HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Role of institutes of TAFE

ADELAIDE

Thursday, 19 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.

WITNESSES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Role of institutes of TAFE

ADELAIDE

Thursday, 19 February 1998

Present

Dr Nelson (Chair)

Mr Marek — Mr Sawford

Mr Mossfield

The committee met at 11.08 a.m.

Dr Nelson took the chair

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

The committee has received over 90 submissions and yesterday in Perth embarked 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 those 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 these 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 the higher education sector 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 TAFE and higher education sectors, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research and the Nurses Board of South Australia.

I would like to thank publicly the board of TAFE South Australia and the Regency Institute of TAFE, which have generously agreed to host the committee's public hearings today. I now call the representatives from the board of TAFE South Australia.

CLARK, Mr Oliver, Council President, Regency Institute of TAFE, 31 Flinders Street, Adelaide, South Australia 5000

EAGLES, Mr Graham, Council President, Douglas Mawson Institute of TAFE, 31 Flinders Street, Adelaide, South Australia 5000

PURDOM, Ms Lesley, Council President, Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE, 31 Flinders Street, Adelaide, South Australia 5000

RAGGATT, Mrs Alison, Council President, Adelaide Institute of TAFE, 31 Flinders Street, Adelaide, South Australia 5000

Mr Clark—I am Chairman of the Regency Institute of TAFE here in South Australia and I am appearing as one of the institute presidents here. Hopefully, there will be four colleagues in a moment, but there are three at the present time.

Mrs Raggatt—I am President of the Council of the Adelaide Institute of TAFE. I am here to represent that organisation this morning, and I also chair a group called the Network of Council Presidents in South Australia, so I accept that responsibility, too, this morning.

Mr Eagles—I am President of the Douglas Mawson Institute, recently amalgamated from Croydon, Western Adelaide, and Douglas Mawson. I am here as a representative of that institute.

Ms Purdom—I am President of the Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE in South Australia, which is an amalgamation of the Tea Tree campus, the Gilles Plains campus, the Brookway campus and Cheltenham, but now with associations with the newly established joint campus with the Adelaide University at the Urrbrae Agricultural School.

CHAIR—Could one of you give us a five- to 10-minute overview of your submission, which of course we have read, then we will have some questions and dialogue.

Mrs Raggatt—As chair of this network that we have formed, I have put together an overview, but more of an introduction to give you an idea of the attitude of the councils. I will quickly go through that. The Council Presidents of the South Australian Institutes of TAFE have formed a tightly knit network which recognises that, increasingly, the strength of TAFE is in its ability to provide wide-ranging and relevant educational programs and is able quickly to respond to issues of concern to the TAFE system and those it serves.

Members of council are appointed for their knowledge of business, industry and commercial practices and are aware of what the wider community expects from TAFE.

Because of direct industry links, we are able to offer realistic and practical advice to government and management as to what is expected in the provision of education and training programs, which provide pathways to employment, or enhanced career pathways for those who are already employed. More than any other group, the presidents have expert knowledge and experience about the needs of business and industry, and it could be argued that government could take advice from councils and their presidents rather than setting up a central bureaucracy.

We do not believe that the amalgamation of TAFE into the university system would be realistic or beneficial to the community. Already, we have collaborative links with three universities in South Australia in the areas of business, dentistry, veterinary science, music, and visual and performing arts, which are working very satisfactorily and will extend to other programs in time.

We believe that TAFE is a national asset and should be preserved as the public provider of vocational education within the vocational education and training system. We are not defensive in this aspect, but believe that TAFE has a more practical and distinct role in preparing people for employment than a university system. We are closer to a client base and the public need than the universities are and, therefore, link more firmly with major employers than the universities are able to do.

The roles are not identical. It is interesting to note that at the present time many university graduates are turning to TAFE to gain practical training for employment. TAFE has gained the reputation of providing locally, nationally and internationally accepted programs in tourism and hospitality, which are just two of the areas I have mentioned, and they are projected to be large income earning areas in Australia's future, with major contributions to our economy.

Institutes are able to work collaboratively with each other. For instance, the Adelaide institute is managing the hospitality training program at the Tea Tree Gully campus, with consequent savings in staff and overheads. One manager controls the two programs.

It is a proven fact that commerce and industry find the quality outcomes of training programs offered by TAFE very satisfactory and the feedback we receive from major employers such as Woolworths, for instance, is very favourable. The network, however, has concerns about the provision of training by the now government funded private providers. We have yet to see the impact that this is going to have on TAFE programs, but we positively do not want to see TAFE institutes driven into becoming a trainer of the last resort.

As a group, we want to see the TAFE system preserved while continuing to improve its image in the provision of vocational education, which is essential to the economic progress of Australia, by training people for employment enabling them to be

effective and contributing members of our society.

Mr Eagles—I am a manufacturing manager. We are talking now really about real skills for real jobs. I think that is where TAFE has changed. I was one of the critics of TAFE five or 10 years ago, but it turned around and they are on the threshold of major change. That change obviously has to continue. We, Email Washing Products, spent a lot of money—in excess of $1 million—on training and we are finding that, if you ask them, the private providers basically are experts in all skills. They are basically focused on funds and profits.

We are quite able to access the TAFE network and nearly always find an up-to-date expert in the skills that we require. Quite honestly, those skills are extending interstate. For instance, Douglas Mawson Institute now has ties with the institutes of technology in New South Wales, Victoria and in Canberra, and we draw on those. If we cannot find the expertise here, we extend the net.

The other move I see that is happening in the institute—I was on the council of TAFE some 10 years ago and I resigned because I was going to sleep. Now, as chair, we have an absolutely industry based employment outcome focused group of people that represent enterprise, unions, et cetera—represent the real world. We are able to focus the institute, if you like, more on training for outcomes and proactively look at innovation in training. So I think that we have come a long way in a short time. I have now been on council, again as President, for three years and I have seen a massive change.

The other influx that I have seen is there is a move to using part-time lecturers and trainers from best practice enterprises. The more full-time trainer, if you like, in TAFE is disappearing slowly and the more expertise focused training provider from a best practice working environment is happening also.

I guess efficiency of TAFE is something you would already have some statistics on. In this state, you will see that the hours per instructor, the hours per training and efficiency measures and the dollars spent are significantly improving. However, I think that, with the implementation of moving towards private providers—for instance, I have some special contacts I spoke to you about before, because Email owns a training company, and I do not want to get into trouble for talking about that. But I know from several private providers, for instance, with the traditional apprentice, they are moving into saying, ‘We will now train our own apprentices’ and several of them are talking about when they get into the more capital intensive training where the skills have to be like a registered skill, for instance, a toolmaker has to know all machines, but in this organisation they have only 50 per cent of the machines, the intention is to throw it over the fence in the last year of training back to TAFE. So they will cream the easy stuff and, when it gets into the capital intensive stuff, there will be a fair bit of handballing back to the institutes.

We are seeing that private providers are really picking the mickey mouse stuff anyway and the capital intensive training has been left to the institute a fair bit, which is now involving the institutes investing more capital, with less hours. That is a real outcome that you need to be aware of, but certainly, if they are focused on profit, they are going to do it for the least amount of assets deployed. I guess that is a bit of warning, from my point of view.

From the Email perspective, rather than just from an institute president perspective, since we have gone back to TAFE, we are getting nationally accredited training by them that is absolutely written to suit our sites; in other words, it is tailored. As I said before, within the industry, we have been quiet, but the tariffs in the whitegoods industry are 5 per cent and they are still going down. We have not locked them or campaigned. We are doing it very tough. If you look at the statistics just released by *Choice*, and it was in the Advertiser last Saturday, a washing machine, for instance, you buy with four days wages on the average wage and it was 27 days, but if you look at a car, it was 45, 35 years ago and it is now 43 weeks. We really have been driven down. One of the ways to do that has been by working smarter and we are doing that by training.

CHAIR—The universities in South Australia have a collaborative relationship with them. We have been told Regency is obviously one of them. Is there any move by the universities to further encroach on the traditional activities of TAFEs in South Australia?

Mr Clark—I do not know there is any hard evidence of it. We have seen Schools of Mines become institutes of technology become universities. There has to be some institute to do the things that are so essential. What we are on about in TAFE is teaching people how to do things rather than how to talk about things.

There is a constant stream of institutes becoming more academic and less practical and at this time we think that TAFE is really the body that provides the sort of training that is really necessary to make things happen.

Ms Purdom—From our experience at Torrens Valley, it has been the approach from the TAFE institute to the universities to become affiliated to do the credit swaps and transfers and to coordinate the courses.

CHAIR—You said that you want to get out of lower level training. Is that something that most of the TAFEs want to do?

Ms Purdom—We see that that is happening with the advent of private providers and we acknowledge that we have to be competitive there by increasing our skills and our broad based learning. We acknowledge, as Graham has said, where the private providers will take the base training. Because that is the cheaper and easier to introduce, we are increasingly being left with the more expensive and taking the socially disadvantaged students, which are more expensive courses to provide and cope with.

CHAIR—Yesterday, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Western Australia told us that they actually have thriving training now and they were describing the situation where employers were prepared to pay $6,000 to the chamber to provide training for their staff, presumably young, and bypass an effectively free TAFE system; in other words, they felt that TAFE, at least over there, was generally inappropriate to their needs and the marketplace was sorting it out. They further went on to say, and we have had other submissions like this, that the way TAFE is currently funded ought to be changed and that the money ought to be following the student, whether it is a smartcard, a voucher, or whatever you like. Does industry have any view on that?

Mr Eagles—Once again, our chamber in the state still provides mickey mouse training, so it is occupational health and safety legislative requirements—when I say that it is 'mickey mouse', it is important to us.

Mrs Raggatt—It is a much lower level.

Mr Eagles—It is not the skills—at the moment, we have five programs running concurrently at my plants at Beverley. That is in power press operations and that is how a person goes in and starts to basically get a press to turn over and make a metal part and how to set the die and weld. A full program that starts with how to turn the machine on and finishes with all the occupational health and quality and safety initiatives associated with it—we have statistical process control software and programs where TAFE will run on site training and say, 'We are going to use this software on our site.' TAFE will get the software, and go and work out that and build that into a course that is tailor-made for our site.

We send people to the chamber. They will probably come to site if we provide the numbers, but very rarely will it be tailored.

CHAIR—What about student based funding, or student centred funding; the money follows the student rather than going to the institution; does that have any support amongst you?

Mr Clark—I would not pretend to know the details of that. It seems to me if the money is provided, the main objective would be for the students to make their selections and the appropriate place to go. I would like to back up a couple of things that Graham said about the last point. I do not believe that Rod was in the tour this morning, but I believe the other members of the committee looked around our campus.

Mr SAWFORD—I have seen it many times.

Mr Clark—I imagine that it would be hard not to notice the investment in the place and how well it is equipped. I suppose it is less easy to pick up, on just a visit like this, the skills in the people—and the other great resource that we have here are the

facilities that teach people what to do. Our institutes are all a little different, I suppose, because we specialise in different things. There are some geographic considerations to be taken into account as well, but we said before that we really teach people in areas where it is critical that they have the skills. I think people out there expect the system to provide people who, when they enter your place to do electrical wiring—I was formerly an operations manager for the Gas Company in Adelaide and then general manager.

All of the training for gas fitters is done here as well as for plumbers, electricians, butchers and bakers and people in the food industry. You just have to be able to do that. I think the community has expected a standard to be set with regard to these things and that expectation has been with TAFEs, in my view.

I am not sure why, in Perth, the chamber would take that view. I would be quite confident that, over here, the chamber and most others would say that TAFEs are the organisations which have responsibilities for standards and they have done it extremely well. I would be surprised if people did not think that way.

Of course, as Alison said in her remarks in opening, the councils are comprised of people who are from the industries that this institute serves. For example, we have people in the food and trades industries and from the unions that support those. They are the sort of people that make the councils. We think we know exactly what it is that the industries we serve are after. We are pretty sure we are getting it right for the students, because they keep coming back and telling us that. We have been spectacularly successful in providing the skills that allow people to get jobs in South Australia. It is not all that easy for young people to get jobs in South Australia at the present time.

This might have already been mentioned, but increasingly we are training people who are from without the state as opposed to within it. A vast majority of people are locals, but we are getting people from interstate and from overseas particularly and we have huge numbers of those people who come here and live in Adelaide for six months at a time to go to our hotel training course, the chef courses, et cetera. That is a hell of a thing for the state and nation, I believe, because they take their knowledge of the area and the products that we can supply into the overseas markets from here and the skills of the people as well. I believe the institutes are providing an enormous service to the country in that way.

Mrs Raggatt—While the Adelaide institute does not really provide the true technical training that you are mentioning, because we are in the CBD, we have about 23,500 students, both full and part time, and international students. We have a very big wine centre where we are doing a lot of training of the people to understand what the wine industry in South Australia is all about. There is a large tourism component. There is quite a small hospitality section, by comparison with Regency, but the strengths are in the commercial training—the marketing, the legal studies, the accounting and so on.

A lot of the students now are full time, but there is also a very large component of part-time students who are working during the day and just acquiring further skills in the evening. It is a very essential part of the central business district philosophy.

Mr Clark—I think all the institutes have a nexus with the industries in our areas and we do out-training—we send people out to find out what sort of training is needed in places like General Motors or BHP. At Whyalla, for example, the institute there looks after their specific needs.

CHAIR—We got a glimpse of that this morning.

Mr SAWFORD—This is the second day of our public hearings, so we are right at the beginning, and we hope to finish in July, depending on the elections, of course. This is a fairly specific inquiry. I think it is appropriate that the secretariat put South Australia and Western Australia first. You will not be surprised when I start off with a couple of questions arising from your submissions in terms of the dilemma question. Perhaps, as an introduction, if I can go back to the Commonwealth Employment Service, which is now finished, but when government asked the Commonwealth Employment Service to meet the needs of the employers, that is, the open market situation, the long-term unemployed soared; in other words, the social obligations dissipated. The CES were blamed for that, but they were actually meeting the needs of government; they were doing what government told them to do.

When government changed and told them to meet their social obligations to the long-term unemployed, the long-term unemployed figures fell dramatically and the employers said, 'They are not training people to meet the needs of employers'—the dilemma.

In your submissions, you mention a similar dilemma—the dilemma between the open market and of social policy and meeting social objectives. Do you believe that those two roles can comfortably coexist and, if they can, in what form, or do they need to be separated?

Mr Clark—I believe that they can coexist. The concept of money following students is interesting, so long as three-quarters of the money goes to their final year in apprenticeships, because that is where the money will be needed to provide all the facilities to teach them. I do not think TAFE has much fear about there being private providers, so long as it is all fair dinkum and they are doing the job to the same or appropriate standard for the money they are getting.

There are over 400 private providers in South Australia. I am not quite clear what parts of the market they have taken. TAFE is still doing about 80, or 90, or 95 per cent of the student hours and certainly the more complex ones and the ones that really matter. The fact that there is going to be competition in the energy industry—governments, this one

and the one before, have engendered competition in the telecommunications and the energy industry. I suppose that it is a way of life. TAFE is not afraid of meeting competition. It worries me that there might be a generation or two that go through a lesser form of education in the vocational areas and, at the end of the day, after 10 or 15 years, the community wakes up to the fact that the tradespeople or people who have been provided are not really that good, so we have to go back and start all over again, because people are coming through with qualifications or bits of paper that are not really worthy of presenting to employers.

Mr SAWFORD—It will be fascinating to visit Victoria in 10 years time.

Mr Eagles—I am originally from Victoria.

Mr Clark—As I am.

Mr Eagles—From an employer's point of view, in the days when long-term unemployment was soaring, we would not touch anyone from CES—it was not an edict; it was the outcome we were getting with that labour in the workplace. I said before that tariffs on whitegoods were 5 per cent. I am sure others are in a worse situation. We are competing and exporting to over 30 countries every day and it is tough. So, four years ago, we were making 3.5 washing machines per day per person, and now it is 4.5 per day per person. That is what is driving it; labour is not the biggest cost, materials are. We have taken millions of dollars of cost from our products—by improving design and processes.

First of all, I have almost zero labour turnover on my permanent work force. We are a best practice company—people enjoy working and do not leave. That is a problem, because all the casual work force are young people. By selection, we aim at skills and ability to learn, responsiveness, dynamics and things like multiskilling, so the young fit that criterion better. They are the casual work force. Unfortunately, I have to turn them away after the work finishes, because I have this permanent, ageing work force.

The average years of education of those incoming kids is year 11 or year 12. They work on putting screws in washing machines. It is more technical than that, but it is basically assembling washing machines. To become a team leader or to work their way up, the technology in our place now is unbelievable. The long-term unemployed and the unemployed in general generally do not fit the criteria.

There was a change and a lot of providers carried out training of long term unemployed that was funded by government to give some of these people some real skills. I employed those people, because I think there was something like a four- or 10-week induction where government supported those, so there was an incentive there. There was an incentive in hiring long-term unemployed. We were not interested in the dollars; we were interested in the quality outcome. If a product of ours lands in Japan, Korea or

anywhere in Asia, it has to work well and look good. We cannot afford to fix it when it is over there.

The outcome of that was those providers—we might put in, say, 40 people from one of these training programs and, in the end, within about four weeks, we would have 10, and most of them would not show up every day to work and the training and the skills that they were given were more to work harder and get to work on time and working together. They were not real skills. That was the problem.

Even though I am in contact with the area managers of what was the CES, because I am on some other regional development boards, really we are looking at real skills for real outcomes, and that is the problem with the old framework.

With regard to the student hour thing, we, as an employer, are not interested in the cost of training—to us, the cost of training is chicken feed. The hours that they are unproductive while they are being trained is real dollars to us, so we are interested in tailor-made training that really gives a hard skill. All our training is project based, so it is touch, feel, smell stuff; they have to do the job as they are learning. It is all done on site and part of the enterprise agreements have incorporated how we handle that training. We do not pay overtime for it—we have all those agreements in place. So the real cost to us is the lost productive hours rather than training.

At the end of the day, we do not want to have to do it three or four times. The history back in the late 1980s and early 1990s is of the training consultancy packages, which is where we were getting most of the training from in those days—going for best practice, or catch-up. I can show you that we repeated that training four or five times for every employee, because we really did not get the skill outcome. We are now, because it is touch, smell, feel project based.

Mr Clark—The utilities, water, telecommunications, gas and electricity, particularly the government-run ones, like the Victorian Gas and the Western Australia Gas are both run by the government, and the Queensland, New South Wales and South Australian gas companies have always been private enterprise, but we started using TAFE for our downstream of the meter—like in people's houses—training some years ago, maybe 15 years ago. We used to do it in-house before that. The electrical bit, downstream has always been done through TAFEs through apprenticeship.

I think there is a big move now for the water boards and the electricity companies, as they are in Victoria, or departments in the other states, actually to outsource a lot of that upstream tree—the laying of mains and the wiring in the streets. Those things are increasingly going to be put out, I think. I am quite sure that they will be looking for people who are very well equipped and very professional in doing these things. I cannot see an alternative for TAFE. They are going that way and I think it will be very big for our sorts of institutions in the future.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I just follow on and in relation to a question that Brendan asked, too, but you wanted to add something?

Ms Purdom—Torrens Valley Institute initiated an internal employment service some 12 or 18 months ago. Last year, we found employment for 1,000 of our graduates and I noticed in this morning's *Advertiser* that the scheme has been picked up by schools and other institutes—or was going to be picked up by the others.

As part of that, we respond to industry needs on our campuses on short-term employment; that some of our students will be sent to a particular industry for experience and for that potential employer also to do some assessing, and that has been a very important part of being able to provide and find employment through our internal services for our graduates—it has been very successful.

Mr SAWFORD—I find there is a feeling of deja vu here. Perhaps I have spent more time in the parliament on the employment, education and training committee than anybody—in fact, I have spent more time than anybody. This reminds me when I first went into parliament about comments that were being made about the CES. What you are saying to me is what people in the CES and employers were saying to me 10 years ago when the CES moved to the open market and started meeting the needs of employers and, before it changed, to meeting the needs of long-term unemployment.

Brendan asked a question about moving out of the lower level of courses and I do not have a problem with it—I do not think TAFE should have ever been in them in the first place—that is a personal view. What I have a problem with is that TAFE, in my view, does have a community service obligation, and there seems to be a very strong drift away from it. Who does the final bits for higher education certificates and so on? Who does the migrant courses? If you do not, who does?

Ms Purdom—At the moment, we are still doing them.

Mr Eagles—I think we agree we have a place in the community to be providing that sort of training and education.

Mr Clark—The things that the migrants really want—we get embedded into the language, but we also give them the sort of skills that get them through into useful employment.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think there are more appropriate institutions to do those courses, such as English for migrants?

Mr Clark—It depends. If they want to do these things, these are the best and we want to start them and lead them through to when they are coming out to be able to do those things if they do not already have those skills. This is a very relevant place to do it,

I would have thought. If you are just talking about the basics of learning English and numeracy in English, I think that is probably a different question.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I am very interested in what is being said and I very interested in the role that TAFE councils have. It appears to me that you have a lot of influence in your own TAFE colleges. I was on a community TAFE council in my own area, but we were more community, so I am interested in the make-up of your council—is it appointed by the government—and the make-up of the people. I am also interested in your backgrounds. I have two backgrounds, but I have not heard from the ladies yet as to their backgrounds.

I think this is very important. You are really at the grassroots. If you are having that influence on your own local TAFEs, I think that is something of which this committee may have to take notice. It obviously varies from state to state. In New South Wales, we have a different setup again.

Ms Purdom—For the Torrens Valley institute, we advertised and sent letters to people who we knew were in areas of expertise that we needed.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Who is 'we'? Who initiated that?

Ms Purdom—There was a change in the state laws some 18 months ago where the institute councils had to more reflect the needs of the state government and state training profile, et cetera, so that the outgoing council is 'we' that sent letters to people that had the expertise in the fields that we were concentrating on within the curriculum. We also advertised in local papers. The outgoing council, again, interviewed the people who responded and then voted for our replacements.

We found a core of 15 people—two staff representatives elected by the staff associations, two student representatives elected by the student associations, the director of the institute ex officio, and 10 community members reflecting industry and community interests. My particular interest is local government.

Mr Clark—I suppose we may be doing that differently. We are looking for the same sort of people, but we make some decisions at the council level about who are the sort of people we think would be able to best benefit what we do in the industry itself that they have come from. We try to get them in. In our case, I think there is a limit—I think the legislation says 'up to 15 people'. I think it says at least one staff representative and at least two student representatives. It goes on from there—the director of the college ex officio and that is what the legislation requires. That seems to work quite well.

We are quite interested in bringing in people from the trades areas that we serve and people from the food industry and that works quite well for us.

Ms Purdom—Each institute's recommendation had to go to the minister for final endorsement.

Mrs Raggatt—We do much the same at Adelaide. Because we have a mainly commercial focus, we look for people from the accounting area, from the legal area, from marketing, and we do advertise, but we find that, by doing a spot of headhunting, it is often the most successful way, and then we interview the people whom we have isolated to be most productive to the council and the institute. Then, when we have done that, we submit the list to the minister for approval and that list includes two staff representatives and two students, so we have a very generalised mix.

My own background is that I have been in management consultancy since the mid-1960s, so I am very aware of what small business and large business looks for, both in training and recruitment. That is just a broad, thumbnail sketch.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What would your attitude be to TAFE facilities—libraries, equipment, et cetera—being used by the general community in any capacity, whether by private providers—

Mr Eagles—They are now.

Ms Purdom—No problems.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I saw an example here.

Mr Eagles—There is a good example at Adelaide. We certainly are increasing and using rooms—the more people from enterprise and business that come in and see what we are doing, the more ideas we get from them and the more networking we have happen within our organisation.

Mr Clark—We actively encourage it.

Ms Purdom—Our Tea Tree Gully campus is a joint use library between the city council and TAFE—joint costings, joint—

Mrs Raggatt—At Adelaide we have the Learning Resource Centre and the information technology room is made available at weekends now for access by students and others to come in and utilise the facilities.

Mr MAREK—Some submissions claimed that contestability in indentured training is undermining the viability of TAFE as a provider. What are the implications of that?

Mr Clark—I think probably all we are saying is that we have facilities in place that are fairly comprehensive and they are designed to take people through the years of

apprenticeship, or whatever the training is called these days. You get more equipment intensive at the end of the course than at the start. I am speaking particularly from the Regency institute point of view, but it would be a shame, I suppose, if somebody is going to be cherry picking the first and second years, which are not all that equipment intensive, and finally they entice the guys to come back—and the girls—to finish their education here. I suppose it means we would be deprived of some of the education dollar, but when the crunch comes, we really are the people who have to put the quality into it.

Mr Eagles—TAFE, in my mind, delivers a good cross functional section of the trades and the skills. Whether you are talking about nursing or engineering or toolmaking, when you go into their course, they will have some gear cutting, plastic die making, press toolmaking, et cetera—a real cross-section of the trade. When you go, for instance, into my business—and I have a toolmaking section, but just say I wanted a tradesman in the factory, we do a lot of gear cutting and a lot of turning and grinding. That is probably all the skills they will get—grinding, gear cutting and turning. We can provide that training and we could probably get them through and they would be a well skilled employee for as long as they stay at our company. When they move somewhere else, they need those cross-skills. Not too many companies would still be cutting gears in Australia. Only a few companies still make gearboxes and most are imported; we still make our own.

If you talk about nursing, it is the same thing. They work in one organisation and they might be using one lot of technology, but in TAFE it is a good cross-section of technology.

Mr MAREK—It is a good opportunity for tradesmen to specialise.

Mr Clark—That will probably happen in the future. For instance, plumbing and gas fitting are together here and they are in most parts of Australia—not in Western Australia. That is essential, because when guys start on the traineeships, they are rather young. When they go on, they might discover they will not stay and be a gas fitter. I think they do plumbing as well, so they are much more versatile and they can earn a quid as a result of their decision.

Mr MAREK—The problem with that is that youth, more often than not, do not know what they are going to be doing in five or 10 years time. It should be, in some ways, mandatory in the curriculum that they do pneumatics, hydraulics and heavy equipment diesel fitting. You might think you are going to be a gear cutter and doing grinding today and tomorrow, but, when you get out in the big, wide world, it is all multiskilling.

Mr Clark—I think that is one of the features like this. We run all those toolmaking and gear cutting courses, also, so that plumbers and gas fitters and others probably get the chance. I would be quite confident there will come a day in their life when they look at some of the areas and know something about it and get some idea of what else is

available.

Mr Eagles—The truth is that employers, when it comes to technical skills—and we take graduates straight from university and we take people in the trades, and we train them as well. However, we already know that the best engineer is one who has worked in several organisations and has been exposed to several skills.

Mr MAREK—Been on the workshop floor.

Mr Eagles—The tradesman who has been exposed is a better tradesman. The last thing you want is focused training for our organisation. That person will never be able to move because he only has the skills associated with our company.

Mr MAREK—You are actually helping him to become redundant.

Mr Eagles—They need to have cross-sectional training. We are into providing the focus skills of our company after they receive the certificate. The graduates come to our place and we teach them how to work. They come in with a really strong base from which to work, but the graduates who have been there have been bombarded with more education and training since being at our place than when they did their masters.

Mr SAWFORD—The employers have said in previous years the opposite, so I am delighted to hear you say that.

Mr Eagles—They might not be out there competing like we are. It is really intense in our business. We are making 800 washing machines today and next month only 400, because of the way the marketplace is.

Mr Clark—I was one of the fortunate people who was working whilst doing engineering in the tech school system in Melbourne at the Swinburne Tech, which is now a university, I believe. A large number of people are now coming out with engineering degrees in higher institutes of learning and coming back into TAFE actually. We know what happens when an engineer comes out of university—everybody around him teaches him what to do, which, as I recall, causes a fair amount of angst.

We are finding, increasingly, that a large number of people come from university engineering degree courses and qualify and they come here to learn about machines and a few of things which they do not learn when they go through and do the academic engineering degrees of today.

Mr MAREK—Do you think there should be any restrictions to prevent mainstream people coming in and doing a full-time trade training option—people who are not indentured to an employer? There are people who want to train, but they may not have an

employer to go to. I believe the Australian Business Chamber actually made the suggestion. Do you know what I am talking about?

Mr Clark—I understand what you are talking about. Here, we have a lot of people who are apprenticed for an introductory year into the place here and they are not indentured out to anybody. I think the indenture system is probably in need of a good refocus. The Master Plumbers Association and other like groups, building people, tend to employ a group of apprentices and send them to all the plumbing firms, so they are really indentured to an association.

Mr MAREK—A couple of us here have done trades, and it is always something you can go back to. Basically, if you cannot get work, you can do a trade—

Mr Eagles—There should be a practical end result. At the end of the day, there has to be some touch, feel, smell. All our training is project based training now and we are getting real outcomes. Business is improving at the rate of what we are expending on training, basically, so teach somebody four years to do it—I think there is an argument as in real estate where you can get a real estate certificate part time and never work in the business. I think that is fine, providing there is some sort of exposure. Engineers get their degree, but they have to have a total of so many weeks of exposure in the workplace.

Mr MAREK—I was going quickly to move from there. If people want to go and do that, how do you feel about people coming in off the street doing that sort of stuff and having the ability to access it through a HEC system? Somebody has to pay for it.

CHAIR—With regard to the issue of fees, TAFE students obviously have a different fee system to others in the higher education sector. Should there be one system operating right across the sector?

Mrs Raggatt—Like a HECS fee.

CHAIR—However it should operate, someone raised the issue of inequity—you can do a TAFE course, and you pay an amount that is a lot for the students, but it is not really a lot. However, it is an up-front fee and then you have a two-year credit for a university degree.

Mrs Raggatt—I think it would be a problem to many people if a fee were introduced to TAFE students, because that is not what the philosophy of TAFE is all about.

Ms Purdom—They do pay a fee now. It is a fee that varies with whatever course they are doing.

Mr Clark—It depends on the facilities and the time.

Ms Purdom—An annual fee.

Mrs Raggatt—It is not like the fees at university, the HECS fee that I mentioned.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Would you be worried that, if a HECS fee were introduced, the fees would go up?

Mrs Raggatt—I would be appalled if that happened.

CHAIR—An argument has been put by some that you go and do a science degree, or a degree like that, you have a HECS fee of $3,000 a year, or whatever it might be, and your employability is considerably less. We end up with a society that is focused only on utilitarian vocational education and training without much emphasis on language, history, arts, or whatever.

Mr Eagles—There needs to be a link with employment outcomes. I do not know how you would do that. It would be a nightmare trying to work it out. For instance, I heard on the radio recently that there is a shortage—we were thinking about bringing some migrants into areas where there are shortages of skills. Those skills should be known. If we can work out beforehand and be proactive, we could probably lower the fee system that encourages people to get education in those areas.

Mr MAREK—Employers are still doing it tough to the point where, in some areas, they are reluctant to take on apprentices, or people generally, because they have had their fingers burnt in time past. They are reluctant to go out and say, 'Here's a job for an apprentice.' There needs to be some sort of stimulation in the small business sector.

CHAIR—The powers of councils, are they advisory or directive?

Ms Purdom—Advisory.

CHAIR—Do you feel there is too much emphasis on articulation between the university and the VET sectors, in particular, TAFE, and if there is excessive emphasis being placed upon it, is it diminishing the way in which you execute your roles, whether it is university or whether it is TAFEs?

Mr Clark—I do not know if it is too much, but I really believe the TAFE system is worthy of going its own way. It is a system that fulfils a very important need. It is quite different, in my view, from tertiary education at university level. There should be the obvious links between them for those who want to go through and those who want to come back and pick up skills in that area, but TAFE should be allowed to set their own destiny and make sure that they are providing those links where required but serve the community, as they have always done.

Mrs Raggatt—I agree with that.

CHAIR—That is uniform.

Mr SAWFORD—Yesterday, the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry advocated a separation of the public VET service delivery and the management of the public VET infrastructure. The public VET facilities are behind after public and private providers. Can we get a quick reaction to that suggestion?

Mr Clark—It is not unusual. Infrastructures in utilities will be leased out to whomever wants them; it will be owned by someone and regulators will set the rates for its use and make sure that monopolies are not charging monopoly rent. You could see a system where that could happen, but I think it would be quite awkward and rather difficult. I think the inefficiencies that it might introduce might outweigh the efficiencies. That is my view.

Mrs Raggatt—I have nothing further to add to that.

Ms Purdom—I have nothing to add.

Mr Eagles—How many experts are in the delivery of training area? Are you going to lease your areas out? In a state like South Australia, and especially Western Australia, how many different people can be experts in delivering training in toolmaking and engineering? You really need to understand South Australia a bit. The TAFE institutes—if you like, the separate institutes—are competing less and less for the same areas of education. We are starting to get focused and we are not competing like we used to.

Mr Clark—We are doing the things we do. We share some things with them. That institute is south of the city and they have similar sorts of industries.

Ms Purdom—Industries, collaboratively.

Mr Clark—If you own all the equipment and it is your life blood and you are teaching people, if you were in business, you would not race out and say, 'We will let it out to anybody else.' That is going to allow people to get in and do the sort of thing I spoke about earlier, those that want to get on the early years and get a quid for not much investment.

Mr Eagles—We have one section, which is printing and graphic arts. We have people like Apple that set up the computer systems and they do not charge TAFE too much for them. Some of that training is delivered by the industry. We have providers in there who are tutoring and training full time, but most of the specialist stuff is done by the industry itself in our campus. If you said, 'Okay, private provider,' who can have different printing machines and equipment and have people like Apple supporting it and providing

the computer and software and latest technology? That is what is happening. In some areas, it is really proactive and in other areas it is much slower. It is gradually increasing in the institutes.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have any regional outreach centres in South Australia, in the Iron Triangle?

Ms Purdom—Yes, an institute is there.

Mr Clark—It is Spencer and that looks after all those areas.

Ms Purdom—They are presidents and members of this network and the institute directors all—

CHAIR—We need to finish.

Ms Purdom—The South Australian institutes have been through, and are still going through, an amalgamation process. We have reduced some 19 institutes, and there is one to be celebrated tonight, which brings us down to eight, and that is from 39. There are ongoing talks between two other institutes which may lead to am amalgamation, or it just may lead to an affiliation.

Mrs Raggatt—The emphasis is not always, in TAFE institutes, on technical education, which seems to have been coming through fairly strongly from the gentlemen on my right and left. We must say that there is a very real place for other things we provide, as in marketing, accounting and that sort of thing.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for taking the time to provide a submission and to speak to us. We are grateful to you.

[12.01 p.m.]

BATTYE, Ms Virginia, Director, Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE, 31 Flinders Street, Adelaide, South Australia 5000

CARTER, Mr Darryl, Executive Director, TAFE SA, 31 Flinders Street, Adelaide, SA, 5000

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WOOLLEY, Ms Madeleine, Director, Adelaide Institute of TAFE, 31 Flinders Street, Adelaide, SA, 5000

CHAIR—Good morning. Thank you very much for putting in a submission, and also for taking the time to speak to us today. Could you give us a five- to 10-minute overview of your submission and then we will engage in some dialogue.

Mr Carter—If I could make an opening statement and also to provide the committee with some information on changes, because the submission was prepared during a transition change in South Australia. Thank you for providing the opportunity for representatives of TAFE SA to address your committee this morning.

Following the October 1997 election, the Department for Employment, Training and Further Education was abolished and the TAFE institutes were part of that department previously. The functions of that department were transferred to a newly created Department of Education, Training and Employment. With the formation of the new department, the government has brought together all the education portfolios under the one minister in order to enhance its ability to provide seamless education within a context of lifelong learning.

The minister's portfolio incorporates child care, children's services, early childhood education, primary and secondary schooling, vocational education and training, higher education, adult community education, employment and youth affairs. The submission you have received was prepared by TAFE SA prior to the formation of the new department and represents the views of TAFE institutes at that time.

As such, while in concert with broad government objectives and views, the submission was written from a provider perspective only. It should be noted, therefore, that the department, with its broader responsibility as funder and purchaser of vocational education and training, may have a different perspective and place different emphases on some issues.

TAFE institutes in South Australia have established a range of collaborative

measures with higher education institutions, including detailed credit transfer arrangements, shared use of facilities, and the provision of dual awards. These arrangements continue to be developed as the TAFE SA network—54 campuses across the state—strives to meet the needs of its community, of industry, and geography.

These linkages are particularly important for rural and isolated South Australians for whom access to a university education has traditionally been limited or necessitated expensive moves to the city. Similarly, in South Australia, there are many successful examples of collaborative arrangements between TAFE SA and the secondary school system.

The new department, with responsibilities for school education and vocational education, will greatly strengthen and enhance these arrangements. Students, for example, will be able to complete modules towards a TAFE award, as the result of VET in SACE arrangements, and memorandums of understanding between individual schools and their local TAFE institute. There will be greater scope for resource sharing in the areas of facilities, equipment and teaching expertise. Future joint staff development, marketing, policy and planning activities have the potential to result in efficiency and effective gains across both sectors. The new department will also facilitate a further co-location of TAFE-school facilities in order to maximise student access to vocational education and training.

In 1998, a pilot project will enable the new apprenticeship scheme to be implemented in schools. TAFE SA will be the major provider of training in these arrangements. It is a government priority to strengthen VET in schools and the formation of the new department has provided a platform to ensure the program's growth over the next few years. It needs to be emphasised, however, that while TAFE SA has a mission to work collaboratively and cooperatively with both the school and the higher education sectors, we still believe that it is imperative that TAFE is maintained as a distinct and separate system of education.

Over 90,000 individuals choose to enrol at TAFE in South Australia each year. We believe they choose TAFE because the vocational education and training they receive is of a very high quality and is directly relevant to the needs of industry. This view is supported by the results of the 1997 National Centre of Vocational Education and Research employer satisfaction survey that indicated that 84 per cent of South Australian employers were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the VET system. This result was the second highest in Australia after Victoria.

The 1996 ANTA annual national report also indicated that South Australia has the highest module pass rate—93 per cent—and the highest module completion rate in Australia, both of which are very clear indicators of successful student participation and achievement.

You may also be aware, and I am sure you are, that the quality of the South

Australian TAFE system was formally acknowledged at the end of last year when the Regency Institute of TAFE was awarded the very prestigious title of national training provider of the year.

By bringing responsibility for employment into the new department, the government is also making explicit the connection between education, training and employment. TAFE institutes are required to report on student employment outcomes and directly assist graduates in their search for employment by appointing institute based employment placement officers. The government expects TAFE SA, as the public provider, to provide training in areas of identified skill shortage so as to optimise the employment prospects of graduates and to provide a supply of skilled workers to industry.

TAFE SA has developed an excellent reputation with individual enterprises and industry sectors on a state, national and international level. Industry is well represented on TAFE institute councils in the preparation of teaching materials and advising on curriculum content and competencies to be achieved.

TAFE staff have educational and technical expertise which is continuously updated through professional development programs and return to industry placements. We are able to provide many concrete examples of how this strong relationship provides the best source of advice for local and national policy development in VET.

In summary, we believe that there is a very strong argument for the retention of a robust, discrete, publicly provided system of vocational education and training in Australia. Our submission further details the many advantages of such a system. While arguments can always be mounted for the finetuning of administrative arrangements to allow the public provider greater flexibility in the marketplace, the esteem with which TAFE is held by industry, the confidence placed in TAFE awards by our students, and the regard of the community for an investment in TAFE facilities and staff, we believe, supports and justifies our position.

CHAIR—What is the relationship between the councils and the boards—the TAFE council and the board? How does it all work?

Mr Carter—I will clarify the 'board' component of the question; which boards are we talking about?

CHAIR—The boards of the individual institutions, or whatever you call them.

Mr Carter—We do not have that. The councils, who you have just met, are normally the industry and community representatives who provide advice to both the institute and to the government, as it then was.

Ms Woolley—The director sits on the council.

Mr Carter—TAFE SA itself has a TAFE SA executive, which consists of the institute directors and myself, and then, within the VET sector, in South Australia, there is a body called the VET board, which is the board established under the state legislation, which is consistent with the arrangements under the national or Commonwealth legislation.

Ms Battye—For a short time, at the time of this submission being presented, the TAFE SA executive, which was made up of the TAFE directors, was titled as a 'board'. Since then, we have reverted to being referred to as the TAFE SA executive, so this submission is from the TAFE SA Directors of Institutes operating as a consortium.

Ms Woolley—Are you looking to discuss our relationship with council members?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes. It seems that, when compared with other states, the models used in South Australia are superior. If they are superior, why do they work and how do they work?

Mr Carter—One of the great advantages of South Australia is size, of course, and the ability for the people within the community of South Australia—geographic, industry, and political, government and communities—to work together in a collaborative way compared with a lot of the concerns that we hear over the borders with respect to undue competition between people in the same sector. Sp I think that South Australia is very much based on providing a system that is cooperative and collaborative and provides the most efficient use of the total system resources for the community of South Australia.

Ms Woolley—Over the last few years, we have moved from 39 colleges—I think to eight institutes now. So Councils have been involved from that massive system in the amalgamations and this stemmed from way back in 1984, when we had a report, which was very similar in terms of the directions we have taken here. So the councils which are representing industry here have been very keenly critical, both in a positive and negative sense, of amalgamations, and what they mean to industry.

Our relationship with them has been maintained at a fairly high and very valuable level. So, when it comes to sharing resources, when it comes to discussing directions in this state, they get together as a group of council presidents as well. We do not have this isolated development in one area as against an isolated one here, which is not communicating. I think that is the strength of it—the advantage being, of course, that we are a smaller state and we can do that, relative to, say, New South Wales, which has enormous difficulty on a relative basis.

Ms Battye—You raised the question of whether the councils were advisory or governing, and it is very important that they are in an advisory role. They have very close links with industry and the communities that the institutes serve. They are able to provide advice while, at the same time, not being involved in operational management, which is very much the province of the institute directors and the government department. Also, in

providing an advisory role, we are the arm of government for providing training, so we pick up government direction in relation to priorities as well.

CHAIR—In your submission, you said that it was difficult for governments to expect TAFEs to operate in an open marketplace whilst at the same time maintaining a community service and public obligations. What ought to happen to enable you to do that? Do changes need to be made in the way you are funded, or anything like that?

Mr Carter—There is a potential conflict there and I think it is a question of how the governments develop their policy and implement the policy as to whether that conflict is going to be of concern to the sector or not. In South Australia, the government is using the public provider as an arm of government policy and ensuring that the community service and the government priorities are met through the public provider.

It is also ensuring that that service is provided as efficiently as possible. The use of the market that is being driven nationally and within the state is one of the factors that is assisting governments to improve the efficiency and productivity of the TAFE sector, but, at the moment, the market only impinges on a relatively small component of the total TAFE effort. So the user choice arrangements that have been brought in is a market of some kind, but it is not a price market—it is a market based on quality and user choice.

Mr SAWFORD—It could become a price market.

Mr Carter—It could—and that is a policy decision. A proportion of the total public funds is put out to the market, but it is still only a relatively small proportion in both the state and across Australia. It will be up to governments to decide where the appropriate balance is in addressing some of those issues.

CHAIR—Do you have any concerns about being able to continue to work effectively with this huge department? It sounds like a prescription for paralysis, having so many things within one mega portfolio.

Mr Carter—The question of what is the most appropriate organisation goes around in circles, I think, as we progress through life.

CHAIR—I can understand the logic.

Mr Carter—I think you will find there are advantages and disadvantages in various models. The advantages of this model are clearly seen by the government to outweigh other alternatives and that is to bring together the opportunities to get cohesion and efficiency of resources right across the education portfolios, as well as that linkage between training and employment, and the minister's responsibilities are very keen in those areas and those linkages.

Mr Kelton—There has been considerable duplication in functions such as human resource management, in terms of the many corporate services which have been held in Flinders Street, but also in something like international education with the old Department of Education and Children's Services going their way and us going our way—there are opportunities to work together closely not only in marketing but also in the servicing of contracts.

From an institute director's point of view, the major benefit is that we will work more closely with the schools. We will have a clearer understanding of the rules of the game and there will be the opportunity for cooperative activities like never before.

CHAIR—A comment was made this morning that it was a concern that the schools were getting into a lot of VET and perhaps not putting as much time into things you think they should be teaching at that level instead of using TAFEs and other places to do it.

Ms Woolley—Council members certainly raised that issue, that is, the relevance of that training and their industry needs. I think it is part of the policy vacuum, in a sense, that exists.

CHAIR—We had a submission yesterday from a person who was very thoughtful and who expressed concern about the schools providing this kind of training, because students were missing out on some fundamentals in terms of thinking ability—and I forget the expressions he used—literacy and all kinds of other things. At a later part in their lives they will suffer because the foundations have not been built in terms of their education as distinct from training.

Mr Kelton—I think that is the Mayer competencies.

Ms Woolley—Careful thought has to be given to the balance of the education. It is possible, depending on how this issue of VET in schools is implemented and to what level, that a school child can be distanced more and more from what is market qualification, which might be a SACE certificate. There are lots of different ways of applying VET in schools, which, I think, has to be very cautiously dealt with.

Mr Carter—I think your concerns and the competencies you are referring to are a high priority for the education system in South Australia. That priority starts in early childhood education. What we are talking about is when the kids get up into the 15- and 16-year-old age group, post compulsory, there needs to be a very close look at the options for those kids. Education must not be seen as just one pathway into universities. We need to broaden those options and make sure that the children and the parents are aware of the options and that is what VET in schools and new apprenticeships is about—increasing those options and pathways.

Mr MAREK—When you made your opening statement, you said that a lot of the employment and education training stuff comes under one portfolio. Arts comes under a different portfolio. We were talking to some people in Western Australia who said that it causes some problems, because arts comes under Senator Alston and not under Dr Kemp; in other words, it comes under arts and communication rather than employment, education, training and youth affairs. How do you feel about that? Do you think there would be a greater benefit? Is this different? University seems to have a different problem.

Ms Battye—So long as you have the advisory structures so that the arts portfolios are able to provide advice on the training needs and link in and so those needs are accommodated, I think the same could apply also, say, to natural environment, that we get their training needs identified and then incorporated into our priorities. I think that, so long as there is the communication, then having different portfolios is not a major issue.

Mr MAREK—I thought that I would just ask the question, because it is interesting to ask the same question of different groups and get people's opinions on it. That is obviously a university point of view. In relation to school to work, there is a great opportunity—you sound like you are a little against it—for students in grade 10, 11 or 12 to be able to come to, say, TAFE, do an apprenticeship-type course and still go back to school and do mandatory subjects like numeracy and literacy. Do you have a problem with that, or do you think that is a good idea?

Mr Carter—We do not have a problem with it. That is part of the emerging policy framework, both at a national and state level, that is being introduced. We are piloting some new apprenticeship arrangements this year, and they will be pilots, because I think there are some untested issues with respect to the pressure on kids as they work through that apprenticeship, work, school, et cetera, but the objectives are quite sound.

Mr MAREK—How do you feel about people being able to do apprenticeships full time, but they do not have full-time employment?

CHAIR—Full-time trade training option.

Ms Battye—We have run very successful pre-vocational courses, which then take the place of the first year apprenticeship, so students, after completing their pre-vocational full-time course, go into a second year apprenticeship. That has been a very successful model. It saved employers some training costs, and really brought the students up to a level where they can make a productive input.

Mr MAREK—They cannot go any further than that. They can only do that pre-vocational aspect. I am talking about the ability of people to completely fund themselves through an apprenticeship, so they come out as a qualified boilermaker or a motor mechanic in three years or whatever the term would be, but you do not have an employer. There are great opportunities out there. There are people who would love to do apprentice-

ships, because they would have something to fall back on, but they have problems getting employment. If they can get that trade behind them and then go and find the job.

Ms Battye—This is one of the values of the group training scheme, where employers are not able to take on a full-time apprentice, but, by participating in the group training scheme, they can do it.

Mr MAREK—Is it working well?

Ms Battye—Yes, it is working very well. If it were full time, how do they get the on-the-job training, which is so important in those areas?

Ms Woolley—I think there are some broader issues in terms of the education and what the marketplace can take also and what kids in the long term might be getting. It is really difficult—parents are influencing children a lot these days. When they look at the labour market, it is very tempting to say, 'Let this child go into a labour market type program vis-a-vis a longer term educational program, because there is an immediate demand there.' I can understand parents coming from that perspective. But you have to ask the question what is the long-term effect of that.

CHAIR—We do not want to end up with a society where everybody is trained and no-one is educated in one area.

Ms Woolley—Yes. I think there has to be a balanced way of managing the promotion and availability of this for the individual student's own personal long-term life and so on and, secondly, what really is available in the workplace—an oversaturation of a particular area.

Mr MOSSFIELD—You referred in your submission to the fact that TAFE institutes have an extremely good record at getting students into employment. It seems to me that you are doing something there, which I think is very good; that is not happening in other states. We were told that your college, Virginia, had a scheme going. I would like to hear more about your employment scheme.

Ms Battye—Employer referral service.

Mr MOSSFIELD—And how it is funded, too.

Ms Battye—First of all, it started about 18 months ago and there was just one officer there, and the council funded that position—and the council is continuing to fund that. It started by establishing a database of employers, and then helping students in their development of their resumes and then making the connections.

Since then, and based on the success of that, across all institutes now we have

employment referral officers. An officer is placed in each institute to strengthen that, but it is a combination of services of, first of all, helping the students in their development of resumes and job preparation skills, and encouraging them in interviewing techniques and then making contact with employers. It has happened a lot anyhow, in an informal sense. The data that we capture on job placement is only a fraction of what really happens. For example, when students do work experience, there is a very high correlation between successful work experience that is part of their course and job placement at the end. We need to get processes in place now to capture a lot more of that job referral.

Mr Kelton—There are two parts to this question. The first part of it goes back to the chair's lead-in where you were talking about the distinctive features of the South Australian TAFE system. One of the things that we have not talked about is that we are running a matrix system. The institutes and the institute directors are responsible for the provision and the deployment of resources within that institute, but we also run a state program management system. We have five program managers, one of whom, in manufacturing construction and transport, is located in this institute and is responsible each year to develop a program plan that measures what we are doing in with the needs expressed in the state training profile.

So that process ensures the relevance of the courses and the subjects that we offer. That is another reason why the South Australian system is so well regarded. We run a collaborative system and we are making sure our resources are attuned to the needs of industry.

Mr SAWFORD—Following on with a question asked by the chair earlier—the dilemma question basically—the open training market and special interest in public policy. I want to use the CES as an example to what may in fact happen, or could happen to TAFE. The CES has now disappeared, of course, but government directed it, basically, to meet the needs of employers at one stage, and the long-term unemployed figures rose through the ceiling; in other words, it did not meet its social obligations. The government then changed its policy and told it to meet its social obligations. The long-term unemployed figures then came down and the CES received huge complaints from employers; in other words, they could not win.

In talking to a lot of the CES people when they tried to marry the two—in other words, they tried to do both—I have never really come across and been convinced that any CES could do both. The CES got blamed, which was totally unfair, because they were simply meeting government policy—on the one hand, the open training market and then something else.

In terms of TAFE, do you believe you can do both, or is it like the CES where you are going to come a cropper in trying to meet both? Government telling you to do both.

Ms Battye—I think if you have a clear delineation of community service obligations and a recognition that meeting those community service obligations requires

additional funding, then we can do both. For example, when I talk about community service obligations, providing programs on Eyre Peninsula, where we do not have the student numbers, if we are going to continue provision in a large part of South Australia, it will cost more than courses in the metropolitan area. If there is clear recognition of that and it is recognised as a community service obligation, then it is fine.

Another area is in—the jargon is 'thin markets' where there are a few apprentices in an area but where there is a need within the state and a recognition that training still needs to happen in South Australia, and then the funding for it.

Mr SAWFORD—I made the suggestion when the CES was in trouble 10 years ago that, basically, the funding should be separate and the delineation is clear. I think that is basically what you are saying. The same thing has happened—

Mr Kelton—There is evidence that that is already occurring where some of South Australia's major enterprises went off with private providers and they have come back to us, because we can offer a comprehensive service and we can guarantee that service. We will be there for time immemorial. Mitsubishi is an excellent example of that with their long-term relationship with Onkaparinga. We are their preferred training provider and we offer a range of training courses and consultancy services to them. They like to come to us because of the comprehensive nature of the service that we can offer.

Mr SAWFORD—As you know, Steve, I always like your optimism on everything, including on that place we sometimes meet on Saturdays. I have to say that Darryl, for example, mentioned the big mega department. We know what happened to literacy and numeracy and the dudding of the junior primary and the primary schools by their secondary colleagues and, may I say, with no help from TAFE or universities, either, when it came to funding.

In an amalgamation, the weaker sector, or the one unable to marshal students out there and complaining with all the ballots and whatever, were the ones that got dudded. When you trace the literacy and numeracy problem in this country, particularly in this state, you go back to that lack of advocacy for the two sectors, the beginning foundation sectors and, if you look at the history of education in South Australia, that will be looked upon very unkindly. In terms of all of you in together, and I suppose this relationship with the universities, how are you going to fare?

Mr Kelton—The great strength that we have is in our relationship with industry, which is expressed in many different ways—through our councils, through the various committees that provide curriculum and standards and quality advice to us in everything we offer. That is our great strength. We have a clear mission and purpose. We know exactly what we are trying to do, and I think one of the difficulties of your inquiry is looking at this, that is, the appropriate role for TAFE institutes, in isolation. Where are those interfaces with us and the school system? What do we want from those young people who come to us? Basically, we need them to have the Mayer competencies. They

need to be broadly focused rather than narrowly focused.

Mr SAWFORD—I could not agree more, but my question is: what is your likely relationship going to be in the future, in terms of what Darryl said earlier, with universities? I am not talking about the red brick ones; I am talking about the sandstone one. You know the one—the North Terrace one.

Mr Carter—We have a fairly good record in terms of relationships with universities on a collaborative basis. We have memorandums of understandings with at least two, if not three.

Mr SAWFORD—Which two?

Mr Carter—Certainly USA and Adelaide, we have a memorandum of agreement. We have a lot of collaborative arrangements with Flinders, but I do not think that we have any MOUs. I suppose that those memorandums have been the foundation of what South Australia and the two sectors are on about with respect to collaboration, with credit transfer, articulation, joint programs and joint facilities. We have just opened a joint child-care centre with Madeleine's institute in the USA.

I think you will find that, in South Australia, the flavour from both sectors—and I am only assuming what the universities might say—is one of a recognition of the relative roles of the two sectors and gaining from the strengths of the collaboration opportunities rather than looking at anyone trying to pinch the other person's package.

Mr SAWFORD—Let me be more specific. What initiatives, with any of you people, have Adelaide university made in the last couple of years?

Ms Woolley—We have one. It is born of recent changes to their funding system. We have been recently discussing with them the articulation with Adelaide institute students in the dance program with what will be postgraduate work with the Adelaide universities. We also have very close relationships with them in the music program.

Mr SAWFORD—It is interesting you say that in terms of what we did yesterday, because it would seem to me that TAFE has more to offer the university in those two areas than vice versa.

Ms Battye—If I can provide another example.

Ms Woolley—I think we would have an argument in terms of music, but by cutting programs in dance, I would agree with that.

Ms Battye—Within Torrens Valley, we have para dental studies. We are now

working very closely with the Adelaide University in the School of Dentistry to establish an Australian Centre for Oral Health. To me, that highlights the best features of collaboration—recognising that there are differences in para professional and professional training but that both lots of training can be enhanced when people are working together. The idea is that the dental assistants, dental hygienists, dental therapists, dental technicians and dentists will train together. They will then recognise each other's strengths and train as a team. When they start working, they can work as a team.

The success of that will depend on the maintenance and recognition of the distinctiveness of para professional training, which is TAFE's province, and the professional training, which is the university's province.

CHAIR—How do you give credit for university training or degrees when people come into the TAFE system, given that most of the flow is from that sector to yours—how do you deal with that?

Ms Woolley—We have a system of recognition of qualifications, which we can put into place very quickly, and then in some areas there is not a need for any at all, because some student may have come with a general arts degree and then want to focus on something very specific. That seems to be the major way in which it happens, so they are really looking at something which is different.

I think what we do more of, which I think is more interesting for those students, is enable a lot more fast tracking. So, for example, in some of the marketing studies at my institute, we run weekend programs and so on and very frequently we have a number of graduates in there. They complete the program in half the time. It is more to do with how we provide a flexible arrangement for students. They may not be graduates of course. There are plenty of people around sharp enough to get through things quickly without having a degree.

The amount of time spent on the relationship between TAFE and universities, in my life, is much, much smaller than the time I spend on the rest of my work. It is not a dominant issue and our focus is very much on what this student might get from any pathway that presents as distinct from any organisational need to restructure.

I do believe—and this may be an optimistic view, but I think I am a good realist—that what we have in South Australia is very much based on, okay, you are good at this and we are good at that and let us value the differences there and work on what really is more of a partnership than a competition.

CHAIR—I think Rod asked the question yesterday of one of the witnesses who gave evidence about what was driving it and, after some thought, the witness said that the students were really driving it—

Ms Woolley—I agree.

CHAIR—the articulation, their needs and their feeling about where their interests best lie. You obviously agree.

Ms Woolley—We are working now with the Western Australian University. Some of the stuff is slightly competitive between the universities, from my perspective.

Mr SAWFORD—University of WA or Edith Cowan?

Ms Woolley—Edith Cowan. This is about our students gaining articulation and accreditation which will enable them to recruit more honour students.

CHAIR—That is obviously what the government wants.

Mr MAREK—That is interesting. You say that TAFE is primarily a stepping stone to university, et cetera, and that most movement is from university to TAFE, not from TAFE to university. Is that how you feel about that?

Ms Woolley—Yes.

Mr MAREK—They are doing the degree courses and then trying to get the practical.

Ms Woolley—Adelaide institute, which is very significantly business, marketing, accounting and management, we have enormous numbers of students with degrees. It surprises me.

Mr SAWFORD—It was interesting to hear the views of the professor of the University of Western Australia, the sandstone university in Western Australia, who said that the TAFE students going to the university had a very mixed result outcome—very mixed and yet, when you spoke to the people from Edith Cowan, the old, former CAE, they were much more open-minded. It was interesting, when you read about the old 'sandstones' around Australia, the collaboration does not seem to be initiated by them. The former CAEs, at that second level of universities, seem to be far more open-minded.

I must make a comment, Madeleine, in terms of the funding. You say you do not spend a lot of time on the collaboration, and I understand that, but if the funding starts to come from one single source, you will find a lot of time for collaboration, because you will get dudded otherwise.

Ms Battye—I guess that is where the value of this inquiry is, that there have not been clearly articulated statements about the role of TAFE institutes. There has been a lot about VET—it was promised prior to the election by both parties. We really welcome this

inquiry, so that we hope coming from it there will be a very clear statement about the role of TAFE as a sector, and TAFE institutes, recognising the distinctiveness of the sector.

CHAIR—That is what it is about. We have to finish. I would like to ask you: what would be an ideal funding model for TAFEs? Obviously, you derive your revenue at the moment from state governments, from students who pay something for courses, including overseas students, and from industry and the needs of the marketplace. What is an ideal model and, as a part of that, how and from where should your government money be delivered?

Mr Carter—That is an interesting question. The ideal model?

Ms Woolley—I do not know I have a model. I have some thoughts and one thing that struck me, since I have been working in TAFE, is that I do not see, and we could probably have an argument about this and I know my council talks about this quite regularly, any funding model which takes account of demand. If we had funding which greater reflected the demand, I believe that we would take a few steps forward.

CHAIR—Funding reflecting demand.

Ms Woolley—From students.

CHAIR—Are you talking about student-focused funding—not that we would give the students the money, but, rather, the dollars would follow their decisions about where they want to go.

Ms Woolley—Yes. From my perspective, this is not about apprentices or trainees; I am talking about the huge number of individual students who come into TAFE, independently; they are in the workplace and employers might say, 'X number of our people are doing further education' and what have you, but these are people who have individually chosen to continue their education, so the link with the life-long learning aspect is what I believe we do a lot of.

They come, and if we could get some funding base which recognised those large numbers of people who want to do their training—it is a bit of the old bums on seats concept.

Mr Carter—Madeleine is right—there would be different views when you ask that question and, of course, you can only take demand so far, because dollars only go so far. There has to be the balance between demand and supply and the needs of a particular industry or employment area. It is pointless providing hundreds of—

Ms Woolley—Which reflected it better.

Mr Carter—I think that link with demand.

Mr SAWFORD—Your submission claims that TAFE's primary clients are students, but public policy, ANTA and employer representatives have sought to substitute employers as the clients. How does this distort policy and what problems does this present to TAFE institutes?

Mr Carter—Our clients are many, there is no doubt about that; the institutes see the students, quite rightly, as their prime client. The clients, the department, TAFE SA are all of those, in terms of we meet government requirements and priorities, we respond to the needs of industry and enterprises, and we respond to the needs and requirements of individual students. The trick is to get the balance that links in with funding, because there is different funding for those different client bases also.

It means that it is a tricky exercise for an institute director who has to work with that environment. The answer is, at the end of the day, the government will look at the competing priorities of all those clients and determine policy framework and the guidelines for institutes as it sees the needs of the state.

Mr SAWFORD—A very diplomatic answer. Basically, let us face it, other departments who have tried to do the dilemma bit—I am not blaming the institutes, because they are just carrying out government policy, but they have been unsuccessful and the submission does state that. I would be interested to hear the quick views of Virginia, Steve and Madeleine.

Ms Battye—As Madeleine pointed out, we have a high proportion of students who make the choice themselves to come into the institute. A lot of them are doing it either to get their first job, so they are not employer based, or they are coming to change jobs. When it comes to establishing some national priorities, it seems that there is not sufficient recognition of particularly the change in jobs.

In determining the range of courses, I think we need to look at industry needs and that shapes the curriculum, but then to have the way in which we deliver it much more attuned to the individual student's needs. I think it is partly a matter in the policy making of the students and TAFE—the providers really not having any say at a national policy level. There is nobody—there are no students, for example, on the ANTA board, nor any providers.

CHAIR—Should there be?

Ms Battye—I believe there should be, yes—that is a personal view. It is kind of the big, if you like, bureaucratic agencies of industry, not even the feet-on-the-ground employers.

Mr Kelton—Small business is not represented. It is a question of balance. On the one hand, we have to provide ongoing opportunities for individual students, but also the TAFE system has to cater for the needs of industry and, increasingly—and Madeleine's institute and this institute are classic examples of institutes which have developed huge cash flows outside the publicly funded cash flow. That gives the institute the opportunity to develop their own learning materials, to offer a comprehensive range of services.

CHAIR—As the institutes actually do increase that income from serving the needs of industry, providing services, do governments claw back money that the institutes otherwise get?

Mr Carter—They may be tempted to. The answer to that is determined each year in the budget process.

CHAIR—The incentive is diminished.

Mr Kelton—The incentive is to survive. Last year we got $18 million in state funds and spent $27 million, so $9 million was raised by us through consultancy fee-for-service, student fees and materials fees and Regency in Adelaide would have higher percentages than that.

CHAIR—Do governments look at your budget and say if they can raise nine, they can raise 12 next year?

Mr Carter—Not generally, because they are really two different markets. The government's funds are provided primarily for this community service component that links in with the needs of state government, et cetera. Beyond that, we are looking into the fee-for-service operation, which is really just liaising with enterprises and industries and offering that directly to them on a fee-for-service basis.

Ms Battye—The maintenance of effort requirements have helped us there.

Mr SAWFORD—Are there any other recommendations like that last one that Virginia put forward in terms of having providers on the ANTA board that consistently come up?

Mr Kelton—I think, for us to survive and thrive, we need to be able to deal directly with industry at our local and regional levels. That means, for me, I need a powerful council. That council is the formal link between the Onkaparinga institute directorate and the community and industry and business that it serves.

Mr SAWFORD—Interesting phrase 'thrive and survive'.

Mr Kelton—It is both.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for the quality and the content of the submission, and for taking the time to come and talk to us. It can, at times, be a demeaning experience. If you think of anything else, if there are any other things, ideas, suggestions, or anything like that, please forward them to us in the form of a letter to Mr Rees and we will certainly take it into account.

There is no pre-determined outcome in this; this is an open book to look at the whole sector.

Ms Woolley—What is the time line? Has it been extended?

CHAIR—We have the problem where we have an election some time this year. Whilst we want to do this thoroughly, we have to try to get it done as quickly as possible. We would like to have the public hearings completed by the end of April and a report written by early June. Our big obstacle becomes tabling.

Mr SAWFORD—One thing that Madeleine mentioned that we did not cover in the questions was that you said that you worked with Adelaide university in music and drama. In terms of the industrial relations question between TAFE, awards and university awards, how does that operate? Does it cause some problems?

Ms Woolley—They are employed differently. Where we share lecturers, they are employed here and here—in terms of any real amalgamation such as what Victoria might be struggling through, they are huge issues. At the moment, we have staff who are wedded to this: this is a good thing to do and they are committed to the program; they own this sort of program. I think that, with a forced amalgamation, you then end up with the difficulties that they have in Victoria.

Mr SAWFORD—Two awards.

Ms Woolley—And a whole range of other things—hours teaching.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

Luncheon adjournment

BALL, Ms Katrina, Research Economist, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 252 Kensington Road, Leabrook, SA, 5068

ROBINSON, Mr Christopher, Managing Director, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 252 Kensington Road, Leabrook, SA, 5068

CHAIR—Thank you very much for taking the trouble to provide a submission and speaking to it. Could you give us a five- to 10-minute overview of your submission and any introductory remarks you want to make. We will then have some discussion.

Mr Robinson—We appreciate the opportunity to be able to come and talk to you about this inquiry. We are sure you will hear lots of different viewpoints and evidence about a wide-ranging subject like the future and the role of TAFE. I thought I would just make a few remarks about some of the broad dimensions of the VET sector itself and how TAFE fits into it, based on the sort of statistical work that we do. The NCVER is the main body in Australia for compiling the national statistics on the VET sector.

Mr SAWFORD—Would you go back and tell us how you are organised, how you are funded and the number of staff?

Mr Robinson—I am happy to do that. The national centre is a government business enterprise. It is a registered company with the Australian Securities Commission. Its nine owners are the Commonwealth and state ministers for training, so the MINCO members are the company's owners. It is governed by a board of directors and there are eight people on that board from government and business and there is also an ACTU representative on the board.

I, as managing director, am also a member of that board. We have approximately 50 staff, most of whom are located in Adelaide. In terms of our funding, we have a broad source of funds. We do get some grants from our owners, but that is not the bulk of our income. The bulk of our income comes from contracts that we win from government or ANTA, or business that we win more broadly, including consultancy work and so forth, and we do work in Australia and in some overseas locations as well, if we happen to win a particular job of that kind. So we are quite a diverse organisation.

We are also a publisher of educational and training material. We have sales of publications and other forms of income of that nature. So, it is a quite diverse enterprise, but we are the other major national body involved in the VET sector, apart from ANTA itself, which, of course, is a Commonwealth statutory authority, so it has quite a different charter than ours.

The whole training industry in Australia has been estimated to be over $7 billion in total. A bit over $3 billion of that is the publicly funded vocational education and training

part, to which I will confine most of my remarks. The other $4 billion or so is the estimate of what employers spend on the training of their employees, both formal and informal, across all forms of business and government enterprises and so forth. So, most of the formal sector, if you like, is in the $3 billion plus that is funded by the Commonwealth and the states—the Commonwealth share of that funding is about one-third of the total. Those funds are dispersed under the ANTA Act, so that gives you an idea of the spread of the sector.

In terms of VET itself, of which TAFE is a major part, VET provides courses leading to qualifications for people. It also provides a fair bit of skill formation that is of a more informal nature—short modules and short pieces of training that are based on people getting particular skills that may or may not ultimately articulate into a formal qualification. VET providers are increasingly providing customised training to firms that approach them to put together a particular package of training to meet a particular business need. So the VET sector is not really like a version of the university sector where the bulk of the work is in formal courses leading to recognised qualifications.

About half the people enrolling in any one year in the VET sector are enrolling with the specific purpose of getting a qualification—56 per cent was the figure for 1996. So, the rest of the people are enrolled in either modules or short programs, or even non-award programs. So, that gives you some idea of the overall context of the sector.

There are about 2,500 registered training providers in Australia who are able, and do, from time to time provide publicly funded VET, but only about 80 or so of these are TAFE institutes. There are over 300 campuses around the country and some of the institutes have several campuses, but I thought I would just run through quickly the importance of TAFE in that total provision, because that figure would give you the impression that they are a minor player, whereas they are a major player in the VET sector.

In terms of clients, there are 1.35 million Australians enrolling in a program in any year—these are the 1996 figures—and that represents about 10 per cent of the 15- to 64-year-old population, so a large number of Australians actually enrol in a VET program. Eighty-three per cent of these people are enrolled in a program provided by TAFE and 17 per cent are enrolled in a program provided by other community providers or private providers—non TAFE providers.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have a younger cohort percentage in terms of 15 or 20, or do you have any more percentages?

Mr Robinson—We could find that out for you. Overall, about 40 per cent of the total number of people are under the age of 25. I do not have the figures broken down.

Mr SAWFORD—That is sufficient.

Mr Robinson—That is in terms of the number of students. In terms of the courses, again a similar figure, 82 per cent of the course enrolments are in TAFE and 18 per cent are in other providers. When you get to the number of hours of training that they do, the figure is more intensively TAFE—almost 95 per cent of the total number of hours of training delivered under the publicly funded VET are provided by TAFE. So the sector is dominated by TAFE institutes in terms of students and the programs they are doing. That is an important point to get across in an inquiry like yours—the VET sector is a broader thing than TAFE, but TAFE is the big player in it.

In our submission, we mentioned a couple of issues in terms of the qualification issues and how they relate to other sectors. We mentioned that there had been a push to establish associate degrees. We made some comment that that may well serve to further muddy the waters between the university sector and the TAFE sector. I am pleased to report that the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board, which has the charter for looking at these things, has prepared advice for ministers—as I understand it, it will be going to them soon—that associate degrees should not be sanctioned as another official layer in the Australian qualifications framework at this time; that universities could be free to offer them if they so wish, but that we should not introduce another level into the formal qualifications framework that both VET and higher ed qualifications are operating under. I just wanted to update you on a development that has happened since that submission was prepared.

We also referred to the fact that there has been some evidence that we gained from employer surveys and so forth that employers are confused by the number of qualifications and so forth that exist. I should point out that, in making that statement, some of this is inevitable to an extent, because we are halfway through a period of moving from a former set of qualification structures to a new set, the Australian qualifications framework, and, of the 56 per cent or so of people who enrol in any kind of formal qualification in VET, a little over half of them were still in the old qualification structure in 1996. So people are working with two structures at once and that is obviously leading to more confusion than will be the case once the new qualifications are fully in place at the end of next year.

We have brought along some publications and some information that has come out since we put in our submission. We publish at-a-glance format as well as our big, thick reports. We will make copies of the big, thick reports available to you, James, for reference in the final reports. We have a set of these publications for each member as well.

Two important surveys have been carried out since we put our submission to you—one is the graduate destination survey, which looks at the industries of employment and employment outcomes of people who do programs of 200 hours or more in TAFE—the TAFE graduates—and the other is an ‘employer satisfaction with VET’ survey. We have also tabled a booklet about the NCVER and what it does and how it is structured. The dark blue one is the graduate survey.

The important point to get there is that, of all graduates who had done programs in 1996, 71 per cent were employed by 30 May 1997. So there is a pretty good employment outcome from VET participation, but it is important also to recognise that quite a lot of the people who go to VET are already employed when they enrol in the program. They are adults.

CHAIR—Are they included in that 71 per cent?

Mr Robinson—Yes. Nevertheless, VET has a good record in terms of being very focused on people's employment and that is why most people go. Indeed, there is a good employment outcome from VET.

The other important point to note is that this survey shows a high number of the graduates themselves who believe their programs were highly relevant to their ultimate work that they gained.

Mr SAWFORD—You have given the graduate destination in May and there is another 30 per cent or 27 per cent. Do you do a follow-up of that 27 per cent and what happens to them?

Mr Robinson—Not of the same ones. At the moment, we are doing the survey about every two years, although we are going to do another one this year. We are trying to move from a huge survey every two years to one where we do a small one every other year, so we are trying to get more regular information about this issue, because it is very important.

Mr SAWFORD—Would it be possible to do an effective survey of the 23 per cent who did not have a job by May? Is it possible to do that?

Mr Robinson—It is possible to do research into that issue. It is one of the issues we have down in our research program to investigate more thoroughly, that is, what is happening to the other people. It is an important point. The other survey, the green one, is the employer satisfaction survey, which was done last year. This is a survey of employers who have employed a TAFE graduate in the last two years.

We have found that 78 per cent of employers have indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the graduates whom they employed in this way—of the employers who had actually employed a graduate. It is an important point to make, that you often hear from employers or employer bodies some negative remarks about the VET system, but when you talk to the employers who actually employ the graduates, the approval ratings and the satisfaction ratings are very high.

They also rate highly the impact that these employees have had on productivity in their businesses. Employers do, though, raise some negative points as well. In particular,

they are looking for more flexibility and a greater say and more relevance from the courses to their particular needs.

Mr MAREK—That is interesting, because when you talk to some employers, they absolutely dread the time of the year when they have to send their apprentices or trainees to TAFE, because they come back a little uncontrollable.

Mr Robinson—It is also interesting that there are some variations between industries on this. For example, the mining industry has a very low rating of TAFE, for example, compared to most other industries.

Mr MAREK—That is because it has had problems with TAFE.

Mr Robinson—I think that is right. Some industries have experienced particular problems for one reason or another. You will get different views depending on who you talk to, but overall, in Australia, the approval rating is very high and higher than you would conclude from anecdotal evidence. That is interesting and I put that down partly to the fact that the employers who are actually directly using the system have a better view of it than other employers who are not using TAFE graduates themselves directly.

I think that is an interesting observation and one that our survey has confirmed. This finding was also the case in our 1995 survey. So, the point I would make with all of this is that one factor in looking at the importance of TAFE is to note employer views of the system. People are, however, quite clearly saying that they want more flexibility, less complexity, more say in what happens and more customisation of the programs towards their particular needs. There is no question there is a great drive for that kind of thing.

CHAIR—Does the 78 per cent satisfaction rating having employed TAFE graduates compare with the cohort with employers who employed people who were not from TAFE? If you surveyed 200 employers, are you likely to find that they are 78 per cent satisfied with anybody they have employed in the last couple of years?

Mr Robinson—We have not actually tested that particular issue, but it is a fair point. This survey is based on canvassing some 50,000 employers and, in that group, you are picking up only 3,000 or 4,000 who have actually got a recent graduate. You have to go fairly widely to get that number. We are planning to enhance our survey and start investigating employers who have not employed a recent graduate of TAFE, about their training practices and attitudes as well. That is one of the things we have on the books, also, but you are right, we have not canvassed that yet.

CHAIR—Your submission implies that you are not all that impressed with the closer activities of the universities and TAFEs. Am I right in saying that? Should there be some sort of government policy that puts boundaries around it?

Mr Robinson—We are certainly trying to demonstrate that the sectors are, in fact, quite a bit different, and that they have different purposes. Obviously, universities have a major role in training people for certain professions, and have historically had such a role, but the VET sector itself has far closer links with industry in the way it runs its programs, and provides a lot of programs that are not large one, two, three or four year full-time classroom based programs. They do a lot of work that is a combination of formal training and work based training.

The point we are really making is not that there should be closer links but, rather, you need to recognise the unique character of the VET sector and TAFE providers, and things could be lost if there were amalgamations or forced mergers where some of that industry flavour could be lost to the detriment of Australian business and people skills for the work force generally. There is a need for caution is what we are saying.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you have any data as to employers' attitude about how TAFE is using its facilities, whether they feel they are making them available to the general community or to private providers? Is there any response there?

Mr Robinson—Yes, some remarks have been made about wanting those facilities to be more widely available and, indeed, ministers have, in fact, taken action in the last 12 months, the training ministers and MINCO, the ministerial council, to require those facilities to be made available to other kinds of training providers and for the wider use of people.

Mr MOSSFIELD—This morning, also, we had a briefing from the TAFE councils and this structure varies from state to state. Is there any employer response to the advisory councils that assist TAFE in making the final decision? I know it varies from state to state. Do employers have any response to that?

Mr Robinson—My understanding is most of the state training boards have a strong employer and industry representation on them. There has been a lot of liaison, I would say, at all levels with TAFE and industry, especially in recent times. There was one point in time, I think quite a few years ago, where people felt that the system was incredibly supply-driven/provider-driven/TAFE-driven in terms of everything it did and how it operated. There was a tendency in the past for TAFE to say, 'We have a course, come along to it if you want to' and not, 'What do you need in terms of your training requirements?' I think that is really changing dramatically, and has been changing for some years.

Most colleges now have a whole lot of ways in which they are seeking to canvass their local business communities to try and provide more relevant programs. It is not only the state level boards and things like that; it is actually on the ground where it is all happening. Many colleges are doing their own market testing and customer satisfaction-type investigations. They are tracing their own graduates as well to see where they end up.

Our large survey does it on an institute by institute basis, and we provide those results back to each college as well as to where their graduates are going and how they can recast their own efforts to better meet the needs of industries where their people are going. It is a very important area. It is one that is on the increase, I am pleased to say. I would not think it was right everywhere yet, but it is moving in the right direction.

CHAIR—Some of the submissions that we have had have suggested that contestability in indentured training is undermining TAFEs.

Mr Robinson—Yes.

CHAIR—Have you done any work on that? Do you have any data to support or refute that proposition?

Mr Robinson—It is an area we are looking at and it is an incredibly difficult area to prove or disprove, I would have to say. I think there is probably more debate about this issue in the sector than anything else. There has certainly been a lot of commentary about the issue rather than analysis of it. Every player believes that they are at a disadvantage and that the playing field is not level for them. The TAFE people believe that they are not really able to get out there and hack it in the marketplace, that there are a lot of restrictions on what they are allowed to do and not allowed to, including having autonomy over their finances and decision making, and the non-TAFE providers believe that TAFE has an enormous amount of public infrastructure and support at its disposal which they are not able to get access to, or that they are not able to compete with.

I suspect, like most of these things, there is a grain of truth in all of that from everyone's perspective, but it is not actually quite the way that people would put it to you, in reality. The smaller organisations are often very specialised and have, for good reasons, developed an expertise in a certain thing when there has been a gap in what TAFE has been doing, or that they are related to a particular industry where they are able to provide a unique kind of training product. Probably in terms of the market philosophy that is going on around the place, the way forward would be actually to encourage different kinds of providers to develop different products that they are better at providing and to have more richness and diversity in what is being provided. I think the theory of it, in many cases, is now that these are all different ways of providing the same thing, but the reality may well be, in the end, that we as a nation need to have a lot of different types of skill packages provided and having different providers of them is one of the ways you can get that diversity and richness.

Mr SAWFORD—I was interested to hear the data on employer satisfaction. Would it be fair to say that, if you had 80 per cent satisfaction level, that would be about optimum? When you take out the ornery ones, the stupid ones, the mad ones, the incompetent ones and whatever, probably the real level of dissatisfaction is around 6 or 7

per cent? Would that be a fair thing to say?

Mr Robinson—I think the figure of 78 per cent is high and I think it is very, very positive for the TAFE sector.

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of that other 22 per cent,how many of their complaints would really be genuine and, in fact, constructive complaints?

Mr Robinson—I cannot really disentangle that. People have answered the question that has been put to them and 78 per cent of them answered it in a positive way. I, however, would interpret that figure to be a very high figure, and if most businesses and industries could sprout a figure like that, they would be very happy with it.

CHAIR—We were discussing the veracity of the research earlier, but has there been industry-wide research just generally looking at employer satisfaction with their employees?

Mr Robinson—Not that I am aware of.

CHAIR—When I employed people, my satisfaction rating would probably be around that, and I would not have a clue whether they went to TAFE or not.

Mr Robinson—You are right; you are always going to have a certain number of people you are not that happy with. This was not quite the same thing—it was not a rating of each employee who had been to TAFE; it was a rating by each employer that had employed at least one TAFE graduate, who had graduated in the last two years. So, some of the employers would have had one and some would have had many, and it was just a sum of their ratings, and it has come out at 78 per cent in positive terms, so in an overall consideration of satisfaction with what their TAFE graduates are doing.

CHAIR—Somebody must be happy. When you see employment rates of 98 per cent, for example, as they have with the catering section here, that says a lot, at least about this institution.

Mr MAREK—Your submission mentions that the repositioning involved in TAFE's upward drift has the potential to adversely affect apprenticeship and post apprenticeship training. How serious is that?

Mr Robinson—I think it was going back to that point we were making before. If you view it from a kind of university view of the world—I will put it that way and I use that term a bit loosely, but a sort of formal classroom education kind of view instead of what do we need to do to better prepare people for the work force type view, you will get an answer that is about longer programs with more intense, classroom based training,

subjects and processes of that kind. A lot of importance will be paid to issues like curriculum content and teaching methodology and pedagogy and things like that.

If you look at it from the point of view of the work force, the emphasis comes back to skills and gaining competencies in those skills. I think all the evidence we have would show that, from the point of view of preparing people for the work force, a combination of classroom and workplace experience is, in fact, the best way to go, rather than all of one or all of the other, because you then get that combination of some important generic educational skills and specific skills that employers and people need in the workplace setting.

So, we would caution against moving to a drift where you turn one-year programs into two-year programs and two-year programs into three-year programs and make them more like university courses, for example. A lot of people think that TAFE is a bit like universities but not quite as high and, really, it is something that is quite different. Its purpose is quite different and it is more diverse. More than half the people are adults who are employed already, who are going along to pick up certain skills either to do their current job better or look for a career change or whatever. They are not young people who are just leaving school and getting some initial skills training. When you look at it all like that, it is quite a diverse range of things that it is trying to do.

Mr MAREK—In your opinion, would you consider that enough youth are pursuing qualifications in the traditional trade or technical areas?

Mr Robinson—I think the evidence is that they probably are. It is hard to tell how much training is enough training, and whether you have enough people going. Participation rates of young people in some form of education or training are pretty high in Australia. We have had a bit of a downturn in the last few years in terms of university entrants, and even a slight decline in the retention rates at senior school students. But we have a pretty high participation rate of young people in the VET sector.

It is hard to know which sectors should be getting bigger and which should be getting smaller. There is some evidence that we have presented in the submission that the unmet demand in the VET sector is a bit higher than the other sectors. We know that, when programs are put together in a constructive way, many young people like doing programs that combine work and training, rather than simply all classroom-based stuff. They are very popular with people—the programs have some good quality and people can see them leading on to an employment outcome for them.

Mr MAREK—What is your opinion—I have asked quite a lot of the other groups this, too—on full-time trade training options for people who are not indentured to an employer? If you have someone who wants to come off the street and do a full apprenticeship but they do not have an employer.

Mr Robinson—There is the group training type model where you try to get some work experience.

Mr MAREK—What if you cannot get into group training?

Mr Robinson—I think that is a difficult question. I would not want to put too strong a view either way. I am not convinced you get the same thing if you do a total non-work based program, but, by the same token, I would not say that it was not a good thing to be doing, either. If not enough employers are willing to provide the commitment to training young people as part of the process of renewing their own skilled work force, then it may be important for other reasons to get people at least part of the way along the track through other avenues, if there are not enough options available. Hopefully, there will be more options available.

Certainly, the emphasis, with the new apprenticeship arrangements, is to try to get many more places available and the government has been doing a lot, I think, to try to encourage employers to take up the call. But, also, from the employer's point of view, it can be a quite large commitment of time and resources. Particularly in the first year or two of training, they perhaps do not reap the benefits. The benefits come down the track.

The work that has been done so far shows that there is a net cost to employers in years one and two and the net benefit starts to come through in about years three and four. It is quite an investment on the part of employers, also, to provide all these slots.

Mr SAWFORD—Does your organisation have any information on TAFE involvement in VET programs in schools?

Mr Robinson—We collect the statistics on the providers, who are funded under the ANTA agreement, if you like. If they are a registered training provider, a skill can be included in our statistics, but I would say, at the moment, that does not include most of the VET in schools. Most of the VET in schools, people are enrolled in and recorded as senior secondary students who happen to be doing this range of subjects and programs instead of the traditional academic ones.

Mr SAWFORD—If TAFE is involved in schools, you have that information?

Mr Robinson—Where the program is being funded as part of the VET agreement in a publicly VET funded program, but I would say it is not most of the VET in schools that is occurring.

CHAIR—In your submission, I think you said that there is inadequate research done on that, the implication being, I presume, you think there ought to be more.

Mr Robinson—Yes. It is an area that quite a lot of people are looking at now. It

is one of these areas that has developed quite rapidly in recent years and there is a wide number of people involved in it, because it covers the schools area and the VET area as well. So it certainly is an area where more needs to be known about its true effects. We do not know a lot, for instance, about how well schools are able to incorporate these kinds of programs genuinely into their culture.

We certainly have suspicions also that school teachers are not all that well prepared to run VET programs. We have heard lots of examples, in an ad hoc way, of really great things that people have been experimenting with and developing, so it is one of those things that is sort of coming on stream now.

Mr SAWFORD—During our public inquiry in Perth yesterday, they said that they were advertising for 500, maybe 1,000, nurses in Western Australia. I find that quite objectionable that we have to go overseas and I note that, at the end of last year, I was talking to Southcorp, Fauldings, and a few other firms out in the industrial area about the fact that they are confronting skills shortages. Do you have information about skills shortages and in what areas they are in?

Mr Robinson—I think it is an area that, quite surprisingly, does not have enough analysis and investigation. The action in recent times has been to go local, I think, in the VET sector. It has been about competition between different kinds of providers and trying to solve these problems by looking at everything at the local level, so you look to your local employer base, you look to your local student catchment, and you try to get better programs that are meeting those needs. But with the emphasis on these things, I think you tend to forget the sort of national and regional kind of perspective, which does look more at issues like how are we going overall in terms of meeting the skill requirements for growing industries and so forth.

Because it is a very big sector with a lot of points of decision making, there is not a centrally planned economy, if you like, in this sector. One of the things about it is that perhaps there is not enough, though, work done in trying to look at some of these issues. In fact, we have recognised this ourselves and we are just starting some work where we are trying to analyse changes in the labour market in each of the major industries in Australia and look at where the training is occurring and what evidence we can pull together from all sources to try to indicate to people which bits are being oversupplied and which bits are being undersupplied. We are going to try to do that in at least a semi-systematic fashion.

We intend to run a major industry planning outlook conference later this year, where a lot of industry people will come together and look at this work and try to untangle it and, hopefully, throw a lot more light on the skills shortage issue. I do not believe that enough has been done on it.

Mr MAREK—Do you believe that breaking down the lines of demarcation, multiskilling, et cetera, might have had an effect?

Mr SAWFORD—There are no lines of demarcation for nurses.

Mr MAREK—We are not just talking about nurses; we are talking about all sorts of trades. When we are looking at the country, we are seeing a shortage of tradesmen across all fields—fitting, boilermaking and everything. I was interested to hear your opinion.

Mr Robinson—I think it is quite difficult to say. I think a lot of it is about the sort of move in the way the sector is managed and operated, for people to be focusing on certain issues at a certain level. The downside of that, I think, has been that there has not been enough consideration of some of the national trends in it. You need, I think, to get a bit of balance in those two things if you are going to do better and try to avoid skill shortages cropping up in so many areas that they do.

It is very hard to avoid them, I think. We can all recall probably the times—I think it was in the 1970s—when they said to everybody, 'Go and be a geologist, there are heaps of shortages.' So everybody did and, four years later, there was a huge surplus of them. You cannot make people do different courses without a lot of compulsion, even if you are able to predict and identify them very carefully. It is not an easy thing to overcome. It sounds like it should be, but I think it is quite complicated in a society like ours where freedom of choice, and choice generally, is a very important consideration.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Has your organisation done any work in that area relating to the government funding for TAFE and universities with regard to HECS fees?

Mr Robinson—No, we have not done any research on HECS in TAFE or fees. I know that the funding policy is the preserve of each state training agency to determine and, basically, the bulk of funds for the publicly funded part come through one-third from the Commonwealth and two-thirds from the states. That is still the main source of funds for the sector.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. Thank you for your submission and hard work. It is very useful to get this sort of information.

Mr MAREK—This information has not come from any other group yet.

CHAIR—If there is anything else that you think of that you would like to contribute, particularly if you review any of the other submissions, could you forward something to us in writing.

Mr Robinson—If we get some new statistics out before your report is compiled, we will pass them on to James.

Mr SAWFORD—I have been on this committee for a long time, and one of the

great faults of education in Australia is the lack of data. There is a great amount of commentary but—you made this comment yourself—it is without analysis. Sometimes the heading is 'Analysis' but it is just commentary. I actually found your presentation and your submission excellent. So, to all of your people, well done; it was excellent.

Mr MAREK—It is information that nobody else has provided.

Mr Robinson—We wish you well in your deliberations.

[2.31 pm]

KING, Associate Professor Bruce, Director, Flexible Learning Centre, University of South Australia, PO Box 2471, Adelaide, SA, 5001

CHAIR—Thank you for producing and presenting the presentation on behalf of your institution. If you would give us a five- to 10-minute overview of the presentation and we will ask some questions.

Prof. King—I am an associate professor and I am director of the Flexible Learning Centre at the University of South Australia. My base is at the Underdale campus, but I service the six campuses of the university. The University of South Australia was, in fact, very pleased to have had the opportunity to make the submission, although I must make it clear that I was not the author of that submission. It is pleased because it has had a longstanding involvement with TAFE in South Australia—as longstanding as a new university can have.

We were the first university in Australia to sign a formal agreement with a TAFE department. That agreement covered a range of areas, including course articulation, pathways, marketing, and collaborative efforts. We signed that agreement in 1992 for three years. It was renewed in 1996 for five years and it will take us through to the end of this century.

There is a regular two-monthly meeting between about four representatives from both of the university and the TAFE operation in South Australia. We have found that a low level, non-bureaucratic approach to working relationships has been most successful. We have a significant number of initiatives which cross the university/TAFE divide, if I can put it that way.

The purpose of our submission, quite frankly, was to address the critical issue, in our view, of any change to the structural relationships between TAFE and universities. Our position is that Australia is very well served by having that distinction in post secondary education; that, in fact, there are differences in kind between what TAFE does and what universities do and, despite the fact that within universities there are very large differences between the kind of institutions that some universities are in comparison with others and while there is, in fact, increasing competitiveness between institutes of TAFE, at large there is still a greater division between the two sectors than there is within those sectors.

That is not to say that there are not clear elements of overlap between the two sectors and that is not something that bothers us to any extent at all. In fact, we have been very happy to move into arrangements not only where there are articulation agreements and clear pathways for students but where we are beginning to teach each other's programs, and we are contemplating dual awards of the kind that have developed in

Victorian institutions.

So our position is that, at the moment, the Australian community is well served by the two distinct sectors. We do believe that they have different missions; we do believe that their education and training programs are very differently configured; we do believe that the teaching methodologies between those two kinds of institutions are very different; and we do believe that the educational missions should be preserved and that that distinction should be maintained.

Perhaps rather than continue to assert that point, though, I might pause and invite the committee to pursue any aspect of it if they wish to.

CHAIR—Could you perhaps elaborate on what sorts of collaborative arrangements you have with TAFE in South Australia?

Prof. King—Yes. As a result of the articulation agreement, we identified six areas in which we would attempt to pursue arrangements which crossed the divide and the six areas were content areas like hospitality, aviation, engineering, et cetera. What we were seeking to do was to look at collaborative teaching arrangements, smoothing the pathway for students, and making pathways more evident; undertaking research where it was appropriate to do so, which crossed the divide; and engaging in joint marketing.

In relation to marketing, we have, over the years, worked with TAFE as a state body in collaborative overseas ventures. It is our view that, on the whole, it is better to pursue targeted marketing in relation to discrete areas of knowledge where we can market the advantages of a pathway that exists between us. We found that in fact we create some confusion when we market the whole of TAFE, together with the whole of the University of South Australia. People begin to wonder what the difference is and whether, in fact, the University of South Australia is a proper university, whether TAFE, in fact, is subordinate to it. We do not wish to create that kind of confusion.

In relation to the teaching programs, a common arrangement is the recognition of a block of credit for studies undertaken at TAFE which are in an area which is congruent with the university's offerings. An obvious example is accountancy, where students who have done certificate programs come in and get a year's credit in the bachelor's degree. We have taken that further in some areas like hospitality and tourism, where TAFE students get two years of credit and go on to do a degree program in their particular area and there is a number of those. I do not have all the details, but they range across areas as diverse as hospitality and aviation, for example.

We take over 90 per cent of the TAFE transferees in South Australia into higher education. It is quite clear that students value those pathways that are evident. At our Whyalla campus, we have a rather different situation, because the University of South Australia and the Spencer Institute of TAFE have adjacent campuses in Whyalla. The dean

of the Whyalla campus of the university has been expending a great deal of energy to build relationships between those two bodies. I think it is fair to say that the relationships have not always been very successful, for a whole range of reasons.

Mr SAWFORD—In that area, or generally?

Prof. King—No, in that area. We are looking, in particular, to fostering awards and joint teaching between awards in those two institutions. We are looking at marketing in rural and regional areas, the capacity for students to move from one level of skills training into a program which takes them further and gives them a professional qualification in their area. We are looking, in particular, at sharing some of the resources for delivery of programs.

TAFE in South Australia, in fact, is reasonably sophisticated in using the new technologies to deliver programs. It led the way in videoconferencing in Australia and, in the Spencer institute, there is a network of satellite substations, if I can put it that way, across the Eyre Peninsula. We are very interested in liaising with them to ensure that programs from both institutions become available through that network. It seems ludicrous to replicate those facilities when the central institutions are so closely located.

CHAIR—Some people have said, in the course of the inquiry, that this transition from TAFE awards to university awards and their inclusion in the Australian qualification framework has debased their value. Do you have any view on that?

Prof. King—That is not our view. We acknowledge that there will be people who go to TAFE who want a TAFE qualification because it advances their career prospects within their particular trade or industry. We acknowledge that there are others who wish to go on and do further studies, because it opens up additional options for them. We come to the table as equals with TAFE in our university, and we believe that we build on their qualifications. We are not concerned about establishing the primacy of our awards by diminishing what TAFE does.

Mr SAWFORD—You quite clearly argue for the distinct values of the two sectors. My question is about regional Australia, and the Whyalla one. It seems that there will not be the money available unless there is some joint sharing of infrastructure. In talking to various witnesses yesterday in Western Australia, it seemed that, when you talk to a sandstone university, the University of Western Australia, they would administer it, no question—there is no collaboration there. Whereas, when you spoke to people at Edith Cowan, they had a much more open mind and collaborative view. Is that similar here in South Australia, and what were the reasons for the problems up in Whyalla? Were they because they were different awards and people were working on the same thing? What caused it—was it personalities? What happened?

Prof. King—Without going into too much detail as to personalities, that was an

issue at one stage, but there are other issues of a more significant kind. It is one thing to have the infrastructure. To have it available at times when both institutions want to use it is a quite different matter. One of the problems that we have found is that many of the programs that the university wanted to deliver remotely are going to employed people and, therefore, their preference is for delivery at times which are outside normal working hours. That holds true, of course, for TAFE, so there were demands from both institutions to use the facilities at the same time, but there were much more trivial reasons for difficulties.

TAFE and the university work on a different term schedule. Programming of facilities occurred on a different basis. While this may seem extraordinarily bizarre, that became a major obstacle to using facilities.

Mr SAWFORD—It seems to me that the dual sector role must work in regional Australia, but is there a danger in the fact that it will work and that governments of whatever persuasion may use it in the future and force it?

Prof. King—I cannot answer what governments might do.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you see a danger, though? It works. People can make anything work. If people are well committed, they can make any program work.

Prof. King—We strongly believe that there are opportunities in Whyalla to forge a closer relationship in that specific context, but it will be a close relationship between equal partners where both of them still preserve a distinctive mission, but where, for the common good, a large number of areas are merged. There is no problem about teaching arrangements crossing the divide; there is no problem about facilities being shared; there is no problem about the off campus facilities—regional study centres—being shared. That is not a difficulty for us at all.

We have looked at a range of bases of cooperating, or even integrating more closely with TAFE. We have looked at the models that have prevailed over the years. For example, in RMIT, you had completely separate teaching and administrations which happened to have a common umbrella name. They then brought their teaching programs closer together and put a common administration over the top. They have now merged both teaching and administration. We have looked at the pros and cons of both those things.

What the evidence is saying to us at the present time—and by 'evidence' I mean reflections on Australian higher education by overseas authorities, particularly in America, but also some information which has come from within the system on a confidential basis—is that students actually prefer diverse pathways. They like to see that they have options.

Because my university is one which is very committed to access and equity, not only as a policy commitment but as part of its establishing act, we have to be very concerned about taking decisions which might be seen by regional groups as limiting their options.

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of the Riverland and the South-East, does your university have any collaborative ventures with TAFE?

Prof. King—We do at the moment. In fact, up at Whyalla, we pioneered a relationship with TAFE with regard to nursing, and we have developed a very flexible form of delivery for nurses in remote areas so that they can begin a degree program. We are extending that into Mount Gambier this year.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not know whether you were in the room when we asked the previous witness about the fact that a Western Australian witness told us that they were advertising for 500 or perhaps it was 1,000 nurses. That seems quite incredible.

Prof. King—There has been a downturn in applications for nursing in this state, but what we are aware of is that the changes to the patterns of funding in the higher education contribution scheme produce a short-term downturn in demand—any change to any financial arrangement which affects students is immediately discernible the following year in a downturn in enrolments. It happened over the higher education administration charge, it happened over the introduction of HECS, and any variation is likely to produce that.

That is not to say that there may not be a state by state variation at the moment. There is a downturn in demand for degree programs for nurses. I am not sure what is happening in the TAFE sector.

Mr SAWFORD—If there were a single funding arrangement—at the moment, TAFE is getting part from the Commonwealth, most of it is state—from the Commonwealth applied to TAFE and universities, how would you react?

Prof. King—I think our concern would not be for ourselves so much as for what we would see as the unhealthy perceptions by one or other sector that it was about to be swamped by its competition. If the funding arrangements did not relate to structural change, then the argument is, I suppose, potentially less threatening. What we would be very concerned about is if the funding arrangements actually drove the quite diverse sectors into what, I think, both would see as an unwelcome alliance and one which significantly impacted on their core business, on their competitive edge, on their capacity to market to students. As I say, the evidence that we found is that students actually value very different pathways.

Mr MOSSFIELD—In any competition for funding, the suggestion has been put to

us that the TAFE systems would be the ones that would suffer. Do you have any views on that?

Prof. King—I am honestly not sure about that. I must say I have had some background in TAFE. For nearly two years, I was director of the Southern Sydney Institute in 1995 and 1996. I really do not know what the outcome would be.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I was interested in your submission where you imply that the expansion of the TAFE sector may be limited just to absorbing students available as a result of the decline in year 12 retention rates; in other words, those that leave school early, rather than growth in, say, the trade areas. Do you see that happening, that TAFE will be providing a second chance education?

Prof. King—We believe absolutely that that is a critical function of TAFE, and I say that, as I say, as a person who has had a foot in both camps. There comes a point in time when young people find the strictures and constraints of conventional secondary schooling are not suited to the other expectations that society puts on them, or, in fact, the way they perceive their own role in society. TAFE, because it has essentially an adult-oriented approach to teaching, is a much more supportive environment for those students, particularly where those students have had some difficulty and have been labelled, over their 12 years of education, as a problem, or somebody who is not going to do particularly well. The capacity to make a break and to come back into a system which is about young adults coming together, studying very specifically to improve their chances for the work force rather than simply continuing their liberal education is something, I think, that is absolutely critical in our society.

Some of the most rewarding experiences I had as a director of TAFE were to attend ceremonies to mark the successful transition of students who had entered tertiary preparation courses and had just been told that they had received offers of places to universities, or who had decided in fact that they were going to go on and do diploma programs in TAFE. That was immensely rewarding. I have a personal as opposed to a university position on this—I believe that the role that TAFE plays in providing second chance education and helping young adults leap the barrier from lack of success into a new start is critical.

Mr MAREK—You are absolutely right. I know a lot of students who have finished year 10, or halfway through year 11, or finishing year 12 and thought, 'Whoops! Last chance, I made a blue at secondary education.' They have turned out to be some of the best students. They have gone into trades, or done secretarial duties and got jobs. There is a social responsibility that we look after them.

Prof. King—I speak personally on this. I was a high school dropout who did external studies through TAFE and got back into university and have had some success in my academic career since then.

Mr MAREK—There are a lot of people in that category. Do you think that there should be regulation or deregulation between the universities and TAFE to stop universities encroaching on or taking too much away from TAFE?

Prof. King—I do not believe that that is a real threat. My view is that it is clear that there is overlap in some areas, but the overlap occurs at the periphery of their core business. The core business of TAFE and the core business of universities is very, very different. It is handled very, very differently—different kinds of students with different kinds of abilities and different kinds of aspirations go to those two kinds of institutions.

Obviously, there will be those who make the move. The move is not one way—it goes both ways. There is an increasing pattern of university people, having graduated, going back into TAFE to get highly specific vocationally oriented qualifications. They go back to learn about small business or computer applications if they have been doing a different kind of course at university. They go back in to do marketing—they go back in to do all those very specific employment-oriented courses that TAFE offers. I think, from memory, two years ago, the Sydney Institute of TAFE was taking 12 per cent of its students from university graduates—one in eight.

Mr SAWFORD—What about the other way around?

Prof. King—I am not sure what the number of people moving from TAFE into the university sector is. I do not have that information.

Mr SAWFORD—This is the second day of this inquiry. We spent yesterday in Western Australia. A representative from the University of Western Australia mentioned that, with regard to the people coming from TAFE into university, the results were very mixed. Do you have some information in terms of TAFE students coming to your university? We gained the general impression that far more university students go to TAFE than the other way around—seven times as many, I think, in Western Australia.

Prof. King—Seven times the number from TAFE to university?

CHAIR—University to TAFE, it was seven to one, which reinforces what you just said.

Prof. King—Yes. My experience, and this is absolutely anecdotal, would not tend to confirm that, but I do not know. It may be very different here in South Australia. Certainly, we get a significant number of TAFE transferees. Just to go back to the question about how TAFE students do at university, I think this is a pretty troubled issue, and it varies from area to area, and it really turns on the kind of teaching which is characteristic of a particular area. So, for example, I suspect that there is less difficulty in making the transition if you were doing accountancy, because the approach to teaching accountancy is rather similar from place to place. However, if students have been to TAFE

and they come in to do social sciences, humanities or a range of the other offerings that we have, we do find that they have some difficulty, and it is because of the different missions of the two sectors and the different forms of teaching.

Essentially, in TAFE, you are taught the prescribed curriculum to national standards to achieve specific competencies. At university, you are taught a curriculum which is very much in the control of the academics teaching in a particular area. You are taught from a perspective of being invited constantly to challenge the orthodoxy in the field, and many TAFE students, like many of our overseas students who come from a different educational culture, find that personally confronting. Their attitude is: 'Look, do not ask us to tell you things. You tell us what we need to know and, when we can give it back to you in the form that you have given to us, you should pass us and let us get on with our lives.'

Mr MAREK—It is a different style of education. People are not used to that challenge: 'I have just been told that is how it is, that is how it stays,' whereas you are asked to expand your vision and knowledge.

Prof. King—We distinguish between vocational education and training on the one hand, which is about the planned, coherent introduction of students to specified forms of knowledge and skills which enable them to perform certain critical functions in a successful way. That is typical of the TAFE sector. There are exceptions, but that is it, on the whole, and it is reinforced very much by the national curricula and by prescribed standards—the whole competency movement has reinforced that particular approach.

On the other hand, you have the university model, where there is a body of content, where there is a high degree of optionality, and where students can elect to follow particular areas of interest. They can specialise in particular areas of topics; they are invited to read beyond the prescribed course; they get recognition for original thinking and for making contributions. It is a very different ball game. It is not surprising that people find it difficult. But that is also the other side of an argument about the different missions and why it is not necessarily a good thing, simply because they are both post-secondary, to see them being brought together.

CHAIR—Is there a place for graded assessment in TAFE rather than just competency-based skills assessment and, tangential to that, is there, as might have been the case in your particular circumstance, a place for TAFE actually providing a transition for people who have gone out of secondary education early and then want to come back into a higher level of education? As well as training people to be chefs, fitters and turners and all the other things that the marketplace requires, TAFE would be actually providing a program for somebody who has left at year 10 and has done other things for around seven or eight years but obviously could not just be dropped straight into a university degree. Do you think there is some role there?

Prof. King—I will take the first question, which was about graded assessment, to start with. I believe that this varies again from subject area to subject area. There are some fields in which, for reasons of safety, you do not want students to be exposed to the dangers of a margin of error. So, when you assess students, you need to assess that they have achieved absolutely the specific competency which enables them to tackle the next part of the course—where they deal with equipment, for example, which could be personally dangerous—in a way which is safe and in which everybody, both staff and students, have every reason to expect that there will not be danger to the student.

There are some instances, I think, where an adherence to competencies, where those competencies are tested throughout the length of a course, is absolutely critical. There are some areas, too, where you are asking students to grasp concepts. I think it is in areas like the second chance education that it is perfectly appropriate to have graded assessment. If you are teaching people English as a second language, there is not either a 100 per cent right or wrong position in relation to things. You have to be able to say: 'Look, on this particular test, you did not do everything perfectly, but, on the whole, you performed reasonably well, and on the basis of that, I want you now to take a more difficult exercise.' I think that is a perfectly reasonable position to have.

So I think that it is horses for courses, to put it bluntly. There are some subjects in which you certainly would not want students who did not have 100 per cent control of the particular skills involved doing any further or more complex work. There are other areas where it is just part of the learning process to make mistakes, to get feedback on those mistakes, and to continue to grow through exposure to the content as a whole, and teaching English as a second language is a clear instance of that.

CHAIR—Do TAFEs seek to imbue in their students a sense of professionalism? I have never been to a TAFE as a consumer, so I would not know, but rather than just, say, simply teaching specific technical tasks, are there also components that deal with responsibilities to the public, fiduciary behaviour—anything like that?

Prof. King—That is a very complex question. I am not trying to be flippant by saying that the answer is both yes and no. I do not think that if you do a specific program in TAFE you are likely to be exposed to a secondary set of skills that would help you to operate as a small businessman, for example. If you are doing a plumbing course, you will probably not get things like the associated management skills which would enable you to be a successful small businessman. That is the first thing. That is normally done as a second course. It is fiendishly difficult to pull off successfully, because, once people are out running their own small business, finding the time to do the additional training is very problematic.

There is enormous socialisation into the trades and industries through TAFE. There are very close associations between individual enterprises and whole industries with the training that occurs in a particular field, not only through the setting of the curriculum but

through placement and, more particularly, through the involvement of those industries in observing and monitoring what is going on in the TAFE colleges. It is quite something to go to a TAFE presentation night and see that, for every group of 15 students, there will be people there from three different enterprises to make a presentation to each of the top three students.

This is about identifying with the young people who are coming into the trade. This happens in course after course, and I think that there is a very strong link between the industry-based courses in TAFE and the people who are the employers in those fields. That manifests itself in an enormous number of ways. I spoke morning after morning at industry breakfasts to try and keep people in the industry up to speed with what TAFE was doing in teaching in their particular area. I was engaged in evening dinner after evening dinner to do the same sort of thing. We had regular meetings between the teaching staff in key areas and representatives of the local industry within the institute. Quite often, it was over very significant issues.

One of the consequences of nationally prescribed curricula and the industry training advisory bodies is that, sometimes, they are dominated by the large-scale employers, so in aviation engineering, for example, the body tends to be dominated by the Qantases, the Hawker de Havillands and people like that. In my institute, I had Bankstown airport and we had 18 small businesses, all of them employing something like seven people. They did not believe that the new national curriculum actually suited their apprentices, so TAFE often mediated in discussions between the industry advisory body and the local employers in a given area, because, of course, the employers saw the problem as TAFE's.

Mr MOSSFIELD—The point you just mentioned is one that I picked up this morning. I was not sure what the position was in New South Wales as far as TAFE advisory committees were concerned. I was very impressed with the information that came from the local TAFE advisory committees who operate in South Australia. Is there the same structure in New South Wales, where you, as a director of a TAFE institute, have an advisory body from industry people?

Prof. King—It operates at two levels. TAFE moves into the formal industry advisory body. We usually have representatives on all the industry training advisory bodies. I was on the New South Wales Metals Board, for example, as the director of the institute. In New South Wales, each institute director takes responsibility for one or two key industry areas, and I happened to have engineering and manufacturing as my particular state-wide responsibilities. That meant that I had the curriculum development group.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What year was that?

Prof. King—That was 1995. There have been significant changes, of course, in those areas. We had advisory groups in relation to a specific programs area and we also

had an institute council, which had significant industry representation on it, and those representatives were chosen from areas where there was a significant presence within the institute. So, for example, we had somebody from the Federal Airports Corporation, because the institute takes in Mascot, and we were providing training for Qantas.

Mr MAREK—At the university, at your end, do you teach a wide range of topics, such as arts?

Prof. King—A huge range.

Mr MAREK—Do you find it unusual or restrictive, or are there any problems with the fact that arts is in a different portfolio to employment and training where the normal funding for universities and TAFE comes from?

Prof. King—I think there is a distinction between arts degrees and what is taught in them and the performing arts and fine arts. In my university, we actually straddle that divide, because not only do we have arts degrees in the old sense of a BA, but we also teach fine arts, so we have the South Australian School of Art as part of our operation. Quite often we find ourselves dealing with different bodies. It is the case that sometimes there are specific grants that we pursue, but, generally speaking, that is not an issue which bothers the institution.

CHAIR—Should TAFEs be engaged in research?

Prof. King—This was an issue which confronted me when I was in TAFE. I was put on the research committee of the New South Wales TAFE Commission. My own view is that the capacity, in the way TAFE is structured, to engage in research is very, very limited.

Mr SAWFORD—Too many hours. Should they be doing it, or do you think it is really in the domain of universities?

Prof. King—I think good research would probably come out of a close association between a TAFE institute and a particular school or faculty within a university, where the university is actually funded to do research and where the TAFE people can provide individuals with key expertise and identify problems and help on the steering of the research. But research is a sophisticated activity and you have to have time to give to it. I think that the national TAFE research body is a very good body and it undertakes national research in a very useful way. I personally do not believe that there is much scope for research for students or teachers in TAFE colleges.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I ask for your personal view, rather than from the point of view of the university, particularly because we have not yet been to New South Wales and we are yet to go, in your transition to South Australia, in terms of the collaboration

between universities and TAFE, were there any significant differences that you encountered?

Prof. King—There is a much closer collaboration in South Australia between the University of South Australia and the local TAFE. That is about, of course, being a smaller state, a smaller city and having a fewer number of TAFE institutes. TAFE in New South Wales is huge; it is something like 40 per cent total provision.

Mr SAWFORD—I think it is 60 per cent.

Prof. King—It is huge. While there are very good relationships between parts of individual TAFE institutes and a local university—some terrific stuff is going on—there is not the capacity, I believe, to deal almost at a system level with an institution the way that has occurred in South Australia.

Mr SAWFORD—It is a small state but there are other small states in Australia—and Tasmania is one, which is very much smaller and maybe, in fact, Western Australia. Traditionally, South Australia, whether it be public or private schools, the collaboration has always been there in education. You do not necessarily find that—New South Wales is a different kettle of fish and Victoria is different, but in Western Australia the degree of collaboration is not necessarily there. Have you found some sort of cultural reason?

Prof. King—I think there is a whole range of reasons—one is demographic. Most of the population of South Australia lives in the greater Adelaide area. We do not have regional centres. We do not have a Newcastle.

Mr SAWFORD—Western Australia has Perth, but they do not have the degree of collaboration.

Prof. King—The Curtin University has developed a strong regional presence in a range of areas. I think it is due to a whole range of things. There is something of the small town in Adelaide. It is the case that the key players know each other. For years, there has been a body which involved the chief executives of the universities, the former colleges of advanced education and the director-general of TAFE—that has been a longstanding arrangement and I honestly do not know whether there is a single cause or not. I suspect it is a whole combination of factors to do with the nature of things.

It is also the case that the University of South Australia is a post-1987 university and has had to forge its way. It had a particular access and equity mission. A huge number of students who come to the university in the targeted disadvantaged areas come from our TAFE intake, so there is a range of reasons why we have good connections. That particular thing of the post-1987 university, does not apply in Tasmania. You have an old institution which was able to develop.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Bruce. That is very good. You seem to straddle both these areas. We might come back to you at some stage.

Mr MAREK—The information gets better all the time.

[3.22 p.m.]

TOLSTOSHEV, Ms Helen, Chief Executive Officer and Registrar, Nurses Board of South Australia, 200 East Terrace, Adelaide, South Australia 5000

WICKETT, Ms Di, Manager, Education and Registration Assessment Services, Nurses Board of South Australia, 200 East Terrace, Adelaide, South Australia 5000

CHAIR—Welcome. We would like you to give us a five- or 10-minute overview of your submission, at the most, and then we will talk about it and ask questions.

Ms Tolstoshev—The board is responsible for the enrolment and registration of nurses. In relation to this inquiry, we are talking about the educational preparation of people for enrolment and specifically DETAFE's role in providing courses that lead to enrolment. It is our view that, since the board endorsed the pathway to enrolment through the TAFE program, graduates have met the standards of competency required for professional practice as an enrolled nurse, so that has been an important transition from the hospital-based training to a DETAFE program.

I think it is fair to say that there are a number of significant issues about enrolled nurses roles that we want to raise with you. The first issue is the issue of articulation. In particular, with other DETAFE programs, like the Aboriginal health worker, it is critical that people who undertake that program are able to access enrolment as a nurse and that that program articulates within enrolled nursing programs. Di will talk to you about traineeships shortly.

The second issue is articulation with the university program for registration as a nurse. It is critical, for instance, for people who start nursing, and who then decide not to pursue the Bachelor of Nursing, that they are able to have recognition of prior learning and access to enrolment through the DETAFE program. Many of these things are in train and developing.

The third issue is about the course content. It is certificate 4 in aged and community care. I think that, given that nursing and nurses are evolving their role in primary health care, it is critical that that certificate encompasses primary health care, and while it does so in community care to an extent, I think it is very important that we look at further improvements to that curricula to encompass the care of families and children in the community in a primary health care model. So that is articulation and course content.

Fourthly, with regard to the issue of the board's requirement for supervision, in this state we have the Nurses Bill 1997 which proposes a new Nurses Act. In our consultation about the clauses of the bill, the issue of why enrolled nurses are required to be supervised by registered nurses was raised by enrolled nurses who practise in settings where it is difficult to access supervision; by medical practitioners wanting to employ enrolled nurses

in their practices; by the aged care sector that wants to employ enrolled nurses as hostel managers; and by consumers in the community who have a preference to employ a regulated person over and above an unlicensed care worker in providing care in their homes. We have committed significant resources to researching this issue. We have held two public forums. The board proposes to have a variation in the bill that gives the board the power to consider an application from an enrolled nurse to practise without registered nurse supervision.

My personal view, as the registrar, is that this is the beginning of separating out the scope of enrolled nursing practice from the scope of registered nurse practice, so that you have two categories of nurse. I think that will pose some further challenges for TAFE.

Ms Wickett—I think the fact that TAFE currently is offering the enrolled nurse program so flexibly—they are offering the program from the Spencer Institute to participants in Queensland and the Northern Territory—and those nurses do seek enrolment in South Australia and they receive it. The program is run in this state and they are performing extremely well. So that is an avenue that TAFE has offered that others have not previously, which has been very good.

CHAIR—Is the provision through TAFE of enrolled nurse training something that is occurring in response to a demand in the marketplace—nursing home, hostel, public and private hospital sector—or is it something that the nursing profession itself feels ought to be provided, or is it a bit of both?

Ms Tolstoshev—I would say it is both. This is a very significant issue, I think. The enrolled nurse or assistant nurse role evolved in a vocational model. One needs to ask the question: is it appropriate to have a second level nurse at this stage now that nursing is a university course? Certainly, the International Council of Nurses has recommended one level of nurse. This board in this state and other boards in other states have made a commitment to retain two levels of nurse.

I would say that, in the majority of states, the number of enrolled nurses is declining. In fact, this board did not actively seek to initiate the TAFE program in order to allow enrolled nursing to lapse. However, it was student demand and students contacting their local members that led to significant political pressure to re-establish the enrolled nurse training program.

CHAIR—The Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry told us yesterday that the Western Australian government last year had to recruit 500 nurses from overseas to fill positions. We assume that they were talking about enrolled nurse levels.

Ms Tolstoshev—No.

CHAIR—This is predominantly the private sector.

Ms Tolstoshev—No.

CHAIR—They were registered nurses?

Ms Tolstoshev—Absolutely registered nurses. There is a significant shortage in specialist nursing categories—midwifery, operating theatre nurses, critical care, accident and emergency and, of course, rural and remote practitioners, but that is not the case with enrolled nurses. There would be some states who would argue that the category of enrolled nurse will be redundant within 10 years.

CHAIR—A view has been put to us that TAFE is getting too close to the universities; that too much articulation, if you like, diminishes the quality of what each sector is trying to provide. Do you envisage, in the enrolled nurse area and the registered nurse training through universities, that is likely to be a problem?

Ms Wickett—I do not believe so at this time. It certainly has not been indicated in the last three years that enrolled nursing has been in the TAFE sector.

Ms Tolstoshev—I think the Australian Nursing Council's competencies for enrolled and registered nurses make the differences between the two categories of nurse absolutely clear. The enrolled nurse is someone who contributes to a health care plan and contributes to an assessment and an evaluation of that plan. They do not have the expertise to do the assessment and nursing diagnosis and planning that is required.

CHAIR—In the health area, and I have some knowledge of this, there are people who feel that the move—I think Peter Walsh, one of your former colleagues, Rod, said this—of nursing education to the university sector was not, in fact, a positive thing and that you are educating people to be nurses for career expectations that are not going to be met. Is the demand, if you like, for an enrolled nurse, a reaction to that? We are producing university graduates in nursing, who then, quite reasonably in my view, look at the nursing job and say, 'If you think I am going to do that, you have got another think coming. I have trained for something at a higher level.' So now we have to have enrolled nurses. Does that have any currency with you?

Ms Tolstoshev—I understand the position. I think the enrolled nurse category evolves through people having a lifelong wish to be a nurse and then not making the entrance scores for university education. Many people still want to be a nurse but cannot make that. Equally, I think the employment of the registered nurse now is at the higher end of the continuum of expertise—this sounds arrogant—but, with regard to the lower order skills, it is appropriate that nursing divests those to other categories of worker, and they do not have to be an enrolled nurse. Indeed, many of those tasks are now going to unlicensed people—care workers, personal care attendants—and that enables nursing to reach forward into the areas of primary health care that I think this country absolutely needs nursing to reach into to provide accessible, cost-effective care.

CHAIR—It is an obvious question, but why do we have these shortages in these specialist areas?

Ms Wickett—Probably in the last five years I think that a lot of the specialist nursing courses have moved into the tertiary sector. A percentage of nurses cannot afford, or say they cannot afford to go ahead and do further education. We did not have the shortages that we have now when the courses were post basic courses—they were really traineeships—whereas now most courses are literally in the tertiary sector. So I think that nurses may not have a degree initially, they still have to get a degree, and then do postgraduate study. We stopped our last training in this state through the hospital system in 1990, so our last graduate is from 1993. So we are relatively young, in this state, in relation to nurses having a degree in nursing as their initial qualification.

CHAIR—My own wife is a midwife and she is running a nursing home—for lots of reasons. She would love to be working in midwifery and was one of those in the 1990 year. Should TAFE, for example, be offering, in conjunction with hospitals, post basic training? Would it not be better to have nurses who are Australian graduates?

Ms Tolstoshev—Absolutely.

CHAIR—Doing work instead of having to recruit people from overseas to work in ICUs.

Ms Tolstoshev—I think the university sector might have a view about TAFE doing that. However, we absolutely agree that we should, and certainly the Nurses Board in this state works aggressively to keep nurses in the working nurse force. When you look at the profession, it is still predominantly female. With regard to graduates, there is a big dip in registrations post graduation in the mid 20s, where people leave for family commitments or go overseas. They then come back to the work force with family care commitments. Nursing is a hard job these days.

CHAIR—Most nurses try to get out of it.

Ms Tolstoshev—That raises the issue—and I am not the union representative—that nurses are not remunerated for additional qualifications.

CHAIR—I agree.

Ms Tolstoshev—What is the incentive to pay HECS, work many hours and then go home and study and manage to keep a family and relationship together when you do not get any recognition financially? Medicine has a model of—

CHAIR—Yes, that is right, the further up the tree you get, the more money you get.

Ms Wickett—There is the question of the flexibility of the university program, also. With regard to those courses, people have to move their jobs and move to Adelaide to do a postgraduate qualification. They cannot do them flexibly. I think that is a real issue.

CHAIR—It is interesting that, in the other sectors that we are dealing with, people do a university degree and then they go to TAFE to get the extra bit that they need—they pick the marrow out of the TAFE courses really to hone their skills for the marketplace. Yet it seems that, in the nursing sector, you go and do a university degree and then you have to do more university degrees actually to fit into the marketplace. I could see a situation where TAFE, working collaboratively with the tertiary hospital sector, could actually be preparing university nursing graduates for specific tasks in the workplace. Is there a recommendation that we could make that would assist in some way?

Ms Wickett—I think the issue would be the placement of students. No matter which sector they came from—I was at a meeting yesterday with TAFE people, in fact the overseas qualifications board here, talking about where to place people who needed to have their qualifications recognised in this state. The biggest issue is where do these people go? It does not matter whether they have come from TAFE or the university, they just cannot get placement in these tertiary hospitals. I do not know why.

There was an issue raised yesterday about WorkCover, whether it was because people were not covered in relation to having students in their organisation. That was a very big issue seen by this board. Whether those students are from TAFE or whether they are from the university, is that a barrier for tertiary organisations taking students in on placement? I do not know.

CHAIR—You would be aware that many hospital administrators, public and private, frequently say that the nurses who come out of universities, whilst knowledgeable, are not as good as the ones who have spent time working in hospitals and training in hospitals.

Ms Tolstoshev—I actually would refute that view, and we certainly, through our complaints data, would be able to refute that view. New graduates are underrepresented in complaints to the board about misconduct or incompetence. I think it is a societal issue about accepting a new model of nursing practice and filling the gap for those other nursing practices, like personal care and bedside care, that people are missing.

However, if I could quickly come back to the issue of TAFE being an education provider, the board has the powers to accredit entry to practise, and that involves midwifery and psychiatric nursing. Apart from that, you could put up a curricula to any employer that would demonstrate that the person was competent in, say, operating theatre nursing, and if that employer says, 'That is the competence I am looking for,' it is a competitive market and, if you can provide them with nurses with that expertise at a lower

cost in a more flexible learning program, I think the market will vote with its feet.

Mr MOSSFIELD—You do have private providers as such, as distinct from universities and TAFE?

Ms Wickett—There is one.

Ms Tolstoshev—It is an enrolled nurse provider.

Ms Wickett—There are private providers in the post basic area as well. Just a few places are offering specialist training that is not necessarily in the university.

Mr SAWFORD—If I am a kid and live over the road at Ferryden Park, I have a satisfactory year 12 score. What pathways and where, geographically, do I go? I want to be an enrolled nurse; where do I go?

Ms Wickett—I am not sure whether they offer community services 3 at this campus, but—

Ms Tolstoshev—Regency Park, yes.

Ms Wickett—I am not sure whether they do here. Port Adelaide TAFE would be the one campus that would offer the enrolled nurse model that would need to be completed.

Mr SAWFORD—Port Adelaide.

Ms Wickett—Gilles Plains is the other option from here.

Mr SAWFORD—Regionally, Spencer?

Ms Wickett—Yes.

Ms Tolstoshev—And Royal Adelaide Hospital is another one.

Mr MAREK—Do you have to be linked up to the hospital to be able to take on the course?

Ms Wickett—No.

Ms Tolstoshev—If you got a job in a nursing home in the Port Adelaide area, then you could access enrolment through the course provided by the private provider.

Mr SAWFORD—Who is the private provider?

Ms Tolstoshev—ACOA.

Mr SAWFORD—If I want to have a degree, I go to Flinders?

Ms Tolstoshev—No, the University of South Australia would be the closest campus, or Flinders.

CHAIR—In New South Wales, we are down to TERs of 38 or 40 to get into nursing. They are trying actively to recruit people in. How low is it here?

Ms Wickett—Fifty-one or 52, which is low.

Ms Tolstoshev—It depends. I also have some issues about focusing on the entrance score. That assumes that school is a positive experience for all students. We all know that is actually not the case. What you want is the commitment to nursing, some basic abilities to learn, and then you rely on the university sector to escalate those abilities to meet the competencies required for registered nursing. I think the focus on entrance scores needs to be strongly challenged.

Mr MAREK—If somebody really wants to do it and they can prove the competency, why should they not?

CHAIR—That is what is happening at the moment—because it is so low—

Ms Wickett—Some do not make it. They go through the enrolled nurse channel; they will seek enrolment first and then enter the Bachelor of Nursing that way and get status for the enrolled nursing certificate. There is an avenue for them to go in by TAFE.

Mr MAREK—They also do not have a model or a structure. Once you are a nurse, there is no ability to be able to improve your education to get more money.

Ms Tolstoshev—The remuneration structure in nursing?

Mr MAREK—Was that what you were talking about before that is a problem?

Ms Wickett—Unless you get a promotion.

CHAIR—It is terribly underpaid and underrecognised.

Ms Tolstoshev—I do not think it is underpaid, but advances in your capacity in terms of qualifications are not recognised, like the medical profession. I am not suggesting that that is the model, but there is no incentive for people to undertake highly expensive

university courses when it is not recognised financially.

CHAIR—If we come back to the problem we had in Western Australia, which I know is a problem in New South Wales, of the specialist nursing situation.

Mr SAWFORD—I thought it was not just specialist; it was over the board.

Ms Tolstoshev—It is over the board, but it is concentrated in the specialty areas.

CHAIR—Would the Nurses Board look favourably on a model of, say, one of the large private service providers, say, HCOA or someone like that, negotiating a training package with TAFE to train nurses to a postgraduate level in ICU, midwifery, whatever you like—is that something you would look at?

Ms Tolstoshev—We do not approve those post entry curricula unless they are in midwifery or psychiatric nursing, so it is absolutely a negotiation in the marketplace. If a nurse were reported to us for, let us say, incompetence, we would then look to the course to ensure that that person had met the competence and it was a reasonable degree of competence.

Mr SAWFORD—I hate asking anecdotal questions, and you probably hate receiving it.

Ms Tolstoshev—We call them 'case studies'.

Mr SAWFORD—I had an elderly aunt, who was seriously ill, and in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. She had an extended stay. As an MP, I walked in there any time I liked. I spent considerable periods at night and early morning sitting with her. There were just not enough nurses there. I had no criticism, and nor did any members of the family, of the services that the nurses offered. They were running everywhere. They seemed to be innately record keeping, which seemed to be out of the ark, in terms of handwritten longhand.

Not enough nurses are employed, because of lack of money and all sorts of other reasons. It is the first time I have really been in a hospital for a long time, other than going around and having the escorted tour, which is a different thing. That is the anecdotal information that people come back to me with—there are not enough nurses.

Ms Tolstoshev—I think that there are two issues. It is a high acuity model. There is a high level of activity with any high acuity model. The ANF would strongly argue that we are understaffed. If you look at us in comparison with the UK model, we are well-off. The issue is: what level of care did your aunt need and was hospital the best place to provide it? You did not say that her care was compromised.

Mr SAWFORD—Who knows? I do not know—she died, so you do not know. I

do not want to get into that.

CHAIR—What Rod is saying, which I know is the case, is that job satisfaction is close to zero. You do a high level of training; you go into the job and you end up doing a whole lot of administrative tasks from answering the phone through to managing people's intravenous therapy and the rest of it for an inadequate level of remuneration. Consequently, many nurses are out there looking for another career.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What about intake? Are people looking to going into nursing as a career?

Ms Wickett—It is my understanding that the universities are not meeting their quotas.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So they are not seeking to become nurses?

Ms Wickett—Is it a status thing? Does nursing hold much status? A lot of people question me about that.

Ms Tolstoshev—The other issue is that—and I know this is very political, and I am aware that some of these issues relate to the medical profession's role in our society—at the end of the day, nursing is incredibly constrained in developing and evolving its practice. The New South Wales nurse practitioner project absolutely demonstrated that nurses could provide safe, efficient and effective primary health care and that it was quite safe to incorporate into nursing care the use of therapeutic agents, meaning some prescription drugs, and the requesting of diagnostic pathology and radiology. We cannot move into that area because, whenever we try to evolve nursing practice, the medical profession says, 'That is medical practice.' In this day of competition, it is reasonable that the consumer should be able to choose from overlapping scopes of practice.

I was the CEO of family planning before I was at the Nurses Board. It is very clear to me that, in terms of preventive primary health care, nurse practitioners and GPs can offer a woman equally safe models of practice. But no nurse was allowed to send a smear test with their signature on it; no nurse was allowed to prescribe the pill. Nurses look at this, and they think, 'I can study until I drop; I can get additional qualifications, but, at the end of the day, there are incredible road blocks at the end of this career to taking it any further.'

Mr MAREK—Do they stop them from being able to do sutures? I remember that once upon a time, if I got a cut, you would slip in and you got a few stitches, but now you have to call a doctor. Why?

CHAIR—It is a question of competency versus professionalism. Why should you train somebody to be a teacher to teach kids when a teacher's aide can basically do the

same thing? It is that kind of argument. I suppose we would come back to the other aspect. We train nurses who then, quite understandably now, with the level of training, want to pursue careers in primary nursing, et cetera. We then get back to the whole business of here we are with TAFE having to offer enrolled nurse courses because the nurses who are trained feel, quite understandably, that they do not want to do these very basic nursing sorts of jobs.

It is a bit like you spend 10 years training to be a GP and then you find your whole life is spent writing prescriptions and doing menial tasks.

Ms Tolstoshev—The question is: is that cost effective? You might not like doing the work, but you also have to look at the health dollar and say, 'Is it cost effective for me, after all the cost of my training and my hourly rate, to be doing this level of work?'

CHAIR—I guess we will not solve those problems here. I sense there might be scope for us, in our inquiry into TAFEs and their roles in relation to universities, to make some recommendations that will enhance the role of TAFEs collaboratively—certainly with the marketplace, public and private—that actually helps things. Is there something we should be recommending that would help in some way?

Ms Wickett—I wonder about rural and remote education. There is very limited ability for people in the country to access education. I do not mean leading to registration or enrolment, but for nurses who may have been out of the work force to access that education and keep up their professional development. They leave nursing.

CHAIR—TAFE could be offering refresher, re-entry, retraining, whatever you want to call it.

Ms Tolstoshev—Yes, and your flexible learning approaches are very suited to people who not only live in rural and remote areas but are bound in the city by other commitments.

Mr SAWFORD—What is offered at Spencer Institute?

Ms Wickett—They offer the community services 4 certificate and the enrolled nurse module—predominantly, it is the enrolled nurse module, but they offer re-entry. People re-enter enrolled nursing via that module.

Mr SAWFORD—What about the Riverland?

Ms Wickett—Nothing; they offer community services 3.

Mr SAWFORD—Mount Gambier and the South East?

Ms Wickett—No, community services 3; it is only Spencer. There are real gaps in the country.

Mr SAWFORD—Is there an opportunity that universities, say the University of South Australia, and TAFE have some collaboration? Infrastructure is expensive and South Australia, like Western Australia, does not have big regional centres. Can that model work in, say, the South-East and the Riverland?

Ms Tolstoshev—Why not?

Ms Wickett—I think it could.

Ms Tolstoshev—Yes, I think so.

Ms Wickett—You have lecturers in both programs that have nursing expertise. These courses are taught by nurses.

CHAIR—It would be possible, would it not, for us, for example, to recommend that the private sector, that is, the private hospitals sector in South Australia, or indeed across the country in fact, and the public hospital sector and then the appropriate health organisation—in this case, the South Australian Health Commission—could be contributing financially, along with a small user pays component for nurses who have been out of the work force and who are interested in re-entry; that TAFE, in cooperation with those, could be providing a re-entry program? It could be for enrolled nurses and it could also be registered nurses, depending on the level. That would help meet a need. I think we all know they are predominantly women but some are men. They are out there; they have had families and have not nursed for four or five years. They would love to be working, but they are frightened and they do not know where to go.

Mr SAWFORD—The average age of teachers in this state is probably well over 50. I think I am a cohort. It will cause a huge problem in a few years time. The greatest agenda item is, 'When will I retire?' What is the average cohort age with nursing?

Ms Tolstoshev—If you are 45, you are in the same sort of blip. We have a big cohort of pre-retirement, and I think it is exacerbated in nursing, because there is a reasonable number of nurses who, in the early stages of their careers, sustained back injuries, because there were not the manual handling proceedings, et cetera. We have a big group who will retire earlier, or who are moving into non patient areas, because of—

Mr SAWFORD—Has this been discussed at TAFE or university levels and the boards?

Ms Tolstoshev—The work force planning, yes, the Health Commission is putting out a work force planning model.

Mr SAWFORD—They did not do it in Western Australia, did they?

Ms Wickett—The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare also gathers statistics from every nurses board in Australia in relation to that, but that is only the people who are registered or enrolled who receive the information or the survey forms.

Mr SAWFORD—There is a problem. I think you said earlier that nursing, in the current climate, is not an attractive option with young people, as is the case with teaching and police work. They have all struggled with qualification issues; they have all struggled with remuneration issues; and they have all struggled with a lowering of the value in the community—whereas previously they were regarded very highly in the community, there is a low regard. That is unfortunate and unfair.

Ms Tolstoshev—They are still a profession that is the most trusted profession, if you refer to the Morgan Gallup poll.

Mr SAWFORD—I would not refer anything accurately to the Morgan Gallup poll, but I do not dispute that you are up the top.

Ms Tolstoshev—It is the issue in choosing your career, whether you want to take that career on.

CHAIR—TAFEs seem, with varying degrees, to be quite good at getting the school leavers. There is some effort, because they are basically focused on the vocational education and training, to talk to school leavers and prospective TAFE students about careers. TAFE is offering enrolled nursing, but if it is offering re-entry, it might also offer a program of getting kids focused on nursing as a career, much more than universities do.

Ms Tolstoshev—I think that is an excellent suggestion. When there was a review of nurse education in 1996, that review group put forward a proposal for a four-year nursing program. Now, clearly, that was not supported by the federal government and it is a three-year program.

From my point of view—and it is only my view as a person, not the board's point of view—if you develop the ideal nursing education program, you would start in the high school with community service that received some recognition for people to go into an enrolled program, which they could exit from if that was as far as they wanted to go, and that then flowed into the university program. I think, if you did that, you would have nurses with a very strong primary health care orientation back into the community. I think that nursing model of education is going to make more difference to the delivery of health care than having segmented—

CHAIR—Are you suggesting you would be better off having a basic nursing training, like to enrolled nurse level, and then you would decide, 'Yes, I like this, I will

stay at this level,' or, alternatively, you go on to do a nursing degree?

Ms Tolstoshev—There would be professional problems with that. I think many of the professional organisations that have struggled hard to have nursing in the universities would refute that. That is why the concept of keeping it as an enrolled nurse program is critical, because I think that is one of the problems with it. We call it enrolment, which, to me, implies that I am actually enrolling to become a nurse.

Ms Wickett—As opposed to registration.

CHAIR—It is a bit like in medicine. You get a basic medical degree and, in the intern year, you could be a GP, and, if you wanted to, you could go on to be a specialist. Now it has evolved into formal postgraduate training for general practice or a specialty, but all specialists have essentially gone through what most GPs have been doing. I know what it is like.

Mr SAWFORD—You mentioned schools. That was a model put up by the Labor caucus, which was supposed to go into Working Nation and did not see the light of day, unfortunately. What work do you do in schools?

Ms Tolstoshev—The board—none. We are a regulator. We see that is a TAFE and university role.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you encourage that role?

Ms Tolstoshev—Absolutely. The board funded that role in marketing nursing as a career for three years, while the education review and the relocation of nurse education from the hospital to the higher education sector occurred.

CHAIR—Some of the universities, though, I think, in nursing have become so desperate that they have employed somebody full time to work on recruiting secondary students.

Ms Tolstoshev—Yes.

CHAIR—When, in fact, obviously there is a problem that is not being addressed, and I think we both know what it is—it is essentially a political one in terms of priorities.

Mr SAWFORD—It is also a practical one in the sense that our previous inquiry was about the career advisers and youth employment opportunities. If you look at a secondary school, whether public or private, the same thing occurs—1,000, 1,200 students; the person selected to be the careers adviser gets it by the short straw method. They have other responsibilities. No-one can do that.

Ms Tolstoshev—It does go in waves with societal development.

Mr SAWFORD—We have never had good career advisers in schools.

Ms Tolstoshev—I agree with that. As value based education evolves, and I see that is becoming more of an issue for parents and some schools are picking it up, then the more about social obligation, I think, will be given greater credence. If you have pathways that begin in schools for community service-type careers, I think we will see people beginning to consider them again. It is more than just what nursing looks like.

However, I think if they have a taste of community contribution, and that it is seen to contribute to entry to something, that the opportunity is right to start thinking about that.

Mr SAWFORD—Interesting that, in a time when the market dominates, and social obligations are being pushed downwards.

Ms Tolstoshev—I am involved in a school, and I was a school health nurse in my previous life. I see that more parents are now more interested in what values their child will be exposed to, what values they will leave the school with, as much as what career options they will have. It is preparing them for survival, is it not?

CHAIR—Yes. It is not a party political issue. I know that, on Rod's side, they are thinking about this. I can assure you that the government is very much looking at trying to do what we can to change the sense of values. Thank you so much for that. We will seriously look at what we can recommend to the Commonwealth in relation to this and, in doing so, we will consult with some nursing bodies and other providers. There might be something useful.

Mr SAWFORD—As a final comment, we hope to finish this inquiry before July. That is always in the lap of the gods. We are in day 2 of the public inquiry. We really do not know. We have an election year. Copies of whatever we come up with—recommendations—will be sent to all participants.

Ms Tolstoshev—It is a good process. I think it is a very accountable process.

CHAIR—Could we just ask you—it might assist us, if you cannot do it personally, your organisation—if we could get some data on what the estimates are of nurses who are out there who might be interested in re-entry—anything like that.

Ms Wickett—We have been trying to get that for a while.

CHAIR—If any work has been done on that, we would be grateful.

Ms Tolstoshev—Can I just make one final comment, that I think that the profession would work very hard against any move that may result in registered nurse education being placed in the TAFE sector.

CHAIR—I do not think anyone is really suggesting that.

Mr SAWFORD—That is not our role or brief.

CHAIR—Maybe the re-entry stuff and some post basic—

Ms Wickett—Can I comment on the re-entry? The overseas people, again—I guess that is quite a bit of my work—there is an avenue I think for TAFE in there in that, when nurses come from overseas, if they come from England or America, they can slot straight into the system here. That may not necessarily be the case. I think there is an avenue to offer a program at TAFE that would introduce people to the Australian health care system, no matter which country they came from. Sure, we have the nurses from Bosnia and the Philippines who have difficulty, because their training is vastly different. We slot them into re-entry programs—I do not know that is the correct avenue. But I think there is an avenue for TAFE. There is the interlink program here, but now nurses are not involved in the interlink program in South Australia.

CHAIR—Like an orientation program, and the marketplace, I am fairly confident, would be prepared, because they are desperate, to pay for that. It could be a revenue raiser for TAFE.

Ms Wickett—Statistically, nurses do not come to South Australia, so, if it could be offered across the board, that would be great.

Ms Tolstoshev—I know you are trying to move on. The issue of traineeship is very important as well and we are looking at, particularly in the Aboriginal health area, having an enrolled nurse in a traineeship and attending TAFE in a program that leads to enrolment, because we acknowledge that, for some young people, that is another alternative. Thank you very much.

[4.06 p.m.]

SEIDEL, Mr Ron, C/- Faculty of Engineering, Regency Institute, Days Road, Regency Park, SA, 5010

CHAIR—We have until 4.45, and we have already had a talk this morning.

Mr Seidel—My submission is on a private basis. It is not easy to separate my private viewpoints out from my professional work.

CHAIR—Perhaps you can give us a thumbnail sketch of your background.

Mr Seidel—I have been involved in teaching and management in vocational education for 30 years odd. My first degree was electronic engineering and postgraduate work in both computer science and education, with special emphasis in sociology. I am a member of various associations involving engineering education around the world—America, some in Europe. I am a member of an advisory committee of the UNESCO International Centre for Engineering Education and, for personal reasons, my wife and I travel overseas quite often, in a private capacity, so I have considerable links around the world.

My current countries of interest are Sweden and Germany and, obviously, Australia—this is a comparative base. I think we often talk about education and training. We need to have a clear viewpoint on what these two things are. The simplest is that education is a divergent learning process where you emphasise individual differences of outcomes and training is a convergent learning process, so you minimise differences. Both are right, both are correct, but they are complementary. You want a surgeon to be trained in what they do, rather than perhaps educated. When something goes wrong, they had better be educated.

We mentioned this morning about culture differences in schools, in universities and TAFE. I think that is one of the important aspects to be examined. One of the research interests that we have is currently with the University of Melbourne in non linear student career paths—what I call bouncing students, those that move around and do all sorts of things before they settle in a career path. Policy is usually predicated on linear career development.

The other one we are working on is the issue of gender harassment. We have also spent two years researching the question of why there are not more Aboriginal people in engineering, particularly in TAFE, and that is again due to a cultural matter.

The other one I mentioned is the idea of concept transformation between languages. These are issues that we are trying to tackle to improve the work that we do. We do run some programs in VET with the school sector. In this institution, the students come to

us, because of expertise and facilities. That may not be the case elsewhere. It is an issue then of, if you move VET into schools, I think you have a school culture of mass education which may not lead to where one wants it to. If you bring schools into the VET sector, there is an issue of a rapid transformation of young people from one cultural context to the next.

The previous witnesses mentioned this—we have quite a reasonable program for migrant engineers, particularly those from central eastern Europe. They come here, never having applied for jobs in their lives, and seek quite senior positions; they have not had to work in the context of a team, never having to discipline or resolve conflicts. We have only about a year to capitalise on the intellectual capacity that they have and send them into the Australian work force and take off.

I think this morning I mentioned something about our collaboration with the universities here. I think there are several reasons for that success, but we can explore that later, if you like.

The other area that I am particularly interested in is the school-to-work transition. While this may not be related to this inquiry, it is an important issue to us in Australia. I would argue that, as a result of industrial relations and various reforms, TAFE has been moved, whether we want it to or not—that is a different debate—to a fairly narrow workplace skills based culture. That has then left in Australia a gap between the school system, which is general education, and the TAFE system, which is very narrow in its focus.

If you use the comparison with the UK where they have a general national vocational qualification system, it is a system, now only five-years-old, which has very strong general and also vocational culture components. I noticed a report last year which mentioned that 50 per cent of university entrants in the UK come out of this stream rather than the school A stream. I think that may be something we need to look at in this country.

CHAIR—Thank you for taking the time. I may have heard you say at some stage earlier today, and correct me if I am wrong, that you thought that it was a bit inappropriate that the schools had gone so far into VET and this had a couple of problems associated with it. Would you like to expand on that?

Mr Seidel—I am not sure I used those words.

CHAIR—I do not want to misrepresent you.

Mr Seidel—If you accept the purpose of schools is for general education—that is their culture and that is what they have been doing for many years—if you move purely vocational activities into schools, the students are probably seeing these from a general

educational concept rather than a vocational concept. You can go through all the same mechanics—so it is not a mechanics thing; but, rather, it is a framework and a way of thinking about things. So, whether or not we get the full advantages for the community out of moving VET into schools is something one would have to examine and debate. I have some reservations about that.

If you take some other countries—Sweden might be a case—at about our year 10 in Australian terms, students are quite rigidly streamed into either a general education that goes on to university, or into a vocational stream, which ends up at about our trade level. In that country, at least, there is no TAFE-type vocational concept—they do not have such things. At the end of school, they finish up with a trade or general education. The general education then leads to university.

CHAIR—Like the old technical high school concept?

Mr Seidel—Yes. They end up with a BSc, which is an associate diploma in Australian terms, or a masters degree, which is Bachelor of Engineering in our terms.

CHAIR—One of our major terms of reference is the degree to which universities and TAFEs overlap and to what extent that is desirable. Is there a model throughout the world that you believe is ideal? We do not want universities to have a predatory approach to TAFEs, nor do we want TAFEs to take on a lot of the educational roles of universities. Is there a model that you think is ideal?

Mr Seidel—I do not suppose any model is ever ideal. Some viewpoints of the countries I am familiar with—in England, with the new universities, certainly there is a down franchising. That is really a student collecting mechanism more than anything else. In Germany, which has significant difficulties in their vocational training sector for a number of reasons, which I could outline but I will table that, I do not think it works very well. The universities there are well separated from vocational training and there are no linkages between them. I think, if anything, in Australia, we probably have got as close as anywhere else in the world. I get that from talking to other people.

One thing I might add is that engineering is a bit different from other fields. In engineering, the different layers are very clearly based on the tools that you have to work with. For example, in the academic world, people at trade level in my own field use for vector analysis, graphics and trigonometry, but they would not be very good at complex algebra. People at the associate diploma level would be very good at complex algebra, but may have some difficulty with transformation techniques. But, at the university level, transformation techniques would be the basic method they might have.

People come into a career level—let us suppose it is an associate diploma-type level—and they will not go up; they will go out into their own career path, which involves management and so on. In some fields, it is much easier to have a linear progression from

one level to the next level to the next level and the next level, but that is not the case in engineering.

Mr SAWFORD—I was fortunate to go to a technical school, which was a superior technical school with a superior principal and a superior set of teachers. As a student, you do not know whether you are in a good school or a bad school. Then I went on to a very reputable high school and I got the shock of my life, where the teaching standard was much less and where the variety and diversity of curriculum was non-existent. John Walker—you are old enough, Ron, to remember John Walker as the director of education and you know that he is really the father of most of the innovations that have occurred in TAFE, and in primary and secondary school.

If you trace all the innovators back, you will go back to the fact that they were students, or directors, or worked under John Walker. Unfortunately, John, as you know, was only director-general for a short period and Australia lost his influence. If he were director-general for a significant period of time, we would still have technical high schools and they would be superior technical high schools. He saw them as a different type of school. You made mention that you did not see the VET sector going back into schools.

Mr Seidel—No, I did not say that. I said I was questioning the value of VET in schools as they now stand. I think that we tend to put schools in the past. They are quite different. If you take some comparisons, in South Australia, visit Immanuel College, a private Lutheran school, where they put a lot of effort into developing the technology side as a legitimate alternative to some other things. Unless we change some of the cultures in the schools, this will not be successful.

A year or so ago, I was on a ministerial working party about mathematics in schools. I talked to a number of teachers and some students. The report was never released, for whatever reason. I was quite disappointed in the understanding that people in the schools had about, not necessarily technology, but even about the mathematics we were investigating. Senior management staff had no mathematics beyond mid high school. It was given a very low precedence in importance. I think, in the old days, that would have been quite different. It was the capable people in schools who did all the science, technology and mathematics, but that is not the case today.

CHAIR—You overheard our discussion with the Nurses Board about enrolled nursing and the idea of re-entry training offered by TAFE. Do you have any views on any of that?

Mr Seidel—I mentioned about our migrant engineers—that would be one thing. My wife might have a bit to say about that. She is heavily involved in some of the analysis. I could check the details if you want me to, but she was recently involved in advertising re-entry into paediatrics. When they rewrote the advertisement the way everybody said it should be written, they had about enough for four or five courses, so

you have to have the right advertising. I think there is probably room for re-entry for a number of groups besides just nursing—in engineering and other areas. Where it should occur, that is a matter for debate.

The advantage of TAFE is that it is used to handling diversity. We see it from our students, universities and elsewhere. I think we could probably be a bit more friendly at times, even though our institutions are pretty hostile places in the cultural context. I think there could be more re-entry. I heard your comment about the South-East. It is a question of numbers and economics, as much as anything else, and being flexible in how you organise it. You may have to organise re-entry when children are at school, you have short periods of the day in use.

Mr MAREK—You are not worried about universities coming backwards or coming down this way?

Mr Seidel—In this state, I have no qualms whatsoever. I meet my colleague deans in engineering every few weeks. We are on boards together and we meet each other socially.

Mr MAREK—I mean bigger than that, to the point that you are not concerned about universities poaching various courses.

Mr Seidel—No, we might fight over a few students. I would not want to comment on strategic development of universities in this state. We have quite different strategic directions. We have been negotiating with them about a whole range of things. I have no fear about them coming into the TAFE area. If they do that, they really have missed their place. In other states, where perhaps competition is somewhat higher, that might be the case.

Mr MAREK—They could argue that they should have all courses like arts or whatever.

Mr Seidel—I was talking about engineering, which is my area of specialty. I would not want to go outside that area.

Mr SAWFORD—You mentioned the South-East. What do you think ought to happen in regional South Australia—South-East, Iron Triangle, Riverland?

Mr Seidel—I think the borders have been drawn as a result of some convention, or something like this. I do not think state borders are the critical issue. I believe it happens—the big collaborations between Mount Gambier, across to Warrnambool, that sort of area. There are collaborations in the Riverland. We run courses in New South Wales, Sunraysia, because it is closer to here. The Iron Triangle is the same. The Flinders University runs courses at Spencer Institute and at Port Lincoln in aquaculture.

We have to do the best in the state with what we have. I do not think divisions are important. In this state at least, I think we should see the universities as being program centres, not geographic centres, so we might find Flinders on the south side of Adelaide running, say, a BA in languages for people who do not get into the University of Adelaide, delivering courses with diferent frameworks on the north side of Adelaide where the University of South Australia is centered and vice versa. Perhaps we should look at institutions being more as program centres rather than physical centres.

CHAIR—Service based.

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of TAFE and universities operating outreaches in these places, it will have to be done on a joint basis from the point of view economics. It is not always smooth, as the previous witnesses indicated this afternoon. What are some of the problems when you put TAFE people and university people together and you try to administer it, then you try to give the service delivery and you try to do the follow-up?

Mr Seidel—I think there are several things. First, if they do not have their own little market niches worked out, obviously they will have conflict. In South Australia, I think they are all worked out so the conflict does not come about. People have to know each other and accept each other for what they are and what they can do and how they possibly can work together. If they do not accept that, obviously it will not work.

There is a cultural difference between universities and TAFE. It is the issue of teaching based on research and teaching based on established practice. When you bring these people together, there will be differences of viewpoints.

When I take my colleagues to national or international conferences, they always come back and say, 'But these people spoke to me; these people wanted to hear what I have to say. They are senior professors and I am just a trade teacher.' That is the thing that people in TAFE have to overcome. We are all doing the same job. If you go about it as a service to the community, all have the same problems and they are people problems, then half the problems would disappear.

Mr SAWFORD—Would you pay these people the same award wage in these venues?

Mr Seidel—In practice, there is not a great deal of difference—university salaries at the bottom of the scale are not too high and quite comparable to some staff in TAFE.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think that could be overcome?

Mr Seidel—I do not think it is a problem. If you want to put pithy dollars on things, it might be, but most people I work with are concerned about service.

CHAIR—Would it be desirable, in terms of changing cultural values, to have university staff teach one or two modules in TAFE and vice versa?

Mr Seidel—In some areas that would be possible; mostly it will not. Mostly, TAFE models are very skill based and of a very applied nature, whereas, in the universities, that is not the case. We subcontract teaching to the universities and to private providers—it does not worry us. The universities subcontract to us. This is hypothetical, but it will do. In business studies, students in a degree course may want to do something about data communications and computer networks. They will come to us to do that, because we give them more applied, more practical, a simpler viewpoint, whereas university staff are used to teaching at a particular level and try to use that level, because that is what they have done all their lives, which is inappropriate for such a course. It is a service concept.

CHAIR—Thank you. It has been a real pleasure to meet you and hear you earlier today, and your formal presentation here.

Mr Seidel—It is just coincidence—I did not know about this inquiry until after I got back to Australia after having been away for a while. I was thinking about this issue on the way home in the plane. If you like, this is my address I gave last week in Melbourne. One of the things I said in here is that one of the issues for Australia was should there be a TAFE sector? This is purely coincidence and unrelated to this inquiry. I have copies of this. It is a published paper:

> Might not Australia be better served by moving the upper levels of public vocational education and training into universities and the lower levels into schools . . .

The other thing which might be of interest to you is called 'Impressions in Europe', which is an internal paper I wrote after three or four weeks in Europe. This one is not for distribution, because it has some criticisms of other countries, which might affect my relationship. It says 'Not for distribution'. Do you want this all together? I presume you are familiar with the contents of this report.

CHAIR—I am not.

Mr Seidel—It is 'Cross Sector Collaboration in Post Secondary Education and Training'.

CHAIR—We will conclude the hearing at this stage. Thank you very much for your contribution.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Sawford**):

> That the committee receive as evidence and include in its records as an exhibit for the inquiry into the roles of TAFE the documents received from Mr Christopher Robinson entitled

Employer Satisfaction with Vocational Education and Training 1997, Statistics 1996 and TAFE Graduate Destination Survey 1997.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Sawford**):

That this committee authorises publication, including publication on the parliamentary database, of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 4.30 p.m.