have got one person?

**Mr Collins**—That is right.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So we are focusing again on the same problem.

**Mr Collins**—I might make a point if I may. In terms of the TAFE system, you might be aware that in Western Australia the counselling service that was available for students in the TAFE system was removed a number of years ago—a couple of years ago—so the individual TAFE colleges have now got responsibility for that counselling component that you are talking about and lots of the colleges do not have a formal counselling service any more, so we are not an orphan in terms of the counselling arrangements.

**CHAIR**—To counsel secondary school students?

**Mr Collins**—They provide a counselling service for people who are entering into vocational educational training programs and help them with career choices and so on. That used to be a formal part of the TAFE system but it no longer is.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I think we are making the point that the career guidance person ought to be in the secondary school—even, in fact, the senior primary school—and that

those options are open, and you certainly cannot do that with a teacher who draws the short straw in 'Who is going to do the careers guidance?'—'Poor Joe'. Or 'Poor you, you've got the short straw' and 'I do that and fit it in with all my other duties.' That is just a nonsense.

**Mr Birman**—There has also got to be a degree of relevance. If you are two years out of the industry then you are two years removed from what is going on.

**CHAIR**—And what you are basically saying, or your organisation is saying, is that if the students have the money or if they are carrying the card that has got the subsidy and they are in the marketplace for VET, then providers are much more likely to be marketing themselves to that group—not that all of us would agree with that.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Following on the types of submissions you have been making, yes, we do get the indication from business for various reasons that they feel TAFE is not responding sufficiently to industry—that it is inflexible, et cetera. I think we would be wanting to make some recommendations at the end of our report that would improve the delivery of services by TAFE. What recommendations would you suggest that we might like to include in our report that might improve it?

**Mr Birman**—I am tempted to be very parochial here and say as far as your state is concerned I think they can stay in the ark because that puts Western Australia on a very good footing. New South Wales TAFE is dragging the lead in terms of introducing reforms and user choice and all the rest of it. I see education training is a very competitive field, and our state is at the front end I think in some of the areas of reforms. So the best thing you could do for Western Australia is nothing. The best thing you could do for Australia is get New South Wales TAFE, which is some 60 per cent of the market, to actually catch up with the leading edge of the market. The dollars for industry and everybody else are diminishing, so the return for the dollar has to be more significant, just simply, and the reform process has to be pushed along.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Are you happy with the relationship between TAFE and the universities as it applies in this state? You make some comment about that in your report. You feel as though the involvement of universities may diminish the influence of employers.

**Mr Collins**—Traditionally, universities have taken very little notice of what industry or employers require in terms of their educational programs. The view as expressed in the submission is that the level of influence or involvement of industry and business in the VET sector now has got to a stage where employers can have some say in terms of how courses are structured and where students attend college and so on. That does not apply in universities. If there is some attempt to increase the involvement of universities in the VET sector then there obviously needs to be some involvement of industry, the same level of involvement that currently occurs in the VET sector.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—I was interested in your remark about the universities now delivering a lot of VET courses, but I did not quite pick up the type of courses that you would see that—

**Mr Birman**—Medicine, law, accounting.

**Mr Collins**—Business studies.

**Mr Birman**—Business studies.

**CHAIR**—Engineering.

**Mr Birman**—Engineering.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—So would you get down to the types of courses that TAFE delivers or traditionally has delivered?

**Mr Birman**—The point I was making is that there seems to be a view—and it may be incorrect—that came across to me as I was listening to the committee's questions beforehand that TAFE is TAFE. If you go to TAFE you do a vocational course. If you go to university you do something that assists you to get the skills to do lifelong learning; if you come out with a job at the end, that is not bad, and if you are actually relevant to that job that is even better. I am not being too sarcastic. The point I was making is that law is a vocational course, medicine is a vocational course and accounting is a vocational course, and I do not think that we need be pure about it. There is no purity in the argument to differentiate the two.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Fair enough, yes.

**Mr MAREK**—What about other vocational-type trades? You say 'user choice'. What if a client wishes to do a different thing, like engineering fitting or something like that, and they do not want to do it through TAFE, but want to do it through university? How do you feel about it? Should it be regulated to stop various vocational training being done anywhere but TAFE or should it be opened up, totally deregulated?

**Mr Birman**—It should be deregulated.

**Mr MAREK**—So in other words, what could happen is that the university down the road could start offering fitting and turning courses. I did my trade as a fitter and turner. If I was now finishing school, as you said, I would be talking to my brother and he would be saying, 'Paul, listen, you're pretty switched on; you're fairly good at numeracy and literacy. Go and do it at the university, mate. You'll end up with a better ticket at the end.' 'No worries'—a better chance at getting a job. On the other side of the fence there might be Geoff over here who is not real smart. 'Oh, Geoff, listen, you'd better go and do

it through TAFE, mate. If you can't do the numeracy and literacy, at least they'll get you through and you'll still end up with a piece of paper.' Ultimately, the guy who has got the university degree or university paper as the fitter and turner is obviously going to be a long way ahead of the guy who did it in the TAFE down the road. Do you understand where I am coming from?

**Mr Birman**—Yes. I do not agree with you.

**Mr MAREK**—Deregulate it, so ultimately what is going to happen is that universities are just going to eat up TAFE. There will be no such thing as TAFE.

**Mr Birman**—No, I do not think—

**Mr MAREK**—Stick with me on this. We are looking at the horizon here.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are you asking questions or are you making a speech there?

**Mr MAREK**—I am asking. No, I am asking a question on how they feel about it.

**Mr Collins**—In terms of the delivery of those traditional trade-type vocational programs, the ones that you are referring to, TAFE is not the only provider who delivers those now. There are a number of private providers right around the country who deliver apprenticeship programs, and employers and their apprentices have the choice of going to those providers rather than to the TAFE college, and that applies with our own training centre. We are registered to deliver mechanical fitting and boilermaking and electrical fitting type programs, and a number of other providers are in different places around the country.

A number of universities currently are also registered to deliver those types of programs, for instance Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Northern Territory University, where there are dual status arrangements. They offer fitting and machining apprenticeships and boilermaking apprenticeships alongside traditional TAFE-type providers. The credential is no different because of the fact that it is issued by the Northern Territory university as opposed to Fremantle TAFE college. The actual credential is the same and the registration process that applies to each of those providers is the same. They all have to satisfy the same criteria to be able to deliver that program. They have to have the right equipment, the right type of people to train—

**Mr MAREK**—But ultimately a completion of the course through university would probably, obviously, carry a much higher weighting in trying-to-get-employment prospects.

**Mr Birman**—The answer to that is no. The answer is absolutely no, because the employer will sort that out the first day you walk on the job, particularly with trade skills.

**CHAIR**—I think what you are saying is that it is as though your employers have chosen you because you are trained, but you are also educated, which is your arts degree. For some people in the marketplace, they just want somebody that is competent, comes out of an institution or through a provider in VET and is able to turn up on the job and do a particular series of tasks.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And Gary has got both.

**Mr Collins**—Certainly if I was looking for work in my previous occupation as a boilermaker, my master of education degree would mean absolutely nothing. It is to do with the criteria that the employer expects. They expect people to have certain boilermaking skills. Whether those boilermaking skills are acquired through a university provider, a TAFE provider or a private provider is immaterial. It is whether that person can actually produce the goods in the workplace.

**Mr Birman**—There is an example of a training provider in your electorate, Rod, in Port Adelaide.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Regency Park.

**Mr Birman**—The fabrication training centre.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Metal fabrication centre.

**Mr Birman**—Yes, which presumably now is well placed to deliver services into the market under the user choice regime. That particular training centre struggled, I suspect, for many years in an environment where it was competing against fully funded competition, but it survived. Now it is placed to grow the services that it is providing to the community in that area, and that can only benefit industry and individuals in that area.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I have not found out how their funding has gone for February—it has not extinguished itself yet—what sort of training they are into.

**Mr Birman**—But we went and had a look at that before we stepped into the market ourselves.

**CHAIR**—Are you happy with the competency-based assessment through TAFEs and TAFE providers versus a graded sort of system? I do not know. I presume for some students or providers they just want to know that someone can do that job, but I just wonder whether it encourages a culture of mediocrity to just say, 'Okay, it's a pass/fail.'

**Mr Collins**—We certainly support the competency-based assessment arrangements. Many of our members complain that they are not provided enough information on student performance, and I am aware that the Western Australian department of training through

their TAFE system have introduced a new reporting arrangement for this year, where they are provided information on student behaviour and issues other than just the competency relating to the course of study they are undertaking. I suppose the simple answer is that we support a competency-based assessment arrangement, but there is always room for more information about how well the students are performing, whether they are attending on time, whether they work well in teams, and so on—some of those other key competencies, if you like, that are always useful.

**CHAIR**—Is it your feeling that, where VET providers have got in there to the university system or there is a degree of integration, they are actually becoming distracted from looking after the interests of employers—or satisfying their needs, I should say?

**Mr Collins**—I think yes. I think one of the dangers that the TAFE system has is this. There has certainly been some sort of credential creep in the TAFE system, where they have attempted to offer all things to all people, and lots of TAFE courses now are currently provided as alternate pathways to university, rather than providing direct vocational outcomes. In many ways they have taken their eye off the ball in terms of the vocational outcomes required by the employers. That is not to say that some of the programs they offer are not appropriate, but some of them are offered directly for alternative university entrance rather than as a direct vocational outcome.

**Mr Birman**—It seems to me, in terms of that, from just a pure business setting, that the creation of any monopoly—we had a supply run system that has the potential to self-perpetuate. The breaking down of that monopoly will see the TAFE system refocus itself onto its client base, both in individuals and industry, and I think we will get a better system out of it.

**CHAIR**—It is perhaps a provocative question, but are there any institutions that you would nominate as being good examples of how not to do it, and perhaps others that you consider to be models?

**Mr Birman**—I am sorry, I would rather not answer that question. It is difficult—

**CHAIR**—Is there a set-up in Western Australia, for example, that your members would find quite attractive and a good way to do things?

**Mr Collins**—Rather than give you a direct answer about whether there are good and bad, what I can tell you is that we have had very good relationships in terms of alliances and partnerships with a number of TAFE colleges. CCI has been operating a skills shortage project on behalf of the Commonwealth and state governments for the last couple of years, and we have done that in association with a number of TAFE colleges, where they provide very skilled trainers to go out into the workplace and deliver training. That has been a really excellent example of how you can get a good cooperative arrangements between TAFE colleges and industry; it has been a terrific experience for the TAFE

teachers themselves, because they have been taken out of the institution and placed into the workplace; and it has been a terrific example, as I say, of how we can work together to increase and improve the delivery of TAFE programs.

**Mr Birman**—I guess it comes back to the initial point we made, that we believe that the autonomy of the TAFE colleges should be increased so they purchase funding from WA department of training in the case of Western Australia. If they are allowed to stand on their own two feet and make business decisions, or in terms of their businesses' provider training, they see that they will get a response from that. Then there are community service obligations. They should be purchased, and they can deliver them.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are there any initiatives your organisation is considering for this year, or even perhaps going to embark upon?

**Mr Birman**—Yes. There is one that we are putting the most resources into at the moment. We have had two, in fact; one we proved up last year. Traditionally, as you are probably aware, there is a fixed period of time where you go to off the job training in VET. We took 100 of our apprentices out of the TAFE colleges last year and basically moved 60 per cent of their traditional off the job training into a workplace setting under competency-based training. That has been massively successful. It has seen the company involved increase the number of apprentices in its employ, and our objective there was to turn their culture from training of apprentices to an investment for the future, to an immediate business benefit. We are looking at how we can grow that into smaller companies, so again increase the productivity time that they get for investing in training.

Secondly, there is this area in health care, where we want to introduce some of the VET principles into the degree course for nursing, and create an employment vehicle to employ students to give them work-based experience and clinical experience during their degree course. That is a great challenge.

**Mr MOSSFELD**—It seems to me that what is actually happening is that industry specific training is now really taking the place of training provided by private and public organisations. Do you see this as an increasing role for industry to actually train their own people for their own particular requirements? I think initially people need a base qualification, whether it be university education or a trade, and it seems to me that after that, most of the training is taking place within the industry in which they work.

**Mr Birman**—I have actually an alternate view in the broad setting. I think that there is no productive industry outside the educational sector that looks upon training as a core business activity, in my view. It is a necessity to achieve an outcome, and what industry is looking for is solution providers. They will buy a solution provider that takes that problem away from them. It is like outsourcing catering, outsourcing security. If it is not core business and somebody can come up with a bit of innovation that provides that solution to them, that will be attractive, and that is a challenge for people like us.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—So you do not see it as core business necessarily—training of your own work force?

**Mr Birman**—No. What is core business is providing petrol, providing wheat, manufacturing widgets, or even, if you want to take it to the most extreme, selling dishwashers. That might be the core business. Everything else is a process to get you to the dishwasher to sell. What business is looking for are people to provide solutions to assist them to do their core business on the way. That is a challenge and a threat, but I think it is also an opportunity to meet that niche, and for people to come in and do it.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—That is what the committee wants to know—what is the employer's view.

**Mr Birman**—I think that is a great opportunity that exists for the VET sector.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Have any of your members reported skill shortages or are any predicting skill shortages in the future, and in what areas?

**Mr Collins**—As I indicated earlier, there has been a major skill shortage, particularly in the fabrication trades in this state, for the last two years, two and a bit years. The shortage currently is not as great as it was 12 months ago, but it is likely that the shortage will get worse over the coming months as a number of major resource projects kick in, so there will be an ongoing shortage of engineering and metal tradespeople across the board, but with particular emphasis on fabrication skills, for the next two or three years. There is a major shortage of trained nurses in this state. The state government organised the recruitment of 500 nurses late last year from overseas, and that is obviously why we have got some interest in getting involved in the health care area, because of concerns about some of our members in the private health sector about the availability of skilled nurses. They are the two areas that we have had some involvement in. I am sure there are other shortages that we have not—

**CHAIR**—Is that nursing issue because they are not satisfied with the university educated nurses or the nurses do not want to work who are trained? What is the problem there?

**Mr Birman**—There seems to be a whole range of reasons for lack of retention in the industry. Education is perhaps one of them, but I certainly would not want to present to the committee that that is the issue, because you might have a 100 per cent take-up of the degree and still have a shortage. There are some comments out of industry that the degree is not as work-relevant as it could be, even though you have to accept that you do acquire experience in your first couple of years. It seems that the simple attraction of the university degree is that it provides other options for people to immediately go on to a post-degree course, and there seems to be a fairly high fallout during the course of the degree, so the number of completions is somewhere around 50 per cent of the commence-



ments.

**Mr MAREK**—Doesn't it go against what you were just saying a couple of minutes ago about on the job training? You were talking about people who were in the core business saying training is really just an offset; they would rather somebody else come in and do it. You have nurses who have previously been trained on the job in hospitals. They have gone away from that, and having them trained in universities, and now we are having people coming out of the university sector that—I guess this is what you are saying—are not really up to scratch or are not what they want. So now you are going to have to go back to the other system again. Isn't that what you were saying?

**Mr Birman**—This is a strong argument to take the best of both VET and higher education and merge them into a program that breaks down that barrier between the concept of education and training.

**Mr MAREK**—That is what I was talking about before. You have got to have a balance.

**Mr Birman**—And give you a degree outcome. It may well be this university here runs a nurses degree. There is no reason why this university could not run a degree course that provided the acquisition of competencies both in a university and a work-based setting. The limit to that—it seems to us, anyway—may be more institutional views than practical necessities.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is there a teaching hospital near here?

**Mr Birman**—Churchlands is the Edith Cowan campus.

**Mr Collins**—It is the institutional setting for the delivery of the nurses course. They do their nursing practice at Royal Perth hospital and Charles Gairdner and a number of the other major hospitals around, but the actual nursing program is based within this university and within another one at Curtin University.

**CHAIR**—We might wrap it up now. Thanks very much, John, and thank you also, Gary, for your contribution. It is certainly a memorable one.

**Mr Birman**—Mr Chairman, just for the interest of members of the committee, I brought along some material that describes the CCI training services—the breadth of it—which may or may not be of interest to members of the committee. I would be pleased to leave it with you.

**CHAIR**—Thanks. I will get Mr Rees to distribute them to all the members of the committee. Thank you very much.

**Proceedings suspended from 1.06 p.m. to 2.06 p.m.**

**HASKELL, Professor Dennis James, Coordinator, University-TAFE Relations, The University of Western Australia, Stirling Highway, Nedlands, Western Australia 6907**

**CHAIR**—Welcome, Professor Haskell, to our hearing, and thank you also for producing and putting in the submission.

**Prof. Haskell**—Pleasure.

**CHAIR**—We have read and digested your submission, but perhaps you would just give us a five- to 10-minute overview of whatever you like, and then we will engage in some dialogue.

**Prof. Haskell**—I think we tried to prepare a submission that was fairly direct and clear. I hope it is. The position I have been given at UWA is just one of the jobs I do there, but it is to look into possible collaborations between the university and TAFE, and I suppose for UWA, being the kind of university it is, that in itself signalled a bit of a change in the kind of thinking there. It is a university that is conscious of itself as one of the group of eight, and it is conscious of itself as a research university, but we saw it—and the then vice-chancellor, Fay Gale, certainly saw it—as a bit of an equity issue. We actually are interested in, I suppose, breaking down a bit the silver spoon, ivory tower kind of image that UWA has had to some extent in the past.

There are lots of complications when you get into the nitty-gritty of looking at possible collaborations. We have had one that I was trying to advance as a trial with the WA School of Art and Design, which is still very much in process, but looking to teach in the area of fine arts, whereby we might be able to work with them. I thought of it as a good example of the kind of collaboration that might be possible, because they have some very good facilities. There is a degree of just technical know-how in terms of art, design, drawing, and so on, practical activity, where they had facilities and some expertise, though their expertise is, as with a lot of TAFE colleges, largely or to a very great extent hired in. There are practising artists they get in to do a bit of teaching. So the culture is different to the culture at the university.

In our area of fine arts we are certainly concerned with teaching art history and art theory. That kind of conceptual thinking is of course behind a lot of university teaching, and I suppose especially at universities like UWA, ones with a sort of strong research culture and a kind of sense that teaching and research are very much linked. So there was a feeling that we had something to contribute and they had something to contribute, so we might be able to work together. That may yet prove to be possible.

The only things that have really happened in practical terms are these: they are not really collaborations, but there are some procedures whereby students who do diplomas at TAFE can get into second year in some courses, including fine arts, economics, and commerce courses. There are some credits given. Our experience with those students is

mixed, I am bound to say. The feeling is that some of them have actually been quite good, but a lot of them have found university study rather difficult, found the pace of it difficult, found certain areas of study rather difficult, and perhaps found the whole kind of approach to study difficult.

We are aware of the large number of graduates who actually go into some TAFE courses, usually short courses. I have been trying to investigate just what those courses are—without a huge amount of success but there are some areas where our graduates, particularly those with generalist degrees in arts and science, can get practical skills, and there are also some who do courses like commerce courses who then try and pick up a language at TAFE. We are quite pleased to see that happening. The other key thing, I suppose, that might be in our submission and not in the AVCC submission is that we thought that these sorts of collaborations actually work because of the differences between the two sectors.

I suppose there might be a little bit of concern with the notion of the seamless web of post-secondary education, which we are certainly not opposed to. There might be some tendency to try and converge them. There are, of course, big differences between the different universities, let alone between the different TAFE colleges, which in WA at least are kind of independent, as well as between the TAFE sector and the university sector. In terms of our working with the TAFE college in some real collaborations in teaching, we do run into those structural difficulties to do with funding, the difference with the HECS system for universities, and the inexpensive courses and up-front fees for TAFE students, and the different roles played by federal and state government in funding, too, which do not make it easier to get these collaborations going. I suppose you have already found that out.

There is one element in the AVCC submission which I felt a little bit gingery about, and that concerned the idea of the universities acting as providers for some of the TAFE courses, and perhaps the other way round. We have adopted a policy just within the university of looking at these collaborations but thinking there may be areas where we can work together, but we need to be conscious of the differences between UWA and between what the TAFE colleges might do. If we muddy those by having TAFE stuff taught on our campus, or us going to the TAFE colleges to teach our stuff, then we could sort of blur the sense of roles, and that would not be to the advantage of either the TAFE colleges or ourselves or the students involved.

I guess that is one element in our submission where in comparison to the AVCC submission—the only other one that I have read—there is that element of difference. The AVCC of course is speaking for all the universities, and they do have a slightly different sense of mission. I reflected on that driving over here today, because ECU has recently come out with the statement about wanting to be a kind of practically oriented university, which would take them, I guess more easily, closer to what TAFE is doing than UWA would, at least in many of its areas of study and teaching.

**CHAIR**—Thanks very much. Some of the universities are delivering programs through TAFEs in regional areas. Is UWA doing that at all?

**Prof. Haskell**—No, we are not doing that. One of the things that I am looking at is for us to offer some courses in Albany in the south-west of the state. I have been down there a few times and spoken to the TAFE colleges. The TAFE college currently is teaching nursing for Curtin University on what is, as I understand it, a kind of franchising arrangement, really. We are certainly not wanting to do that. If we teach courses down there, we may use the TAFE facilities, but we want to try and ensure that with the students there— if this all does work, and it is ‘if’ at the moment, to a large extent it will depend on our eventually trying to get extra quota places from DEETYA to enable us to do the teaching there—if all that happened, we want to have the students there to have as close to the experience of students up in Perth as possible, and we are conscious of UWA’s kind of stature, I suppose—its name. We want to see that the assessment of the courses is conducted by our staff, and that they are administered as closely as possible to the way we do it up in Perth. If we do any of this outreach stuff, we are looking to do a large part of it ourselves, and certainly to keep control of the whole thing ourselves.

**CHAIR**—Some people have suggested that the closer articulation between TAFEs and universities has debased the value of a university degree. Perhaps tangential to that, if ECU moves much more toward training kind of courses, what impact is that likely to have on university education? You might have one sector of the university system providing training—I have a medical degree, so I have been trained, not educated—which is attractive to prospective students. Then you have got other universities left to carry the load in French, history, arts and so on.

**Prof. Haskell**—We certainly would see ourselves doing something more than training. UWA, through its then vice-chancellor, who was chair of the AVCC, of course, were very much proponents of diversity within the system. I suppose that has become even more true since the Dawkins revolution and the larger number of institutions. Once a certain number of CAEs and institutes of technology became universities, I think you were bound to get a degree of diversity, and a degree of orientation towards more practical courses and more conceptual, theoretical courses in other places. UWA for a long time was the only university here in WA, so it has sort of been conscious of itself as a university and as teaching through the conceptual historical sort of teaching.

For all that, of course, in areas like engineering and so on, commerce, we are teaching straight-out training things—but we would think not just that. We would think that whereas you might go to TAFE and learn, say, how to use a sort of Excel program, and you might learn how to do bookkeeping or something, we would be engendering a degree of conceptual thought—that people would have an understanding of why you do the bookkeeping the way you do, and we are therefore treating people not for short-term careers, but rather for long-term ones, with all the stuff that is spoken about that. With a need for flexibility in a fast-changing, increasingly global economy, and an increasingly

technologised one, we hope we would be teaching these generic skills, so something beyond training would be involved. Whatever the other universities might do, we would see that as our role.

I think, with the question of the status of a university degree, once the changes that John Dawkins introduced came into play, we were immediately headed towards the American system, whereby you can have a degree from a university which you can just about buy over the Internet, or you can have a degree from Harvard, and these things are both called 'degrees', but they mean very different things. I feel—and I suppose I should say this is me talking; I have not talked about this with our Vice-chancellory, but I do not think there would be much disagreement—that we are partly in that situation already.

**Mr SAWFORD**—This is just a little quote:

Competition between TAFE colleges and universities would diminish the range of educational opportunities for Australians.

Would you like to expand upon that?

**Prof. Haskell**—I just think that if we get the kind of blurring where, if the universities were forced to go running—because of the way funding was—towards more training courses, ones with more immediate and more visible outcomes, and TAFE colleges were not exactly forced, but pressured to up the ante in terms of what they are doing, then you might get something in the middle which does not really cater for—I was going to say for anyone; that would not be quite true, but you would not then be catering for people who wanted just training, for whom it may be perfectly proper and reasonable for the kind of work they want to do, who are undertaking education for vocational purposes and perhaps no others. You could end up I think in the worst possible scenario with people being taught how to drive cars but not the kind of ideas behind building the engines, or the kinds of problems with pollution that ensue when everyone is out there driving a car. I think you run a little bit of a risk of just reducing the degree of diversity in the system.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can I just put it in another way. It just seems to me that higher education could well do with an impetus of new ideas and change, and, to use an example from my home state—I think it happened in the mid-1960s—there was a deliberate import of young, vigorous university lecturers from the red brick universities of the United Kingdom. They particularly came to South Australia doing say teachers college courses and university courses. It became quite clear that the quality of the people delivering the programs determined really what came out of it, and many of those students, including myself, chose to opt out of the university, boring, irrelevant programs, to a much more exciting program delivered by people who I think were far more forward looking.

In terms of not just a pure concept of competition, it seems that in some universi-

ties, often the more established ones, there is that lacking of—the word comes out as this—competition. You do not want to see competition between TAFE and universities, and ‘they diminish the range of educational opportunities for Australians’. It is a strange statement to actually write. Maybe I could say the same sentence: it would actually enlarge the range of opportunities. Why would not it enlarge them? I want to go back to what I said about depending on the quality of the people in that institution. Surely the quality of an educational program, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is highly dependent upon the people who deliver the program. There are great people in universities delivering great programs, but there are great people in other systems also. Is not that the key, rather than these artificial differences that people find it convenient to keep separated?

**Prof. Haskell**—It depends on the extent to which they are artificial, doesn’t it? I think there are real differences there. I have been to TAFE too, years and years ago. I actually personally grew up in the western suburbs of Sydney as a working-class kid and went to TAFE. I think you certainly do get some good people in TAFE: you get good people in schools; you get them in all sorts of institutions. The key thing in the quality of any education is the quality of the people delivering the stuff; the quality of the students who are studying; the facilities they have got to work with—which, in areas like science and so on, are obviously fairly crucial—and often the kind of ethos in which they are working. If you have got the situation you describe where you have got—and I do not know it—people who come out of a system where they are encouraged to get students to think, to get students not just to learn off competencies but rather to think about the concepts behind the competencies, you could get maybe some very good courses. It depends on having good students like yourself there. It depends on having a kind of ethos in which this thing is encouraged.

I am hypothesising, but I think if I were teaching in the TAFE system now, where I was teaching those short courses where you have competencies the students have to measure, and you can tick them off when they get there, it might be very difficult to actually take the time out to do that kind of conceptual work.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So say you have a good maths teacher or a good teacher of any kind. I just do not understand what you are saying. In terms of teaching, that is a reflection on the teaching in universities, but the very best of teachers who know their discipline well can reduce anything down to basic concepts at any level. You take Professor Deans, the Canadian guy. I have seen him sit down with seven-year-olds and explain very complicated calculus in a game format. Now, that is the sort of teaching I am talking about. A lot of people who are mathematicians are mathematicians in inverted commas. If you are a mathematician you actually know all the basics. If you are a philosopher you know those basic principles and rules, and you have a way of doing it. Sure, it is much easier to have good students, but any fool can be a teacher with good students.

**Prof. Haskell**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The really good teacher is the one who lifts people—all people.

**Prof. Haskell**—Yes, but the key thing is how far you are lifting them and what you are lifting them to, or in which direction. I think it is true that the really good students are going to get through whether they have good teachers or not. They will cope. They teach themselves.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes.

**Prof. Haskell**—As a teacher, they are not the ones you have got to worry about, in fact. It is the middle ones and the weak ones. But you have got to have the kind of courses which allow the time to do that. I am not a maths teacher, but if you were teaching a course where people are aiming to come in and learn these skills, get the certificate and get out and get the job, then you might well not have the time that it takes to go off onto these tangents. You might want to get them to learn to do these things and have it done. You might not have the kind of ethos which allows you, whether you have got the ability or whether they have got the ability or not, to think about the concepts behind the skills.

**CHAIR**—When you say that competition between TAFE colleges and universities will diminish the range of educational opportunities for Australians here, do you mean the duplication of academic and administrative activity is going to diminish opportunities; you have not got this cross-fertilisation of—

**Prof. Haskell**—I think you might get less cross-fertilisation than if they are seen to be doing different things actually; if they try to work together or if the students get the experience of both kinds of things—I would say practical and the theoretical conceptual sort of work. Suppose you have this and that and you force them. Suppose you have got black and white and you force them both towards the middle. You end up with grey. When everyone is teaching grey, then you could have people—everyone; it rather exaggerates the situation—doing a bit of conceptual stuff and a lot of training stuff, rather than having some doing training pretty purely, some doing a large amount of conceptual, and some doing a mix.

**Mr MAREK**—Would it be fair to say that the arts are possibly being catered for by the wrong training institution?

**Prof. Haskell**—‘The arts’ meaning?

**Mr MAREK**—Listening to a lot of the people we have spoken to today, I guess. We are talking arts; we are talking camera training at TAFE, all those sorts of things.

**Prof. Haskell**—Right.



**Mr MAREK**—Would it be fair to say that it is probably because an institution like this feels as though they should have all the arts training—that they should just take them off TAFE, and therefore there would not be this need for this great overlapping thing? Do you know what I am trying to say?

**Prof. Haskell**—Yes, I do. Sorry. My question about arts was just to find out whether you meant fine arts or whether you meant history, philosophy et cetera.

**Mr MAREK**—That is further down the list. We will work our way into this.

**Prof. Haskell**—Personally, I did do painting at TAFE once, drawing and so on. It was fun. There was a good teacher; it was great. And we teach fine arts at UWA. What we would see ourselves as teaching, and what interests, let us say the WA School of Art and Design, which is part of the central metropolitan TAFE here, in talking to us is that we teach art history, art criticism. So you can teach art in different ways, I think.

**Mr MAREK**—Yes. You do art here. When I am talking arts and those sorts of things, I am saying that at TAFE they teach camera techniques and that sort of stuff, so is there a push to try and take that off TAFE?

**Prof. Haskell**—Not from us. I cannot answer for the other universities.

**Mr MAREK**—Okay. Who do you think made the decision to start the push to move to this cross-overlapping thing in the first place? How long ago, in your opinion, did it start?

**Prof. Haskell**—Do you mean generally?

**Mr MAREK**—Yes, just generally. I went through TAFE. It was TAFE and it was uni; there was nothing in between. That was back in 1984-85. Now I am saying to you: when did the actual move come to start intertwining this seamless overlap, of starting to bring TAFE and university together?

**Prof. Haskell**—It is hard to say, isn't it? My guess would be, although maybe I am just picking the obvious place—that the obvious date would be once we got the great expansion in the university system. Amongst the CAEs and the institutes of technology, there were quite substantial differences there, and I think there were changes in staffing there because there were people who came through university, got research degrees. There were not many jobs in the universities. They got jobs in CAEs and institutes. They then of course were interested in doing research and they had the kind of thinking about teaching, the research-teaching link that we all proclaim for the universities as what differentiates us in some ways. There was pressure from there, I think.

I have got one personal friend who teaches at Randwick TAFE. He and I did our

PhDs together at Sydney University. He has a previous degree which is in English and he has got a previous degree in Chemistry, so he is teaching English and Chemistry at TAFE. So there are probably some of those people there too. Once those people are in that system, you are likely to get some pressure for convergence, I think.

**Mr MAREK**—We are listening to people like yourself coming from the uni. Do you know how TAFE feels about this push? Has it been a bipartisan approach?

**Prof. Haskell**—I guess it might be different in WA to the other states, but because the TAFE colleges are independent, they are competing with each other. We have had a number of them approach us to see about collaborating in some way, and I suppose it is in their interests to say they have got a kind of affiliation with UWA. We have got a lot of discussions going on as regards this possibility with WASAD, the WA School of Art and Design, and what the students end up with in the end if it all goes ahead. Do they switch from there to university? Do they get a kind of combined degree, a UWA-TAFE certificate, or what? Those kinds of questions have not been really faced before. The TAFE colleges I think, being in competition, are interested then in developing links.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Has business approached you?

**Prof. Haskell**—Not business firms very much; a little bit. We have got one going as a possibility in the management area, and a materials engineering group has approached the university. They are sort of overarching groups rather than individual firms.

**Mr MAREK**—I am getting to where I want to be almost here.

**Prof. Haskell**—Sure.

**Mr MAREK**—The chair asked a question about whether this could devalue the uni degree, and you answered there. So now you have got TAFE; you have got unis. Would you see a lot more being taken from TAFE once there was an industry awareness or an acceptance to move towards the unis? In other words, I am saying that previously we spoke to some people and I said, 'Well, if I was going to do a trade as a fitter and turner and I knew that I could do it with TAFE and walk away with a piece of paper, yet then again I could go over and do it with your university, I'd go and do it with the university.' Can you see that there would be a lot of people just moving away from TAFE and wanting to go and do all the courses with the unis? I am sort of building on this. Should we regulate or deregulate so the competition can take place, or should not it take place?

**Prof. Haskell**—We do it at the moment to some extent, don't we, with the use of admission requirements. If the students could come through—say the people who are doing fitting and turning—and do engineering at university, I suppose a lot of them would. I would not like to see that happening for all sorts of reasons. But at the moment I think

that there would be a lot of people who could cope with the TAFE course who might not cope with the engineering degree. Our experience with the students who have come from TAFE into doing some of the stages, got admitted on the basis of TAFE qualifications—in that area, which is not my area; I am relaying this—is that a lot of them have awful trouble with the maths involved. That is a big problem area for us.

**Mr MAREK**—We are just about where I want to be now. So back to where we were. If you have got a student or a client who is going in through TAFE, has not got great numeracy or literacy skills, he can go in through TAFE and he will end up with his piece of paper. But if you are pretty good at numeracy and literacy, well, you go through the university and you end up with your course done. So what is actually going to happen is that the cream of the students are not going to go to TAFE to get the same training; they are going to go to university or whatever. So then I say, ‘Should there be a social responsibility line where we should restrict the unis taking the cream of students?’ which takes us back to devaluing.

**Prof. Haskell**—The UWA certainly would like to see a system where the students had more choice about where they went. They have got me looking at TAFE things, partly with a sense of realising there is an equity issue there, and that is one reason why we are interested in Albany. It is not only because of skills that some students go to TAFE rather than university; also social backgrounds matter enormously.

**Mr MAREK**—That brings us back to where I first started from. I have done the circle now so I have almost finished. But the point I am trying to make is that if you can get the better qualified or the better—what would one say—respected, more highly respected, course degree as a fitter and turner in a uni, not as a fitter and turner in TAFE down the road, all of a sudden you are going to see people trying to come to uni to do their course; all of a sudden there is no need for TAFE.

**Prof. Haskell**—Yes. I presume you would have quite a lot of people doing the course they were doing before. It would be just at another place and under a different name, wouldn't it?

**Mr SAWFORD**—If you want to do fitting and turning, you would not go to a university. There are some things that TAFE do much better than universities, and that is one of them.

**Prof. Haskell**—Yes, absolutely right. Quite true.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And universities will never ever surpass them.

**Mr MAREK**—What's in a name, Rod?

**Mr SAWFORD**—I think it is an attitude. It is not in a name. It is an attitude.

**Mr MAREK**—You look at some 15 years down the track.

**Prof. Haskell**—It could be a matter of semantics. I think we already have that experience, as I was saying, of some students. We would like to see a greater diversity in the student population we have got. We have got the largest proportion of school leavers amongst our student population of any university in the country, and we meet attitudes like this: we have got a prospective students officer who goes around the schools. She can go around the schools around Peppermint Grove and Dalkeith—all those rich suburbs which are around near UWA, which are well-to-do—and there are lots of kids interested in hearing about UWA. She comes out to Mirrabooka and so on, and it is hard to get the students to think in terms of going. We would like to see that change, but there might well be—I am pretty sure there would be—a lot of students who are going along to TAFE—doing, let us say, fitting and turning—who might not be capable of doing engineering, which would be the comparable area.

I am not trying to look down on those people in any way, and we certainly would not want to be seen to be doing that. We think there should be courses for them. There should be this diversity in the system. They should be able to make the choices themselves. As young as they are and as naive as they might be, and with all the kind of often crazy bases students have for choosing the courses they choose, they should be able to make the choice.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But you only make a choice, a good choice, on the quality of the information that you are given, and there is a problem in secondary schools throughout Australia with this ridiculous system of 1,000 students and some poor devil as the careers adviser, selected by the short-straw method and having other responsibilities. That is just an impossibility, and it has got nothing to do with where the suburbs are. Some people want to push an argument with the postcode. A good choice has always got to do with the best information available on which you make the choice.

**Prof. Haskell**—Yes, but even with the information there. We go around to those schools. We have actually made a big push to try and get around to all these different schools.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—I think basically what is coming out is that really there is possibly a need for each college to specialise in particular roles. I think there could be some wasted money in duplication, and I see TAFE has a specific role, universities have a specific role, and probably somewhere in the middle they come together.

**Prof. Haskell**—Yes, they are the lap-on sort of edges, I think.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Yes, I think so. But I would like to know this. You make a statement in your presentation that the university believes the roles currently undertaken by universities and TAFE colleges respectively are appropriate to current circumstances.

How did you arrive at that view?

**Prof. Haskell**—It is a judgment of course.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Do you have any input from industry or from students?

**Prof. Haskell**—We did not set out to get it in order to write the submission. We feel that we are regularly talking with industry and talking with students, and of course even talking with TAFE colleges. So that is an overall assessment based on the experience of a few people at the university. There is communication with industry and government at different levels. I did draft the submission, but it went through the acting vice-chancellor and the pro vice-chancellor at the time, and was based on their contacts with government and with industry, too. So I cannot say, 'We met so-and-so on this date.' and so on. I think that this is a kind of ongoing thing. I was conscious with this that it might sound a bit as though this is the best of all possible worlds and that nothing should change; I do not want to give that impression, I must say.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—You also make reference in your submission that there was collaboration with TAFE to teach different aspects of courses, and one such current plan is for the university, the Curtin University and TAFE, in the area of oral health.

**Prof. Haskell**—Yes.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Have you got any other examples of that type of collaboration?

**Prof. Haskell**—No. The materials engineering is. The oral health one is a new one that is starting up this year. I have not been directly involved in it, but that is interesting because it involves two universities. To get two universities here to cooperate with each other is something, but to get a TAFE college and two universities cooperating is a miracle. There is the area of materials engineering which I also mention there, where there is a facility where we can do some research and there is some teaching going on too. They are all fairly new; that one is up and running. The oral health one is a new one this year.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Do you see this concept developing?

**Prof. Haskell**—I think they certainly could, given that they are both new ones, and the art one, if we get that going, will be even newer. They have all come out of where a couple of years ago there was none—just as a couple of years ago, or until the middle of last year, there was no-one doing the job I am doing, of looking at collaborations with TAFE.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—All right, thank you.

**Prof. Haskell**—If I can make one last comment: I feel that in the current climate there might be some pressure on universities to move in the training direction—move towards what are the visible and more obvious rewards of study. I think this is a bit of a danger myself. But the kinds of things that we would see ourselves and other universities doing are in terms of research, in terms of that kind of conceptual thinking that enables long-term adjustments—the learning for life sort of thing. But that is getting squeezed in the current economic climate. It seems to me a bit of a risk because the rewards are more invisible and more long term rather than short term. We could lose some of that, if we are forced to come together with the training kinds of approach to education. For that reason, having students who could do, say, a general science degree and then do specific courses at TAFE is actually a good model.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You said it in terms of regional Australia, Dennis, down in Albany.

**Prof. Haskell**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are there any other initiatives in terms of regional Western Australia, and what responsibility do you feel the University of Western Australia has in fact to the whole state?

**Prof. Haskell**—We think we do have some responsibility. We think that we have not looked to it much before. It is expensive for those students to come to UWA. We have got colleges at UWA but it is still expensive. I have actually met with the Department of Education Services here, which is a state government-funded thing. They are trying to look at an overall plan. What we have discussed with them is the notion of, let us say, us being in Albany. We think we cannot be in many places because the population structure here in WA is in some ways odd. It is like South Australia.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes, it is.

**Prof. Haskell**—We cannot be in many places. We could take primary responsibility for Albany. There are things that could be taught down there, such as nursing, which is being done through the TAFE college at the moment. That is Curtin's course. Curtin might also teach that. We could have a kind of mini campus there which involved collaborations. We would administer it. We would work with the TAFE college where appropriate to do it. Curtin or Murdoch might take the lead in Geraldton, which is the other population centre where it might be possible to do something, we think, and we might be able to supplement what they teach by teaching areas they do not. We think that there is a need for one university to take responsibility for administering what would really be a university centre.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But do you see that there could be a dual sector role in regional Western Australia? You said the university would take responsibility for administration.

**Prof. Haskell**—That is for the kind of thing we are talking about in Albany.

**CHAIR**—The institution you mean?

**Prof. Haskell**—Yes. If it is all of them in and everyone is doing a bit of it, we think it will just end up in a mess. Certainly the Department of Education Services feels that; that is, at present, a kind of notion of universities being in those regional centres to offer first-year courses at least so the students could get started. Maybe then they would have to come up to Perth for some courses—they certainly would—but at the moment it is certainly true that in all the regions in WA the students have low participation rates and they have high failure rates when they do participate. There are all sorts of reasons for that I think. It is partly economic.

**Mr SAWFORD**—There is no role for UWA in the Pilbara or the Goldfields or—

**Prof. Haskell**—We do not think economically we can manage it; certainly not at the moment. If we thought we could, to do something up in the Kimberley would be the ideal place. Some of the other universities are trying to start up something there. We do not think there are enough students. There is not a big enough pool of students to make it viable. We certainly do not think even in, say, Albany that we could all be down there competing for students in the same area. There is just not a big enough pool because the population is so much centred on Perth here.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Professor Haskell. We are very grateful for that, and we will obviously take that into account in preparing our recommendations.

**Prof. Haskell**—I look forward to hearing the results of all these deliberations.

**CHAIR**—Yes, so are we.

**Prof. Haskell**—I wish you well with it.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

[1.48 p.m.]

**KOWALIK, Mr Henry Michal, Coordinator, Planning and Development, Curtin University of Technology, Vocational Education and Training Sector, PMB 22, Kalgoorlie, Western Australia 6430**

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Michal, for preparing and presenting your submission, which of course we have read. Perhaps if you give us a five- to 10-minute overview, and then we will engage in some discussion.

**Mr Kowalik**—I have an additional paper which I would like to give you if I may.

**CHAIR**—Yes, sure. Thank you.

**Mr Kowalik**—It is a further elaboration of the overlap between the sectors. Would you wish me to read it?

**CHAIR**—Just speak to it. We can read it. I have got the general gist.

**Mr Kowalik**—Basically, what I am saying is that students in TAFE are more interested in the competencies and skills that they acquire than in any qualification they may receive as a result of acquiring those skills. Very often they complete something like 95 per cent of their course and do not bother to complete the last unit or subject because they have got everything they wanted from their study, and the fact that they have got one subject missing is neither here nor there as far as they are concerned.

In TAFE the courses are accredited and reaccredited regularly. About every three years or so the course is reaccredited, so an old course does not mean anything much in any case. Certainly if a student has started, say, four years before on a part-time basis and chipped away at completing the course, it may be a completely new course by the time the student is about to graduate. What they achieve is to get the skills and competencies. The whole business in TAFE is moving in that direction, so much so that even subjects, units, modules are no longer regarded as being of particular significance; rather, competencies are measured, and that is the unit of measurement. A particular competency is what is counted.

So it is very different to a university, and at Curtin we are in a situation where we have both a TAFE sector and a higher ed sector, and it is one of two universities in Western Australia that has that situation, the other university being this one here, Edith Cowan University, which has WAAPA, the academy, which is largely a TAFE institution.

**CHAIR**—Okay. Anything else to add?

**Mr Kowalik**—It is fairly self-explanatory I think. I would be happy to go over to my other submission. The only elaboration I would make is that—



**CHAIR**—Just interrupting you, is what you just told us, and certainly what is contained in the supplementary submission, the view of the institution or is it a personal view?

**Mr Kowalik**—This is a view of the directorate. We wrote the paper together. There were three of us who wrote the paper: myself, Bob Svendsen, who is now the director of vocational education and training, and Annemie McAuliffe, who has worked on our strategic plan for a long time. It summarises the opinion that we have at Kalgoorlie, so it is not a personal view as such.

**CHAIR**—It is not unknown for someone to present a view and you think it is the institutional one when in actual fact it may not be.

**Mr Kowalik**—It is probably not the institutional one, because the institution is hardly aware the vocational education and training sector exists.

**CHAIR**—All right. In terms of the original submission, is there anything you want to add to that?

**Mr Kowalik**—Again I think it is self-explanatory. I do not think there are any difficulties there.

**CHAIR**—Can I just ask you first of all, Michal, in the supplementary one you have given us today you are speaking about customers and competency-based assessment versus a graded sort of assessment. Are you essentially supportive of increased articulation between the university and VET sectors or not?

**Mr Kowalik**—Very much so. The movement, as I say, is very much from university to TAFE, by a very large margin. Very large numbers of our customers already have a degree or some sort of university qualification and they come to us seeking additional qualifications in order to make themselves job-ready. That is far more common than people with an incomplete TAFE qualification articulating and getting credit for university studies. They are few and far between, but the other way—university students, former university students or people who have university qualifications going to TAFE to get qualification—is quite common.

**CHAIR**—Can you, if you are able to, send us some data to support that?

**Mr Kowalik**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Either for your own institution or, preferably of course, right across the country. We would be interested to see that.

**Mr Kowalik**—Right, I will do that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Even if it is only WA.

**CHAIR**—That is right, even if it is only Western Australia. On the Australian qualifications framework, some people who have sent submissions in have said that a continuum between TAFE and university awards in the Australian qualifications framework devalues awards in both the sectors. Is that something you have come up against yourself, and in an ideal world how should it work?

**Mr Kowalik**—The currency of a TAFE award is very short. It is about three years or however long the accreditation lasts. It is not a case of devaluing, it is really a different sort of thing that we are talking about. What a TAFE college is about is essentially making the workplaces around it more productive, so it is more to do with competencies and skills development in the workplace so that there is additional productivity. So the thrust from which TAFE thinking impacts on this issue is really that it is an academic exercise for somebody else.

Our core business is recognition of training skills, teaching—that is, course delivery—and development of new courses which are required in order to increase the productivity of workplaces nearby. Other issues are peripheral to that, and one can get very het up about them but that is not the core business of the organisation: it is training delivery and either recognition or development of training methods. So it is more a problem for universities I should think, and people agonise about it in TAFE. We just go on and do the job.

**CHAIR**—In fact, I think in your submission you suggested that the movement, by the way, back from universities to TAFE was about seven times higher.

**Mr Kowalik**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—It would be nice to see the actual data.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That presents a contrary argument to what has been given.

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mr Kowalik**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—To what extent has recognition of the TAFE qualifications by universities been enhanced since the merger?

**Mr Kowalik**—We have seen no evidence that there has been any change in the university's attitude to us since the merger. It has always been the case that the university would give about a year's advanced standing for a person who had, say, an advanced diploma or a diploma. Whatever the particular level of study, the university would take it

up, and the university has a very well-articulated position about advanced standing. It gives advanced standing of up to two years in some courses, but a year's advanced standing is not unusual. Usually it is a bit less than a year's standing for, say, a diploma student.

You can get more advanced standing in, for example, arts and design, where you can get up to two years advanced standing, but in, say, business one year's standing is the maximum. If you are talking about mathematics you would be lucky to get a semester's worth, and engineering might be a semester and a half.

**CHAIR**—Just finally before Mr Sawford asks you questions, on the fee issues: we have got one sort of student fee system for TAFEs and VET; we have got a different one for universities. To what extent is that a problem and what sort of reform do you think ought to be required? And related to that I suppose is also the industrial situation for teachers in the two sectors. How can we improve articulation between VET and universities without looking at what we would need to do in terms of fees and also payment of staff?

**Mr Kowalik**—The students pay a fee of \$1.10 per student curriculum hour. Typically a course is something like 500 student curriculum hours per annum and so they would pay about \$550 in fees in the TAFE sector. The university students, of course, pay the HECS fee which is a bit more than the TAFE students. In the sense that they can get two years credit in a particular area if they go the TAFE path and then transfer over to the university—

**CHAIR**—It is cheaper.

**Mr Kowalik**—It is cheaper for them. But I think the main cost as far as students are concerned is the opportunity cost of being a student. The wages lost, wages forgone, is the biggest cost as far as they are concerned, and their living expenses. The fees themselves are a minor consideration when you consider the other costs that they incur.

As far as teachers are concerned, our lecturers come in without, in many instances, a university qualification and so although they are trained to be, say, sheet metal workers or fitters and turners or carpenters they may not have a university teaching qualification. I do not know if that is what you were getting at in your question about teachers.

**CHAIR**—Well, those appointed to the universities are paid more than those who are teaching TAFE.

**Mr Kowalik**—Oh, right.

**CHAIR**—So there are industrial issues.

**Mr Kowalik**—In some cases that has been overcome, as at the academy, because

everyone gets paid the same rate. At Kalgoorlie there are two awards. There is the University Academic Award for university or higher ed lecturers and there is the Community Colleges Academic Award for our TAFE lecturers.

**CHAIR**—But if the University of Western Australia is essentially contracting the TAFE at Kalgoorlie to provide services or educational services which lead to a university degree, doesn't that create industrial issues?

**Mr Kowalik**—No. Not so far at any rate. The conditions of service are different. The demands on the lecturers are different. It has not been an issue so far. There is concern among the TAFE lecturers that the university has been slow in bringing forward the promised wage increases and there is an enterprise agreement being negotiated, but that is in train and that will happen. They will get their five per cent backdated to 1 January, and that happened last year and that will happen this year, so that is not an issue.

**CHAIR**—But if I was under a TAFE award, the community education award, and I was teaching students, knowing that those students would get credit for a university degree from the University of Western Australia, you do not see that that is likely to be an issue if the two sectors get closer together?

**Mr Kowalik**—The intensity of work is different in teaching TAFE students to university students. The requirements on a university lecturer are also to do research, to sit on committees, and there are any number of other duties that university lecturers are required to do as part of their normal course of affairs which are extras in a TAFE situation. So the two awards are finely balanced, as I would say, and there is not that much discontent amongst the TAFE lecturers about the higher status that university lecturers enjoy.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Did I get you right, Michal, when you said that from a TAFE point of view the personnel in TAFE do not see the collaboration with the university as a big issue?

**Mr Kowalik**—No.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is my view, but I do not get that same degree of confidence coming from personnel from universities.

**Mr Kowalik**—Right.

**Mr SAWFORD**—They seem continually to give me, anecdotally, and to show, a great unwillingness. Can you see this being overcome? Is it your view of the university personnel you come across that this dual sector collaboration is not for them?

**Mr Kowalik**—It is very much that sort of culture that exists in a university. It is

breaking down very slowly. I worked in a university as a university lecturer for 14 years, and then I have been at Kalgoorlie as a director, or head of school initially, for 14 years, so I have had a foot in each camp for a fair while.

I can understand the reluctance of universities about TAFE and the attitude was, 'We do not really want to know about that.' In Curtin's case, Curtin arose out of a TAFE. Perth Technical College was part of it and was hived off at Bentley and formed Western Australian Institute of Technology and Commerce which had the acronym WAIT and C. The 'and C' was dropped off very quickly, so it became WAIT. That was bad enough. Now it is Curtin, so there is progress.

At Curtin you would think that they had never met a TAFE person, having themselves come from TAFE, so that attitude of academic snobbism, looking down their noses at their colleagues in TAFE is still there, so much so that—I know everything I say is being recorded—some of my colleagues in the higher ed sector still do not know that we exist, although we have been merged with Curtin now for about 16 months and the merger process before that took another three years, so you would think that everyone at Curtin would know that Curtin now has a VET sector. But I would hazard a guess that the rank and file at Curtin do not know that they do have a VET sector.

**Mr SAWFORD**—If the collaboration in the long term is to be successful, where do you see the leadership coming from? Do you see it coming from the vice-chancellors? Do you see it coming from government? Do you see it coming from a business? It just seems to me that there is an element of leadership that has gone missing when we look at TAFEs and universities, in fact when we look at education in general. You could apply the same principle to secondary schools and primary schools for that matter. They all jealously keep aside each other. They see each other as a threat in terms of funding. They think if somebody gets something their funding has to be reduced. Where is that leadership going to come from?

**Mr Kowalik**—I am not sure that I know the answer to that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can I just go through one by one: if it comes by government what are the advantages and disadvantages of that? If government starts to push.

**CHAIR**—Or perhaps where has the increased articulation that we have got so far—where does the push for that come from?

**Mr Kowalik**—It has come largely from students who want a system that is transparent, that is predictable and they know ahead of time. Students who pay fees, and increasingly they pay more and more, become more and more demanding as to what the outcomes are and they want to know what is in store for them. The push is coming from students, and I think the way the government is looking at things—namely vouchers or some other system of funding individual students—is the right way to go, because if universities then do not get their act together, the students will vote or its customers will

vote with their feet and go.

Where I think the leadership from the government should come is government should set parameters in place as to what the manpower needs are likely to be in five years time or 10 years time, and make vouchers available in let's say, engineering, mathematics and not make vouchers available in areas of low demand, or perhaps high demand and high prestige but of not real value to the nation in terms of production and productivity. Here I am thinking more in terms of do we want to produce, let's say, 10,000 lawyers or 10,000 engineers? If we produce 10,000 lawyers will this country be richer as a result, or will the distribution of assets be distributed differently?

If we produce 10,000 extra engineers one hopes that the production of goods and services will increase, whereas if we produce more people in a certain line the distribution of existing assets and resources will be redistributed. So are we to grow, or are we to cut the cake in different portions?

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—What role will industry play in this process? You have mentioned the students, or the clients, and you have mentioned the government. Where will industry fit in, in driving universities in this direction or the VET system? Do you see industry being involved in the process?

**Mr Kowalik**—Industry is consulted very closely.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—But government would consult industry and then make the appropriate decisions as to where the extra training should take place, in what particular fields.

**Mr Kowalik**—Each faculty, each school has an advisory committee from industry, and industry has an input and advises what the industry particular requirements are for education, training, what you will, so industry has an input in that sense. In TAFE of course the industry input is very good because there are industry training councils set up as such, which take the particular industry concerns at that level and then to the state training board and then from there the state government says, 'We will purchase so much of this kind of training from these providers,' which happen to be the TAFE colleges. Industry in that sense has a very direct role and becomes the driving force of the whole system.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—What support would you get from industry for this concept in your submission that the universities and TAFE combining into a single identity appears unavoidable? Will that be industry driven, do you feel?

**Mr Kowalik**—No, I do not think that is industry driven. It makes sense for a larger organisation to go that way because it has the resources to explore.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Would that be government driven, would you think? Would governments be driving that concept? What I am really getting at is where will the support be for this combined university TAFE concept?

**Mr Kowalik**—That is government driven and has been government driven so far. Every amalgamation between a TAFE and a university has been sweetened by the government, in our case by \$12 million. Without such sweeteners in the way of capital works one doubts whether the amalgamation of a TAFE college with a university would ever take place.

**Mr MAREK**—So is it the government or the bureaucracy?

**Mr Kowalik**—The bureaucracy can see that there are advantages in having amalgamations, because there are economies of scale to be had. For instance, our administration now is one, so we have reduced our administration at the School of Mines and what was Kalgoorlie College, so there is now one set of student service officers who deal with all the students whether they be higher education or TAFE. We have one counsellor who deals with the whole lot, one library, and so on. That economy is being pushed through. There is an economy to be had by amalgamating.

The resistance from the university to merge with a TAFE is considerable, and that resistance in our case was, I think, largely overcome because resources came which were not available other than through amalgamation, and because the Commonwealth saw fit to give \$6 million initially to get the amalgamation going, a further \$6 million down the track—which we have had, and perhaps another \$6 million—it is a considerable amount of Commonwealth funds which have gone towards making the amalgamation effective.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—So you feel as though Curtin is a good example of where TAFE and universities will come together and work successfully.

**Mr Kowalik**—Yes.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Are there any other clear examples around the country that you might know of where the two have come together?

**Mr Kowalik**—The example that is often given is Coffs Harbour, but I understand that Coffs Harbour has its own problems and I would not want to comment about that because I have not been to Coffs Harbour.

**CHAIR**—If I could just bring you back to whether it is a voucher—or whatever you like, but where, essentially, the government's financial assistance and support for education goes to the consumer, which you have described as the customer instead of the institution—and then you say that we could limit or match the amount of money or consumers that are funded to the objectives you want to achieve. What about arts and

things like that? You are not suggesting that we basically have an education system that trains people for jobs and things that are demanded in the marketplace, and that we do not fund history and language and all the other things that are important to culture? I know you are not suggesting that, but couldn't you see that there might be some consequences for that area of education?

**Mr Kowalik**—One makes an assessment as to how many graduates, say in history or philosophy or the like, are required. Some of these are not strictly vocational. There is no subject that I have ever done at university that I have not found useful at some stage or other, or from my secondary school for that matter. I often think to Latin, that I did at school as a schoolboy, and I find Latin is applicable in all kinds of situations, in writing essays and so on and being able to work out whether someone is speaking correctly or not.

There is no loss as far as I see it as to what a particular area is funded, but do we need to put resources, say, into medicine or dentistry or veterinary science or engineering? What is the level of funding that we need to do? A society has to decide how much of its funds will go to pensions, to social security, to education, law and order and so on, or to defence. Given that there is a limited budget and so much of society's resources will go in a particular direction, one has to look very carefully at those funds which are going to go into education. What is the best way of apportioning that particular pool of money going in that direction?

I do not think it should be just open slather, and people choosing to do with that whatever they like. It may be great fun to have everyone read novels, but if we all did that the productivity of our nation would not necessarily go up; or have everyone play a musical instrument. I think what we need to do is ration certain areas so that if a person wants to go into that area, by all means, but if we say as a nation we want 1,000 musicians, then make allowance for 1,000 musicians. If 5,000 want to become musicians, well and good, 4,000 of them can pay their own way. But the Commonwealth should only fund that number which its manpower planning indicates will be what is required in a projection. It has to look ahead. If you do not look ahead you do not know what you are doing and any path is good enough.

**CHAIR**—I am sure that Dr Kent would enjoy a lengthy discussion with you.

**Mr MAREK**—The penny has already dropped. I know exactly where we are going.

**CHAIR**—I think Mr Marek has already written his report.

**Mr MAREK**—It is finished, it is all there. I know exactly what is going on.

**CHAIR**—Just one final thing: our committee recently looked at youth employment and the problems associated and the barriers to young people getting employment. One of



the issues that came up was apprenticeships and the difficulty in attracting both employers and prospective apprentices to apprenticeship training. Do you feel that the trends in TAFE or the way things are going are going to make it more difficult to get young people into apprenticeships, or will that have no impact at all?

**Mr Kowalik**—From what I have heard my staff say they are in favour of the moves that have been made, the new apprenticeships, the open system where there is choice in going to training providers. The big problem in our region is the low level of literacy and numeracy that young people have when they front up to employers and want to become apprentices, and that is a concern. It is far easier to address issues of literacy and numeracy at the right moment, and the critical moment is probably before the child is nine years of age, rather than try and fix up the literacy and numeracy problems when they are almost an adult at 17 or 18.

The cost to the community of fixing it up at a later age is much more severe. Habits are already well formed and to change those habits at a later age is much more difficult. It is far better and more cost-effective, I believe, to make the funds available for literacy and numeracy at an earlier age.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Just a comment, Michal, I am delighted to hear that. That is not a view you hear come from universities or TAFEs, and in actual fact the history of education sectors in this country—in fact in all English-speaking countries unfortunately—has been the undermining of our primary schools in this country, both private and public, and much of that undermining has emanated from universities and TAFEs and secondary schools, in terms of blocking significant innovations and changes. When you look at funding in a primary school of \$1,900 per student, sometimes they exaggerate and say it is \$3,000, but it is actually \$1,900—and you look at the funding—I always thought the younger the learner the more vulnerable, the more dependent; the older the learner, the more independent, the less vulnerable. The funding ought to be going the other way, so I am delighted to hear someone from TAFE, and formerly a university lecturer, say what you said.

**Mr Kowalik**—In another life I used to be a child psychologist with the Education Department in South Australia, so my patch was very wide in terms of looking at reading difficulties and learning difficulties that children had, so I am aware of the problem.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Mr Kowalik.

**Mr Kowalik**—Thank you.

**CHAIR**—We wish you and your wife well and hope things go well. It is a very well-considered submission and certainly was a stimulating contribution, thank you.

**Proceedings suspended from 2.20 p.m. to 2.35 p.m.**

**GARNETT, Professor Patrick James, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Edith Cowan University, Pearson Street, Churchlands, Western Australia 6018**

**WALMSLEY, Mr Tom, Director Academic Services, Edith Cowan University, Pearson Street, Churchlands, Western Australia 6018**

**CHAIR**—First of all I would like to thank you for the submission from Edith Cowan University and also for taking the time to come and speak to it. Perhaps if you would just give a five- to 10-minute overview and then we will engage in some discussion.

**Prof. Garnett**—Our position is a little bit fluid at this time. The university has been through a strategic planning exercise over the last few months, but I do not think we are very far away from the AVCC's position on the relationship with TAFE. I will add more to that, but in general terms I think—and you would be aware of the AVCC's position, I presume?

**CHAIR**—Well, perhaps if you could remind us. This is our first hearing.

**Prof. Garnett**—All right. Maybe if I just expand on what I think our position is.

**CHAIR**—Okay.

**Prof. Garnett**—The two sectors are, to a fair degree, distinct. They serve different needs and they probably do that fairly well. The VET sector is obviously more vocational. Not that universities would claim to be non-vocational, but the TAFE sector I think is more vocationally specific, and it is more competency based in its training obviously than universities are. The universities would claim to be more about scholarship but, particularly these days, they have a pretty strong vocational emphasis as well. Despite that, I think the sectors do cover different territories and, if it is worthwhile, I can dig out the AVCC's paper, although it is probably better you get it from them, I suspect.

**Mr MAREK**—Excuse me, could we go right back one more step? What does AVCC stand for?

**Prof. Garnett**—AVCC is the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, so it is all the universities' vice-chancellors. They belong to this club basically.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You describe it well, Patrick.

**Mr MAREK**—Now I understand what it means.

**Prof. Garnett**—Okay. We would put the view that you need to preserve the best

elements of both sectors, and one of the things I would be a bit fearful of is, for example, universities subsuming all TAFEs and then losing what TAFE provides across the educational profile of the country. I think the TAFE sector has an important role to fill in there and, along a similar line I suppose, TAFEs becoming universities and aping universities I do not think is in the best interests of the country either. So I do think both sectors have a heartland. It is interesting, what is happening in Victoria at the moment with some of the TAFEs being taken over by universities there. You probably know more than I do about that, but I do not know how that will pan out in the long term. So the point I am trying to make there is, I do not think you want to have a uniform system or assume that TAFEs and universities are covering the same territory, because I do not think they are.

If I could make a couple of comments about the qualifications framework. Are you aware of the Australian qualifications framework?

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Prof. Garnett**—We know that is not intended to be a strict hierarchy and we do not view it that way either, and I think Geoff Gibbs made that point in his letter to you. I think it is useful, and if you get that AVCC submission, they talk about two of the qualification levels, the diploma and the associate diploma, as territory which both sectors will probably operate in and they put the point that universities should be degree and above, the TAFE sector or the VET sector certificates and below, but in those middle two areas there will be some overlap and we live with that, I guess.

Universities also get a little bit—‘precious’ might be a bit unkind a word for universities; but universities will always want to maintain their freedom to offer what qualifications they like, so there are some qualifications not in that framework that universities will offer, like graduate certificates, associate degrees and those sorts of things, but I do not think that is too relevant to you.

Having commented that I think the two sectors have got a distinctive role to play, I do think inevitably there will be some blurring across the sectors over the next few years. It will be interesting to see what comes out of West at the end of the day, but I do think there will be some blurring and you will see increasing levels of collaboration between the VET sector and the university sector.

I just, when I was thinking about this, tried to jot down some ideas to straighten things in my own mind. Obviously there are some institutions that are cross-sector already, completely, like RMIT and Swinburne and so on. You will have places like the academy here which are cross-sector in a niche situation. I think the academy would argue, and we would support them, that that has brought about a unique institution which has got a lot going for it in terms of producing graduates of real quality. So there will probably be a limited number of those niche areas that will be cross-sector.

I think in some of the regional areas there is probably a case for cross-sectoral institutions even. We have got the Bunbury campus of ECU with the South-West College of TAFE right next-door. I am not quite sure of the situation at Kalgoorlie—I guess you have just been talking about that—but there is probably a need for, and some advantage to, looking at those regional requirements, where you cannot really afford to set up a university but they have university aspirations. I do not know whether you have the TAFE part under a university campus or whether you license a TAFE area to offer university degrees in some sort of way, but I think the regional needs of various parts of the country could come under that umbrella.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can I just get a bit of clarification here, Patrick?

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What happens at Albany and Geraldton?

**Prof. Garnett**—Well, they are all ambitious to have university campuses, I can tell you that. At Albany at the moment I understand UWA has got a bit of a presence. Do you know anything about that?

**Mr Walmsley**—We do a bit of country contracting down there, which was through TAFE. Essentially, they were teaching—

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is what I was actually going to get to, because we had a previous witness this afternoon from the University of Western Australia who mentioned Albany—Edith Cowan, Albany.

**Mr Walmsley**—Well, yes, we have been country contracting for some time, TAFE teaching our courses on contract, in visual arts, children's studies.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is pretty small, isn't it, now?

**Mr Walmsley**—I think children's studies finished and visual arts continues, but it is small, yes. The same sort of thing was at Kalgoorlie, and some of our Aboriginal studies are done in a range of regional centres, but a little bit differently.

**Prof. Garnett**—What we have been looking at for some time—and I think we were one of the leading institutions doing it, partly because of where we are in the market—is formalising articulation arrangements with various TAFE colleges to make it easier for students who are TAFE graduates to come on to university and get a reasonable level of credit in their degree, so if they have done an associate diploma, for example, we virtually guarantee in a cognate area that they will get a year's credit in a degree program. We are being a little bit more generous in one or two areas where we have had a bit of say in the design of the TAFE level course. So that general area of articulation is one

which will continue to develop.

I think increasingly you will see joint qualifications awarded between universities and the VET sector. Monash have been doing some of that and we have started one this year. Murdoch University have got one between the Rockingham TAFE and themselves in engineering. We have got one just starting in chemistry. I think you will see that increasing, and there are distinct advantages sometimes in some institutions doing that, in that you can use the resources a little bit more efficiently so you do not buy another set of atomic absorption spectrophotometers and mass spectrometers and so on, so you make use of facilities across the two institutions.

I also think some of those courses provide a blend of the skills which the TAFE sector often provides a bit better sometimes than universities, with the theoretical and scholarship aspects that universities provide. So I think you will see an increasing trend in that direction of joint qualifications.

We are also looking, at our own institution, at trying to set up stronger relationships with TAFE up at the North Metropolitan College at Joondalup, which is right next door to us. So I think that is where some of those joint programs will come from; making the thing a little bit easier from a student point of view I guess, so the student who goes to TAFE—‘Oh well, I think I’ll do a university qualification now’—does that without having to start all over again.

That is mostly where we are at. In summary what I am saying is that the sectors, I think, are different and you need to preserve the differences where they are useful, but I think you are going to see more blurring. That is not meant to be a contradiction if it sounds like a contradiction. You are going to see a little bit more overlap and certainly more collaboration as time goes on. I do not know if you are looking at funding. Are you?

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Prof. Garnett**—That seems to me to be complex, and this sort of stand-off between the Commonwealth and the states in relation to funding, as a voting member of the public I find absurd really, and I do not think it is particularly helpful. You guys have to sort out, I suppose, who should be doing the funding, but there are probably some issues too in relation to equity and student fees and so on. At the moment, as you know, students going to university are up for HECS fees. I think that is going to drive demand down in the universities for a while because I personally believe those fees are too high, particularly for the less well-off in the community. At TAFE there are not HECS fees, but there is a small up-front cost. I do not think that is huge, but there is a small up-front cost.

What may happen I think over the next little while is that you will find springing up around the place, potentially anyway, TAFE institutions possibly trying to offer the first year of a university program which students can get for very little cost, and then hop

into the university sector later so they end up owing less money, and I do not know if that is what the country wants, but it does not seem too smart to me.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In fact, that was going to be my first question, about the fee arrangements for students and the anomalies there. What is the ideal situation? There is a lack of equity there, particularly as there is cross-fertilisation and articulation between VET and university sectors. What recommendation should perhaps we be putting to the Commonwealth? If you were writing it, what would you be saying?

**Prof. Garnett**—About what fees, say, TAFE—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Student fees.

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes, it is tricky, isn't it? My perception is that generally a lot of people who go to TAFE are not well-off and, even though it is a deferred debt, if you whack on a heavy HECS fee then you might drive people away from TAFE as well, and I really think we need a highly educated workforce rather than a less educated one.

Tom and I have talked about that briefly and wondered whether maybe we should use the qualifications framework and look at, say, for certificates and below having a very low fee regime, as is currently the case, but if there is going to be a trend—and I do not know that there will be—where TAFEs might like to offer the first year of a university degree or even the first year and a half or even the first two years at this cheap rate, maybe you make the diploma and the associate diploma have a HECS-like charge comparable to ours, although I still think ours are too high.

**Mr Walmsley**—I think it is a question of equity, so that where similar courses are taught, the fees, the costs, ought to be somewhat similar, otherwise there is a distinct possibility of serious disadvantage to some group. So those courses which can be done in both sectors could be considered for costing in the same way. Those courses which are unique to a sector may well be costed differently, but it is that issue of equity. If you go to a university from day one you are liable for HECS. If you can complete the first part of it or half of it in some other institution you might pay considerably less. That appears to be inequitable.

**CHAIR**—Are students—or customers, as we were just told—making those decisions now?

**Prof. Garnett**—Well, people tell me they are. I do not have any particular experience, but certainly the faculty of business have got some concerns. They have had, in our place, a bit of a downturn in demand this year, which is really contrary to what it has been for a while, and they are concerned that this might be students saying, 'Well, I'll go to TAFE and I'll get my first year.' They have been in the vanguard of setting up these relationships anyway, so maybe it is some of their own making, but they certainly seem to

think—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is it that or is it that the students made the choice that they think the offering at TAFE is better in that particular area? It is a bit hard to tell, is it?

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes. I do not have any data to say really.

**CHAIR**—It seems a ridiculous situation here. It is cutthroat to get into the VET Performing Arts. They have got no fees at the moment, then they will go to \$1,500 a year, and you have got some other poor bugger signing up for a science degree or something like that and he has got big HECS costs.

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes.

**Mr Walmsley**—I think until recently it has been the case that students who had considered uni would prefer it to TAFE, and they would apply firstly to university. I suspect that is changing and what you are saying, Rod, is probably true. There is a recognition that some of the approaches used in TAFE, and some of the facilities, are as good as if not better than those available in universities.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I have just received some anecdotal stuff, but I have no data whatsoever, and it may be quite inaccurate, that some very bright young people who have got high skills—I am not talking about low skills; high skills—whether they have in fact received particular information about careers advice or whatever, someone has opened their eyes: if they do these particular courses their employability and also future remuneration is higher—and it is in some TAFE areas. It is.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Not in every case.

**Mr SAWFORD**—No, but there is some anecdotal information that is coming in to my office that is saying that this may be a possibility, but in terms of numbers I have not got a clue.

**Prof. Garnett**—One thing with that joint qualification that I mentioned before that we have done is we have structured it so that the students can opt out at the end of first year or second year or third year. If they go out of first year they get a certificate of some sort, second year a diploma, third year a degree. We are doing that deliberately, because I suspect there is a market there of students who think, ‘I do not know that I want to do three years. I’m not absolutely certain I want a university education, but by doing this I can, if I want to get a job, opt out after year 1 with a certificate or, if I like it, I can go on.’ Those sort of experiments I think will happen. But we are getting away from your question, I am sorry.

**CHAIR**—What about the industrial issues in terms of staff remuneration? The

previous witness I was asking about UWA contracting out at Kalgoorlie TAFE. If I was teaching in a TAFE and then the institution was contracted to provide teaching that would lead to a university degree from ECU, I would say, 'Well, why aren't I getting paid the same as a university academic?' We were told that job descriptions are different and you have got research and committee work and that sort of stuff, but I would think the average person teaching at TAFE goes to a few committee meetings. I realise research is probably less of an issue. Is that a barrier to further articulation?

**Prof. Garnett**—I do not know that it is a barrier to articulation. I think it is going to be a problem in an institution like Swinburne that I think employs people under two sets of conditions, doesn't it?

**Mr Walmsley**—There are such institutions, yes.

**Prof. Garnett**—RMIT I am pretty sure does anyway. So they employ some of their staff under TAFE requirements or conditions and some under uni, and I think that is a recipe for dissatisfaction. The academy, as I understand it, employ all their staff under our normal uni conditions, and I would not like to operate an institution in any other way really.

**Mr Walmsley**—Where we contract or have contracted, the staff employed are employed under sessional university rates. As close to town as our Midland centre, the Swan tertiary ed centre—we operate out there, which is a relatively new development, the last three years only and a small development—there are TAFE staff who teach for us in some of our programs there on a part-time basis and they are the same as university.

**CHAIR**—The Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who understand we have very much a market/industry need sort of approach to the problem, amongst other things were suggesting that the institutions, the physical resources, actually be available to private providers, so that if you want to provide a welding course or something and you can do it for a certain price, you ought to be able to use the facilities to provide the course. Is that something that a university providing a part VET component could cope with?

**Mr Walmsley**—Simply hiring a facility or providing it for free?

**CHAIR**—Well, providing it. So in other words, under the auspices of Edith Cowan University you are providing a fabrications training program and you have actually contracted it out to Rod Sawford Enterprises or something. Is that something that is feasible?

**Prof. Garnett**—Would Sawford Enterprises want to pay an appropriate dollar for that, or do they think that it ought to be for free because at least some of it has been provided by the government?



**CHAIR**—Perhaps another way of looking at it is: is it possible for you to maintain the standards that you would like to maintain, and have private providers providing the vocational education and training component of any course?

**Prof. Garnett**—That is really tough. I have thought a bit about that because I know in the VET sector there is a lot of contracting out, and so on, but I think what you are going to find, in a university context anyway, is that the things that would be taken up by the private sector would be the things that you can do cheaply and where you have got large numbers, so business courses, for example, where you do not have to run laboratories, computing possibly, because the market is there. So I have a real problem with it. You would probably get away with it for a little while, I think, but who is going to maintain the library, for example, in that sort of situation? If a private provider comes in, I presume the students would want access to a library. Are they going to provide a library of their own? I am not convinced. We can all do things better, but I am not convinced that opening everything up to the private providers is going to end up with a higher quality higher education system than you have got now.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Would you provide a direct service to industry in any shape or form? Would you go on site to industry to provide training?

**Prof. Garnett**—Absolutely, we would, yes.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Go to a mine site?

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Alternatively, would you bring a group of people from the one industry into your university and run a course?

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes. That is one of the things we are really trying to do, as we are I guess being forced by government to raise more money of our own. You are going to have to go out and market. Deakin University have done a fair bit of this in the past, and we are putting a fair bit of effort into developing materials that we can run through the World Wide Web so that people can access it on a fee-for-service basis. We do some of that now. Perth is relatively small. One of the problems for us in Perth is that we do not have many head offices here, so a lot of the training gets done on the other side, but we would certainly be interested in doing that sort of thing. I know Geoff Soutar's group does a fair bit of consultancy type of business.

**Mr Walmsley**—It does in banking; it does in-house training for banking. Our faculty of education training and development is used for Train the Trainer, on site, at a time to suit—weekends, evenings and so on—but off the university campus, Security Science does some tailored commercial courses for the security industry.

**Prof. Garnett**—We have done that offshore and over east as well in security. I think what you are going to see more at universities too is that they get more entrepreneurial. You will see a lot more modularisation of course materials, and people will do it fee-for-service, and then at some stage if they want to take out a qualification they will be able to put collections of modules together for a unit of a course or towards a course.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Just in terms of Churchlands, Claremont, Mount Lawley, were they the former teachers colleges, and are they the same sort of size as they were?

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes and no. In 1982 this came about. We started off with Churchlands, Mount Lawley, Claremont and Nedlands. Nedlands has subsequently been sold, with the agreement of the state government, to the University of WA, and the money from that was used to build up this campus a fair bit. ECU bought the Joondalup site, and if I can just say I think it is very unsatisfactory that we had to buy that site, because normally state governments provide land for universities, but we actually bought that site and have built with Commonwealth moneys the buildings on that site. The direction that we are moving is that we are certainly looking seriously at trying to get a buyer for the Claremont campus, possibly UWA, so that we can concentrate our teaching activities on Mount Lawley and Joondalup, and we are looking at Churchlands as a commercial campus.

We do have some relationships with a private provider at the moment, who attracts a lot of overseas students who come to do the year 12, year 13 area, and then come into our programs as full fee-paying overseas students. So we are looking at consolidating our campuses. This is a long-winded answer I am giving you.

**Mr SAWFORD**—No, the explanation was fine. Can I just ask another question to both of you. This is the first day of our inquiry, and all the previous conversation I have had has been with university people in Adelaide, who seem to come from the former CAEs or whatever you want to call them—red brick, sandstone, or whatever. They seem to have a much more open attitude to dual sector and are much less defensive, and I have noted that today from both of you, that you do not seem fazed by it one way or another.

**Prof. Garnett**—No.

**Mr SAWFORD**—If it evolves into a system, well, it evolves. If it does not, well, it does not.

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And you acknowledge in your submission the regional need, which I think is highly important from a national point of view. You just have to have collaboration in some of those regional areas. I am a little worried when I see Edith Cowan down in Albany rather than the University of WA. That worries be a little bit.

**Mr Walmsley**—Notre Dame.

**Prof. Garnett**—You mean in the one place?

**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes.

**Prof. Garnett**—Our presence is minimal, really.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I gather the whole presence is minimal, anyway.

**Prof. Garnett**—At Albany, yes, that would be right.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So that is something to be developed.

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is it perhaps the personnel in the former CAEs? There is a different attitude.

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is less defensive, and I find that quite strange.

**Prof. Garnett**—I think there are a couple of reasons. One is the old sandstones are aiming for the top of the market. The universities, when we were boys and girls, were really only interested in the top five or 10 per cent perhaps, and I think the old CAEs in terms of their development have had to be entrepreneurial and opportunistic, I guess, in terms of course developments and so on, and they have been through a lot of changes. When we amalgamated as those teachers colleges, all we did in those days was teach education students and some business at Churchlands. Then with that 1982 amalgamation there was a move to broaden the profile, so we had to develop all sorts of new courses. We had the Dawkins thing, so we became universities, so research was cranked up, so the fact that we have had to be adaptable is part of the answer.

**Mr Walmsley**—I think in answer to that there are two things. Edith Cowan probably led the way in Western Australia with its links with TAFE, and went to some trouble first to establish credit transfer, and I think the other universities—a couple of them, at least—are catching up a little bit. So that is one reason. We have had an interest in that for the sorts of reasons Pat has mentioned, but it is clearly an important part of our mission. We take a diverse range of students in. We take more mature-age than most, we take more females than most. We probably have a wider range of entrance groups, but that is a clearly stated mission of the university, so TAFE is one of those groups, and I guess that explains why we have maintained a very high intake from students who have completed or partially completed awards in TAFE.

**Mr MAREK**—Would you say that it could actually start producing the start of a phase-out of TAFE?

**Mr Walmsley**—No.

**Prof. Garnett**—A takeover of TAFE.

**Mr Walmsley**—A phase-out?

**Mr MAREK**—A takeover or phase-out of TAFE. Ultimately if the universities can offer the same courses and even in some ways, some would say, produce a superior training level or whatever—and of course you have got the user's choice, the ability for a client or a student to be able to say, 'I'll go to the university and do my training, rather than go to TAFE'—then after a while you will see probably more funding going to universities for those sorts of things, because TAFE will probably start having a loss of students going to it. So would you predict that it could be the start of the decline or phasing-out of TAFE?

**Mr Walmsley**—I certainly would not.

**Prof. Garnett**—I would not support that either.

**Mr MAREK**—Or would you say that TAFE will always have a role?

**Prof. Garnett**—What I was trying to say earlier, and probably not very well, was that I think the two sectors do have different roles, and I would not like to see TAFEs and their students treated so that they ended up with the same debt if they went in to do certificates as a university graduate. I think you need to keep that sector there, and I also think you need to encourage people to go to it.

**Mr MAREK**—Well, the only thing that would change that is if all of a sudden you said, 'Okay, as of today, students who go to TAFE have to pay their way as well, and they have to pay HECS, too.' So all of a sudden that is gone.

**Prof. Garnett**—You are saying if that happened, that would hurt TAFE?

**Mr MAREK**—Yes.

**Prof. Garnett**—There is no question about that.

**Mr MAREK**—Yes, most certainly. So once again I bring back the argument. The way the country is going, regardless of what government is in power, we are starting to see this trend towards user pays.

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes.

**Mr MAREK**—So once again you get back to the point that if more people start wanting to enrol in university because there is no restriction—either place can teach any subject—then all of a sudden you will see the decline in TAFE. So what I am saying is, should there be restrictions or should it be regulated or deregulated?

**Mr Walmsley**—For a start, I do not think both sectors can teach everything, and it would be foolish to suggest we could handle what TAFE do, or that they could do what we are doing. They are distinctly different, and TAFE ought to continue with the things it does best; so should we. What we acknowledge is that there is a bit of an overlap in the middle, and if there is a problem area it is going to be there. We are attempting to solve the problems by recognising the overlap and facilitating transfer between the two, but to suggest that we could do what they do across the board is not sensible at all. Similarly, they could not do what we do.

There are separate jobs for each sector, and it will continue, and even if HECS fees as we know them were introduced in TAFE, certainly there would be a massive hiccup, and their enrolments would suffer, but they would recover. The strength of TAFE is in its ability to do its vocationally-specific training courses, which are more specific than many university courses, and meet a real need, and will continue to do so, and people will be prepared to pay for them.

**Prof. Garnett**—It is interesting. If I can comment on the deregulation/regulation bit, one of the things coming out of West was it made a big song and dance about deregulating the system, but if you read it through carefully, sure, it was going to deregulate, and the notion was there for student-centred funding and vouchers and all that, but there was also this amazing level of bureaucracy that they were going to put in place to regulate anything. They were going to have a national ranking system for all university applicants in Australia. They were going to have a national ranking system for all postgraduate students. They were going to have a national accreditation system for all qualifications. I just could not believe that an intelligent group of people could say they were deregulating the system, and then they were going to put all this regulation in place.

I know market forces are powerful and competition is good, but I do not have absolute faith in the market being able to finetune our education system. If I can give you an example, if we said, 'We'll take as many students as want to do physical education teaching,' or the University of WA said, 'We'll take as many medical students as want to do medicine,' the free market people would say, 'Well, eventually there will be so many graduates it will drive down the return, and then there will be less demand, and so on.' But with phys ed teachers the demand has been there forever almost—for 20 years—and there are a lot of people who did that qualification who did not get jobs in that area, so I just do not think the free market can work totally in education.

**CHAIR**—There are fiduciary responsibilities that both the institution and its graduates have that are not going ever to be met by the market itself.

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—A number of the submissions we have received, notably today at least from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, are very strong advocates of funding being made available to the students. One of our people described them as customers. Do you have a view of that? Does the institution have a view of that? You are creating, as you know, an educational marketplace, and that was one of the options that West put up. Clearly there are some VET programs and some university degrees that do lend themselves to that kind of approach, but there is a concern also about the arts and language and things that are defining of any culture that are going to suffer in such a system. Would you like to comment on that?

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes, I share those concerns about the things that do not appear to generate necessarily an economic return. Also from an institutional point of view, vouchers would harm us very much because we are not one of the old sandstones, we are the last kid on the block, and therefore our status in the community is not as high as UWA, or Curtin for that matter. The same situation prevails in the other states. If you do go to a market-centred, student-centred voucher system, I think ultimately you are going to have some casualties. Now, if that is what the government wants, that is fine, but what you are going to do, I think, is force some universities out of business. That is my guess.

**CHAIR**—Were the representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry here, and one or two others who have made submissions, they would say, ‘Well, that is probably not a bad thing.’

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes, they probably would.

**CHAIR**—I am not saying this is my view, and it is certainly not the committee’s, nor the government’s, but they would say, ‘You are not providing a service that is attractive to the market’; that is the customer, as we are told they are now. Some of us still think of them as students. ‘That is not attractive, because ultimately it’s not attractive to the needs of the workforce.’ So their view would be that if you were providing the best VET or university program in a particular field, then you will get customers.

**Prof. Garnett**—Yes, I understand that argument, and there is no point saying it is not fair because UWA has got a history of 100 years, and if you put all their staff in our place and all our staff in their place, UWA would still be the preferred place to go, just because it has that standing. That is like Optus arguing with Telstra. A new player in the market just has to cop it, I guess. I do not know how the student voucher thing would work, and one of our other concerns is, and it might not be an accurate concern, but it is likely in a student voucher situation that that is going to be oriented more to school

leavers. I think the mature age market has had its run, in a sense, politically. Most of our students are mature age students. We have about a quarter who are school leavers, a third, perhaps.

**Mr Walmsley**—Yes, a small number.

**Prof. Garnett**—So that aspect of it we would not be too keen on, either.

**CHAIR**—Thanks very much for that. That is a very thoughtful and useful contribution. If there is subsequently anything else that you come up with or you see submissions from other people that you are a bit concerned about, do not hesitate to write me a letter.

**Prof. Garnett**—Thank you very much.

[3.15 p.m.]

**WHITE, Associate Professor Michael Anthony, Faculty of Education, Curtin University of Technology, Kent Street, Bentley, Western Australia 6102**

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Professor White, first of all for taking the trouble to make a submission, and then coming along to speak to it. Perhaps you could give us a five- to 10-minute overview of your views, and then we will discuss them.

**Prof. White**—Thanks. Where I am coming from on this is that I have written a history of post-school education in Western Australia from colonial times to the mid-1970s. I have written the official history of WAIT to the time when it became Curtin. I introduced a course at Curtin, after coming from Murdoch, to train TAFE teachers. So I have a fairly wide background, historically and policy-wise, on a lot of these issues, so I am interested in it.

There is an additional selection here that I thought I might read into the account. In thinking about my submission, which was perhaps in stronger terms in some cases than I had actually perhaps intended, I thought I would like to point up a couple of areas that I think might be worth this committee taking into account, because, if I can just pick up parts of it, the main submission concentrates on four things: cross-crediting between TAFE and higher education, country contracting—which I have had a lot to do with here—cross-sectoral amalgamations, and degree status for TAFE institutions.

The thing I wanted to add was, in support of a more general arrangement for the transfer of students from TAFE to university education, my purpose in that was to urge upon TAFE institutions the need to provide higher level general education programs that will benefit students who prefer to enter TAFE instead of completing conventional matriculation programs in secondary schools, but who later seek to transfer into university degree courses with credit for their TAFE studies.

I will read these quickly, because you have not had a chance to see this. First, to date most of the transfer arrangements have catered to strongly vocational programs: accounting, business and so on. There has not been any demand of consequence for transfer into arts, humanities or the pure sciences. Secondly, with the number of high school students forgoing the extended academic and cultural depth demanded by conventional matriculation—that is TEE programs requirements in Western Australia—there is a case, I believe, for some recovery route to these studies in the TAFE area.

Points 3 and 4 deal with situations as I have seen them in America and England. The liberal arts and science subjects are the foundation of transfer programs in the American junior and community colleges, enabling students at that level to continue their general education in literature, history, social sciences, basic sciences and mathematics.



Indeed, the universities and baccalaureate granting colleges require that level of general education for transfer students.

In the UK further education colleges, advanced level matric studies in similar areas are an important feature of programs for students who wish to enter universities, and they are an important feature of most FE colleges.

The important matter from an Australian point of view is that TAFE colleges in recent times have cut themselves away from upper secondary academic studies in the liberal arts and sciences, leaving those to the schools or senior colleges comprising the last two years of high school. Moreover, with the introduction into Australian states of adult testing programs based on student aptitude tests, the SATs, very few Australian students seeking mature age entry need bother about formal academic studies of a general education nature. In WA they can sit for the student tertiary admission test and gain entry if their scores are acceptable.

I go on then to suggest that this suited the genuinely mature age entrant—tradespeople and others—who became motivated later in life, but is arguably less suitable for the much younger students who abandoned academic studies for TAFE-related studies at about year 11 in high school. My argument is that these latter students, and indeed those even of the more conventional mature age groups, could be encouraged to complete at least a minimum of general liberal education prior to entering a university. The case is philosophical rather than pragmatic, since it is out of those more traditional academic studies that students confront the conceptually difficult studies that universities traditionally offer.

The studies are important from a cultural literary point of view in any case, though low on the scale of priorities of students seeking purely vocational skills for entry-level occupations and even many occupations demanding higher levels of skill. The word 'skill' indeed sits awkwardly with more conventional academic studies, despite the current emphasis on generic skills that involve higher range thinking and problem solving.

The point I am making about general liberal education is pungently brought out in a quotation from Donald Horne, of *The Lucky Country* fame, who in this particular case was actually castigating the vocational preoccupations of universities as they adjust to present-day pressures from public policy, and he argued that:

Unless universities redefine their central objectives as the quest for knowledge, rather than merely technical training, Australia will become a know-nothing nation of selfish boofheads and know-nothing windbags.

I think that comment holds even truer of the obsessional commitment to purely vocational skills that tends to dominate TAFE purposes at the present time.

Then I go on to consider: the number of secondary school students that are sliding

out of the more challenging academic studies should ring some alarm bells among public policy agencies, since these students are missing out on the very studies that will challenge their cultural and conceptual abilities in ways that are not going to be stretched in vocational programs. Lower level English and mathematics courses, for example, do not come close to literature or even standard mathematics in conceptual difficulty, nor do they realistically pass on to a new generation the richness of a cultural tradition that should be their birthright.

The provision of substantial general education programs in TAFE colleges seeking to build up regular transfer programs to higher education would be an important means of correcting the deficiencies that I have described. Such provision would benefit the vocational programs as well, since it would add a nucleus of arts, social science, maths, and science graduates to the staffs of TAFE institutions. Any more comprehensive transfer arrangement between TAFE and university education should, in my opinion, include exposure to academic foundational studies of the sort I have mentioned.

I think that with the four main areas that I dealt with, they are all, particularly the first two, ones that I have had a fair bit of experience with at Curtin. I have sent that submission in, so perhaps if you have some questions or would like to question me more on that, that might be a better way to proceed.

**CHAIR**—Sure. Thanks very much. I must say, I find myself nodding a fair bit as I read through this. I suspect my colleagues certainly may not feel the same way. It just seems that perhaps we create a problem on the one hand in increasingly putting the VET demands on tertiary, or at least non-secondary, institutions, and now we have a problem—or at least some people would say we have got a problem—in the sense that we have got the universities increasingly wanting to take over some of the roles of VET and TAFE institutions or providers. It is refreshing to meet with people—and obviously you are one—who recognise that perhaps they are missing out on some of the other cultural aspects of education that are pretty important.

Now what you are suggesting is that the TAFEs provide not only a focus for training which prepares people for a working career, but also teaches them a little bit about other areas like literature and arts, or whatever you like.

**Prof. White**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Some people might say that it might be better for universities to basically get back to what their core activities are about, and for TAFEs to focus on what theirs are about. Paul has a background in a trade, for example. There have always been people like Paul who have pursued very successful careers in that, and who are not interested in other things. Then there are others who have always been more interested in the university side of things. Some people would say that maybe we ought to just keep them quite separate and let them do what they should do best.

**Prof. White**—I think that is one of the unfortunate sides of some of the recent trends in the TAFE system, in the shift towards competency based assessment and the influences that that produces in the actual teaching processes and so on, because it seems to me it almost devalues a lot of vocational education which goes to more than just simply being able to be competent in a range of the skills that are required. There is a whole attitudinal process in there; that there is an ethical basis to work which I think is missing sadly from our vocational programs. There is a pride in work that is missing from this that I think was perhaps built into the more traditional apprenticeship programs, and it is certainly something that, say, the German programs are very good at. People are terribly proud of what they do, and the quality is built in in very strong ways because industry supports it so well, and the unions support it so well, so there is the ethical thing.

What has been worrying me, and is the point of my second submission in a way, is the type of thing that is happening in Western Australia, where we have had something like two to three thousand fewer people than really could sit for the TEE actually sitting it. They are opting for vocational-related programs in the secondary schools, and going on. Now, I do not have anything against vocational preparation for those who want it and need it. I think that is terrific. What I am concerned about is that there is a range of people with the ability who are not being stretched intellectually, conceptually, and in some of those other sorts of cultural ways which I think are terribly important.

Okay, we are not probably going to be able to shift and change that as far as people who are going into the traditional or the newer trades or the newer vocational areas. But where we are thinking of transfer programs—that is people coming out of TAFE into universities at a later point, and I have dealt with a lot of these students—if the colleges retained, as they used to have, their sort of TEE-level work, at least there is the possibility there of mounting some of those general education courses, and you end up having to teach those subjects. I myself do not buy the view that you can teach a lot of general education skills and understandings through a lot of the straight—at lower level, anyway—vocational areas. They just do not come in contact with that sort of conceptual work and thinking.

**Mr MAREK**—So what you are saying is that there are more youth—students, clients, whatever—going into TAFE and vocational trades than there are into unis? Is that what you are saying?

**Prof. White**—There has been a very marked drop-off nationally, but particularly in this state, in the number of students at secondary school who sit for the TEE. That is the tertiary entrance exam.

**Mr MAREK**—Yes, but who then go on to uni?

**Prof. White**—What they are doing is, the schools are providing many more vocational related courses in years 11 and 12. I have every support for that.

**Mr MAREK**—I find that extraordinary, because you would be the first person I have heard in the two years I have been doing these inquiries who has said that there are more people going into TAFE. From all the inquiries of the people I have spoken to, the push from the guidance officers and those people in the schools is for the students into university, and they are not going to do the trades and the vocational training and that sort of stuff, and that is why we are starting to become deficient with tradesmen in this country. What you are saying is different to what I have heard.

**Prof. White**—Certainly last year there were something like 2,500 to 3,000 fewer people who sat for the TEE—that is entrance to university—than expected, and the year before that it was something like 2,000. What that has meant is that the university institutions here are scrabbling for students—well, the more marginal institutions are—and it is driving down the level of admissions almost to the point where you wonder whether the quality of the students is there. Primary and early childhood teacher education is a particularly worrying area.

**CHAIR**—Nursing is another one.

**Prof. White**—Is it?

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—I agree with what Paul is saying. In a previous inquiry we had with the same committee looking into issues relating to the employment of young people, the criticism was that the education system was directing students to the university and neglecting the vocational training. Now, whether in fact that has now changed—

**Prof. White**—I think that Carmichael, Finn and the rest of it have had quite a marked impact on the schools.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—And does the result of that mean now that more people are going into the vocational training side of education?

**Prof. White**—Yes, there is no question that that is so—no question in this stage, anyway—and I am sure it is happening elsewhere.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Well, I would agree with your suggestion about the recovery route. There is certainly a need there within the TAFE system to allow people who have rethought their position and want to get back into serious education and training to have the facility there. Certainly it would appear that TAFE would be the appropriate body to carry out that sort of training, rather than universities.

**Prof. White**—Yes, after the Carmichael and Finn inquiries the move developed, and it certainly was followed very strongly in this state, that you would focus that either in the upper part of the existing secondary schools, or you would create out of some of them senior colleges for just years 11 and 12, and they would have substantial vocational

programs. A lot of the vocation-related programs obviously, through accreditation processes and so on, enable people to go on into TAFE with some advance standing. I like the idea of that, but I often wonder whether TAFE, by becoming a year 13 program, has in fact lost some touch with a very important group of people who are not happy with schools but would be much happier in the TAFE system. It is a much more adult system for them. Schools are not really geared to a lot of those young people, and some of the older ones, too.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Would you support, say, full-time training for unemployed people, a full-time TAFE course?

**Prof. White**—I really think that the idea of the traineeship is terrific, but it does require a tremendous amount of cooperation from industry. It always used to make me smile to read the paragraph in the Finn report which says, 'This has tremendous support from industry,' and so on. Yes, it does in rhetoric, but when it comes to the crunch, does industry in fact provide these places? Do they cooperate in the training side, or do they see it just as simply cheap labour, which often has tended to be the case? Or do they not know anything about it, which is very much more the case when you get beyond the big employers and down into the small employers who make up, after all, the vast majority of employers in this country?

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—I suppose the specific question would be for that group of people who are unable to get employment, rather than putting them into full-time training.

**Prof. White**—I think so, yes. There are lots of experimental programs, for instance up in the Pilbara region here through the Ministry of Education. What was it called? Fast Track? There is another one. They are given acronyms and names like this. They pick up those young people at risk and put them into a program, though, that gets them into industry as well. Now, those have been experimental with relatively small numbers, and it has worked really quite nicely for them, I think. The employers are happy to have them. But once you take that beyond an experimental program to make that available to everybody from schools, you are suddenly in a different level of resources and interference with the work patterns in industry, and there is a lot more regulation, a lot more stipulation of what must be done. In that sort of context, the full-time course—but I would put it in a TAFE college rather than a secondary school.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Yes. Well, that was the question that related.

**Prof. White**—I think a lot of those kids hate school. They want to get out.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Are you concerned that there is an increasing trend for secondary students midway, or at least with incomplete secondary education, to opt for a vocational

education and training program as, if you like, an easier way out, and that their education—as distinct from their training—is incomplete, and then later on they are coming into a TAFE course which is entirely focused on job preparation for a marketplace.

**Prof. White**—Yes, I am. It is an interesting sort of conundrum we are facing at the moment, in that on the one hand you have had this very marked vocational push in the schools, and it is working. There are large numbers of students going into those programs in the upper part of the secondary school, which is terrific in many ways, but at the same time we are talking about the need for cultural literacy, and in particular for teaching about citizenship and all of those other sorts of things which are history based and literature based and all of those sorts of things. Yet a lot of the students are drifting out of the sort of subjects which actually give them access and the knowledge and the skills to be able to cope with some of those areas and to understand a lot of the concepts.

Yes, I am a bit concerned. I think that there is a cultural side to education which we need to preserve very carefully. I was noticing your comment earlier on about universities and the arts and the sciences. One of the clients that universities and, I think, schools have to satisfy is truth, beauty and goodness, as well as a cultural tradition. That is, I think as I put it, a resource that everybody should have as their birthright.

**CHAIR**—I must say I agree with you. There are community and social responsibilities that educational institutions of all types have, which I suppose are not ever going to be satisfied by a purely market sort of approach. But I went from economics to a medical degree and had not done any science. I had to do science when I got to study medicine, so my gaps were of a scientific nature, so then I had to go and do that as well as the medical stuff when I was at university.

Would it not be better for people coming into a TAFE situation if we were to recommend something along the lines of what you are suggesting: that instead of TAFE, which is very good at VET, saying, ‘Look, we’d better teach a bit of culture and civics and all this sort of stuff’—I can imagine the attitude that some people might have to that—saying instead, ‘Well, we’re not good at that. Instead of that, our students will do two units of this offered by the university,’ which will not lead to a university degree, but they are actually doing a course which the university is providing. Do you see what I mean?

**Prof. White**—Yes, I can understand your viewpoint. If I can take that down further into the secondary schools and the TAFE colleges, the year 11 and 12 level where I think it is probably more crucial than beyond it. By focusing a lot of vocational programs in the school system, you are faced with at least two things: you have got a resource problem in terms of the equipment and workshops and kitchens and all of those sorts of things. The TAFE colleges have superb facilities; the schools do not. It would be better for the TAFE colleges in that particular suburb or region to be used for that work and the schools to provide the general education.

It does require a lot of connections there. It is not going to be easy, but I think that would have been better in some ways. Put hospitality, cooking and those sorts of areas in the TAFE colleges where they are very well done and they have cafeterias and restaurants and all of that, where people can be trained well by people with the background to administer it.

**CHAIR**—So TAFEs would be providing some of that kind of training to secondary students?

**Prof. White**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—There is a problem though, in that in secondary school you have got adolescents, teenagers. Wouldn't there be some problem with them coming along to a place like this, where you have got students in their late teens and early 20s who have different language, culture, and recreation activities?

**Prof. White**—I am only talking about, say, years 11 and 12. The thing is that TAFE used to take kids at that age anyway. It is only in very recent times that it has become a post year 12 organisation, and I do not know that that was necessarily a very good thing.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—It raises the question of what we understand is the senior high school concept. You are aware the kids need a change in direction as they approach adulthood, and there is some argument that there should be senior high schools set aside for years 11 and 12.

**Prof. White**—Yes.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Well, the same concept could be here. People would go to TAFE for years 11 and 12 in some areas.

**Prof. White**—Yes. This is part of my latter point, I guess: it is in the schools that you have the people with the general education training and background who can teach those areas well. It is in TAFE where you have people from industry and so on who can teach those well, and they have the equipment, understanding, knowledge, contacts with industry and so on to do that well. Within those senior colleges, I would prefer to see them linked to their local TAFE college or even some of the private providers—some of those training centres are very good now—to provide that sort of work.

It is going to require cooperation. If you put that sort of thing into a school, you have to turn your home economics teacher into a hospitality teacher. Now, I am involved in a program where they are in fact retraining a lot of those teachers. They go into one of the TAFE colleges here and they work in industry over their Christmas vacations and get that sort of background and get accredited to be able to teach the TAFE-related courses in

the high school. But their kitchens, compared with those in the TAFE colleges and the other facilities, are just nothing by comparison.

The state and federal governments have poured millions of dollars into some outstanding facilities in the TAFE system, and I think they are a bit underused. They have tended to be here out at Balga which is only just up the road a bit, a wonderful \$14 million facility for teaching building-related trades, but for some years it was very much underused.

**CHAIR**—Do you have any problem with private providers using those facilities to provide courses in accredited diplomas?

**Prof. White**—I know exactly the thing that you are driving at.

**CHAIR**—The Chamber of Commerce people.

**Prof. White**—It has been a real issue with the whole bidding process that the TAFE system itself has introduced. At one level, no, I do not, and I recognise the whole time that TAFE organisations have a very chequered history in terms of their governance, administration and all of those sorts of things. But it is a public facility, and I think there would need to be a number of controls. For example, if a provider is to do it, then they must accept students in the general run, on the same sort of basis as the TAFE colleges do, and things like that. So there would have to be a number of controls and regulations.

**CHAIR**—Yes. I think the proposal is that the institution—say, this one—might say, ‘Well, we have 40 students and we will contract you to teach them a particular subject for a certain amount of money, to a certain standard.’

**Prof. White**—Yes. There is a difference, say, from this institution to perhaps one of the TAFE colleges.

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Prof. White**—Clearly, once you move into the higher education area, you are moving into an area of subject teaching and so on which is a bit beyond that.

**Mr MAREK**—The other thing is that TAFE is so expensive. Working in the mining industry for years, and other industries as well, the mines or other companies would want a particular course taught, but TAFE just outpriced itself, so they ended up getting other accredited training providers to come in and do the courses, like Caterpillar, Komatsu, those sorts of things. And then in some cases—I am not saying it is my point of view, but I am saying it was the point of view stated by some—even if you did get TAFE to do it, the quality of the training was suspect. I have also heard that. So TAFE I think had a bit of tidying up to do from some of those people’s points of view.



**Prof. White**—It has had a lot of tidying up to do, I think. I think that is happening, mind you, at long last. It is almost going the other way a bit, if you ask me, in that they are almost abandoning their education function for a training function and an entrepreneurial function and all of those sorts of things. But they had a lot of problems with their staff. Teachers unions were running the institutions virtually for their own benefit, and things like that. That is changing radically, but almost to the point where you are favouring short-term contract people the whole time from industry. That looks good in the short term, but in the longer term you are losing a lot of professional people who can hold the thing together over time and have an institutional memory as much as anything.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Yes. I think there is a problem with staffing in some TAFE colleges. Even my own nephew over here in Western Australia, who has only just started the course this year, lost one of his teachers within a week or two days or so. His teacher has moved to New South Wales. So as far as the availability of teachers is concerned, I think early in the year that is a problem as the system sorts itself out.

**Prof. White**—You are going to get that in any area like TAFE where people can command high salaries and wages outside. Very often the people at that level are very good. A large number of them come into teaching because they have made a decision in their own mind that they want to pass on their knowledge. Unfortunately in the past, too, there were a number who retired early into TAFE, who got out of the hurly-burly of having to crawl through cobweb infested ceilings and things like that, and that is an unfortunate side. I think that is out of TAFE now; it has really disappeared quite quickly.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Professor White. It was a very useful and refreshing contribution. If you have any subsequent thoughts or ideas, or if you have got views to express on other submissions you see or hear, then let us know.

**Prof. White**—Western Australia is a bit different from, say, the other major states where you have much bigger provincial centres, but it is a real problem in this state having branches of the major institutions. They cost a fortune to run for very few students. The experience of all of the institutions that have had branches is not good.

**CHAIR**—Yes, I think the honest ones admit that. Thank you very much, Professor White.

**Prof. White**—Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Now we have some procedural matters.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Mossfield**, seconded by **Mr Marek**):

That the committee receive as evidence and authorise the publication of the submissions received from Mr Michal Kowalik for the inquiry into the role of TAFE; that

the committee receive as evidence and include in its records as an exhibit for the inquiry into the role of TAFE documents received from the Western Australia Chamber of Commerce and Industry titled CCI Training Services; and that the committee authorise the publication of the evidence given before it at public hearings on this day, including publications on the electronic parliamentary database of the proof transcript.

**Committee adjourned at 3.50 p.m.**