HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Role of institutes of TAFE

BRISBANE

Thursday, 19 March 1998

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Members:

Dr Nelson (Chair)

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

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

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Role of institutes of TAFE

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Present

Dr Nelson (Chair)

Mr Brough	Mr Neville
Mr Dargavel	Mr Pyne

The committee met at 9.45 a.m.

Dr Nelson took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing for the inquiry into the roles of institutes of TAFE and the extent to which those roles should overlap with universities. The committee has received over 90 submissions and has conducted public hearings in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney, intended to give business and the wider community, TAFE itself and the university sector an opportunity to participate directly in the inquiry. The purpose of the inquiry is to clearly identify the appropriate roles for institutes of TAFE and the extent to which they should overlap with universities. The committee aims to produce recommendations for government action that will enhance TAFE's capacity to meet community expectations in relation to those roles.

Matters raised in submissions and at public hearings so far include: the importance of TAFE's community service and vocational education and training roles; the importance of TAFE's links with industry; the effect of competition on TAFE's traditional activities; the appropriateness of TAFE's current administrative and financial structure; and the funding anomalies between TAFE and higher education which affect both students and institutions. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the issues to be considered or an indication of the committee's final recommendations and where they may lie.

Today in Brisbane the committee will hear evidence from the higher education sector and the Queensland Nursing Council.

BAGNALL, Dr Richard Gordon, PO Box 696, Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122

CHAIR—Welcome. I invite you to give us a five to 10-minute precis of your submission, which we will then discuss.

Dr Bagnall—I am associate professor in adult and vocational education at Griffith University but I am not representing the university. My submission is an individual one. It is based on research theory and criticism that focuses on the nature of and changes occurring in contemporary society and culture with particular reference to post-compulsory education. I see myself as one of a number of academics who are actively contributing to that field. The position that I take in relation to contemporary cultural changes is one of critical acceptance in attempting to identify not just the nature of those changes and their value to society but also their potential negative consequences. My work and submission to the standing committee is driven by a concern for social fairness, public morality, individual opportunity and cultural good, while recognising also that the meaning of all such concepts is itself part of the very cultural changes that I seek to critique.

The submission primarily addresses the second of the two charges of the standing committee of this inquiry. It recognises the contemporary cultural shifts occurring in society in favour of the increasing privatisation of educational responsibility, the increasingly competitive marketisation of post-compulsory education and the continuing reduction in legislative and other regulatory distinctions between different sectors of tertiary educational provision and funding. This submission calls for caution in the legislative response to such tendencies, not for the sake of preserving the past or delaying desirable change but rather to enhance equity of access to a wide diversity of tertiary educational opportunities by all Australian adults, to properly recognise through government support the public value of individual involvement in and through tertiary education and to build optimally upon those features of traditional tertiary education systems that are seen to be in the public good.

The submission agues that inappropriate, ill-informed, overly zealous or insensitive legislative change in tertiary education runs a number of risks already evidenced in changes to date, particularly a loss of diversity in educational provision, a reduction in access to a proper range of educational provision by those members of society who are relatively disadvantaged and a loss of cultural value to Australian society in and through its tertiary educational systems.

In the submission I advocate four principles as desirably informing government policy and education: firstly, the recognition of the role of government in optimising equitable access to tertiary education by all Australians; secondly, recognition of the extensive and penetrating but diffuse nature of tertiary education as a public good; thirdly, recognition of the freedom of educational choice as a positive rather than a negative conception; and, fourthly, recognition of the responsibility of government as the

representative of the people. I note that there is a tension between these principles on the one hand and the contextual changes towards the increasingly privatised and marketised nature of tertiary education on the other.

Finally, the considerations that I suggest for future legislative changes are: the recognition of the value of centres of educational excellence across the whole range of tertiary education; the need for appropriate and ongoing reviews of access to educational opportunities; the need for targeted and regulated funding to address areas of concern identified in those reviews; the delicate legislative and regulatory responses needed to give proper recognition to the diversity of private and public benefit from education; the diversity of institutional outreach to its communities and the value of that diversity; and, finally, the need to encourage educational flexibility and diversity across the whole sector.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. I must say that your submission has distilled into quite an understandable form a broader philosophical tension that underlies the nature of the inquiry, that is, should education take an increasingly utilitarian role on the one hand, or alternatively is it about preparing people for life and the inculcation of values? With the increasing articulation of universities on the one hand and the vocational education and training sector on the other, one of the questions we are looking at is: is one sector distracting itself from its core activities? That is really what you have addressed in your submission.

There are a couple of things. As legislators, how should the government ensure that things that universities are repositories of—research, knowledge, learning, language, history, fine arts and all those sorts of things—continue to have a value placed upon them for their own sake, whilst at the same time ensure that there is a reasonable articulation with the VET sectors?

Dr Bagnall—It is a tall order to answer that question so briefly. Certainly, the traditional roles of the universities in generating, preserving and transmitting public culture are important to society. That suggests certainly in Australian society, given its traditions, the need for continuing public—that is, government—support through appropriately restrained legislation to not force universities to become too strictly vocational in their mission.

I would argue, though, that the reverse tendency that we see, and are likely to increasingly see in the rest of the tertiary education sector, is that of the distinctions between what has traditionally been regarded as the TAFE sector and the university sector progressively continuing to be diminished. I would expect that that would be an important outcome of future legislative change.

We are likely to see, therefore, institutes of TAFE, or whatever they might become in the future—I suspect under a different structure and a different title—become a more integrated part of the tertiary education sector, so that TAFE institutes as presently

conceived will increasingly in many instances take on the responsibilities that presently are largely taken by the universities. Similarly, the universities will continue to expand their vocational concerns. The important thing is, though, to ensure that the other remains.

CHAIR—Some universities are offering VET programs at the moment and have moved into that area, much to the consternation of some TAFE providers. Do you think that is a desirable step, or is it something government should move to prevent?

Dr Bagnall—I do not see any particular value in seeking to prevent it. I see it as an almost inevitable direction for change, given that there will be, as I and others would term it, continued de-differentiation of the tertiary sector, a breaking down of the distinctions between different parts of tertiary education. I would react by saying, 'Whether or not it is overall desirable, it is going to happen, and the best thing that legislation and regulation can do is to accept that and to enhance the positive aspects while seeking to diminish the negative ones.'

CHAIR—The final thing I have before I ask my colleagues to ask questions is that I would like to quote a statement you made on page 2 of your submission. You said:

> It needs to be recognized also that the national mandating of educational fetishes and cure-alls, such as that of the competency-based movement in current vocational education and training legislation and policy, will inevitably cause enormous damage to the public value of education in and through the systems so affected.

Are you talking about competency based assessment in the TAFE sector or in the university sector?

Dr Bagnall—I am actually talking about it in the TAFE sector as a universal requirement for all vocational education. I think it is inappropriate for any government to suggest that it has the overall answer in a single formula for educational development, and that is the sort of thing we have seen with the promotion of a competency based approach to technical education. So we would be arguing for acceptance of a much greater diversity; not against competency based education but against the universal and singular mandating of that as the only way in which vocational learning should be assessed.

CHAIR—We have had some people suggesting that having competency based assessment only encourages a culture of mediocrity, and then we have had others, particularly employers, saying that they want people who are trained to perform particular tasks with a narrow training base, if you like, and that the graded assessment concept is one of the things which primarily differentiates the VET sector from the university sector. You feel that some TAFE programs ought to have a graded assessment instead of competency?

Dr Bagnall—Most certainly. I think it is extremely unfortunate that that singular form of assessment, which lends itself to such well-informed attack from educationists,

should be used to differentiate the vocational sector from perhaps what we might call traditionally the higher education sector. It helps to maintain the vocational education sector at a lower status, which I think is something which we need to get beyond. There certainly is educational involvement by TAFE that should include other forms of assessment and, as long as we maintain such a differentiation between the two sectors, we are erecting an enormous barrier to their integration. I think the country would be better served by much greater integration.

There is no doubt an important place in some foundational work, skills based work, by universities for a competency based approach. But, as long as we have the present universal or national mandating of it for TAFE, universities are naturally going to resist any efforts to bring it into the university system. I think we need to accept its value across the whole system but accept the value of other forms of assessment as well depending on the particular circumstances.

Mr PYNE—You talked in your submission about universities being centres of excellence and how we needed to maintain that. Do you think there are centres of excellence in TAFEs around Australia?

Dr Bagnall—What I was trying to say there—and obviously did so too cryptically—was that I am not arguing for universities continuing to be seen as centres of excellence as distinct from TAFE. What I am arguing for is that the tertiary education sector should be seen as a whole and that we should recognise appropriate centres of excellence both in TAFE and in universities depending on the particular academic and vocational mission at hand. The notion I am suggesting of centres of excellence is that various notions of centres of excellence that we presently have in a higher education university sector could usefully be extended to the TAFE sector and appropriate funding competitively made available to help develop those. I think that would do a lot to further our vocational education and work to break down the barriers between the two.

Mr PYNE—Do you think there is any evidence that the diminishment of distinctions between TAFEs and universities that you talked about has produced an identity crisis for both sectors?

Dr Bagnall—I am sure. We can expect that, yes. The sorts of changes that we are seeing in society—not just Australian society; these are obviously quite general changes—and are likely to see in the future, are causing and will continue to cause tremendous anguish amongst those of us who work within the systems. I am sure it is quite difficult coping with that.

Mr PYNE—Do you think that is a bad thing or a positive thing?

Dr Bagnall—Again, it has both positive and negative features. I think it is just something that we need to learn to live with and use constructively as best we can. To

hold back change because of the distress that it causes to the systems involved and those within them, I do not think is in the country's interest and will only, in effect, delay it and call for much more radical change and much more sudden change down the track. I think it is better that we respond to shifts in society and in our expectations of society progressively.

Mr PYNE—One of the purposes of this committee's inquiry is to identify problems that are occurring as a result of the diminishment of the distinctions between TAFEs and universities, to decide whether there is a blurring of roles and whether this is a good thing or a bad thing. If we decided that it was a bad thing, what sort of things could we recommend that would turn that change around in terms of building two strong colluding sectors but separate from each other as opposed to one sector which is interrelated?

Dr Bagnall—So you are suggesting a possible scenario where there would be two distinct sectors achieved and optimised?

Mr PYNE—Yes.

Dr Bagnall—Certainly getting adequate support through funding mechanisms to make it possible for both sectors to assure those persons who are committed to them that there is a future there is a very important thing to do. There is in the TAFE sector at the moment considerable concern that the marketisation pressures, which have been quite massive, and the competitive pressures are forcing TAFE institutes away from the hiring of staff even on reasonable contracts and away from the hiring of reasonably qualified staff because they are too expensive towards the hiring of minimally trained teachers at the bottom of the funding scale. For the system as a whole I think that has a negative impact and in the medium term that will work to reduce the quality quite dramatically.

That is very substantially a function of the opening up of the TAFE sector to competition between institutes. There needs to be erected a system where there is a sense of much greater long-term stability within the system as one of the measures to encourage collaboration. At the moment we are emphasising competition between institutes, which is having largely very negative effects, and we need to turn that around into encouraging the collaborative development: the sharing of capabilities across institutes.

A lot of the work that TAFE does—decreasingly so because of this effect—is actually very expensive in terms of plant and equipment. TAFE institutes tend to be fleeing from their traditional role into a very small range of provision focusing on business studies and the hospitality industry, where there is high demand and relatively low cost on the whole, and other areas as well. That is one of the dangers we will see continuing unless funding provision is made and legislative provision is made to encourage collaborative development and the ability to accept broad social responsibility, which most TAFE institutes have but which they frequently say they cannot afford to exercise, in

providing educational outreach across a much broader range and servicing the traditional or rather more costly areas. The same, of course, applies to universities, where we see a diminution of those areas that do not attract funding or that are very expensive, including technical education itself.

Mr DARGAVEL—Just on costs, there are naturally some courses which are fairly expensive to run. I imagine, for example, that having a metal industry apprentice is a bit more expensive than having someone in some other vocational course which does not require the same kind of investment in capital plant and equipment such as C&C lathes and all the rest of it. Do you see any evidence of skill shortages emerging out of a lack of ability for the TAFE sector to deliver those more expensive courses that are fairly technology driven and infrastructure driven?

Dr Bagnall—I am not aware of that at the moment. I can see that as being only an inevitable, longer term impact but my lack of awareness may be ignorance.

Mr DARGAVEL—I want to clarify your response to a question that Dr Nelson asked earlier. It was in relation to the 'fetishes and cure-alls of the competency based movement'. Am I understanding your response correctly: is your critique saying, 'Don't hold up competency-based assessment as the cure-all' per se or is it saying that competency based assessment and portability of skills and so on is a bad thing?

Dr Bagnall—I am certainly not arguing against portability of skills. I am not arguing against the use of competency based assessment sensitively applied in areas where it is judged to be appropriate.

Mr DARGAVEL—But I detect some concern that you are going to see this thing, which has emerged as a real force in vocational education, flow into higher education. Is that your real concern?

Dr Bagnall—No, not really. I would be surprised if that happened with the continuation of the present system. The universities would fight it vigorously. My concern is that competency based assessment is being used to define the TAFE—the vocational education sector—and to distinguish it from the higher education sector. That serves to further diminish the standing and the value of the vocational education sector because it has become the singular approach to assessment for vocational education. Everything is reduced to it and that is inappropriate. It is the singularity of the competency based approach for vocational education that I seek to argue against.

Mr DARGAVEL—You could compare it with the time served model of the old days where you had five- or six-year apprenticeships—now three-year apprenticeships. Would you have, for example, tradespeople go back to the time served model where you start your apprenticeship and at the end of it you are a tradesperson notwithstanding?

Dr Bagnall—Certainly not.

Mr DARGAVEL—So it is the distinction between the VET sector and higher ed that concerns you. What are you proposing in place of the uniformity of the competency based assessment in general?

Dr Bagnall—There are various approaches to assessment. The determination of excellence in skills, for example, in physicians and lawyers is not undertaken in a competency based way. Nevertheless, we are basically looking at various skills in both cases—manual and intellectual—just as we do in the TAFE sector. I would be concerned if we were to move entirely to a competency based system like that in TAFE for the assessment of the capabilities of physicians and members of the legal profession. A wide range of approaches to assessment which are more finely tuned to the particular outcomes that are required are used there, and should be in TAFE.

One aspect of the education system that competency based assessment is seen to have replaced is what you referred to as the time based system. I would argue that there are important elements of learning to be gained in any trade or profession from actually being immersed within it for some periods of time—actually interacting with others, especially with experts. Whether they be physicians or carpenters or whatever does not matter. By being immersed in the culture one picks up the essence of what it is to be expert in the area in a way that competency based assessment, no matter how good it is, cannot do. That is what research is telling us over and over again.

So in response to the direct part of your question: I would be arguing for elements of time in any vocational education task. It is not sufficient to develop expertise in any vocation by merely assessing, through a competency based approach, the performance regardless of background. Our attempts to do so through the TAFE system are certainly diminishing the quality of vocational education. That is the main negative impact that it is having. That is not to say that there are not valuable aspects of the competency based approach.

CHAIR—We did have a private submission from a university educator in Western Australia in which he expressed the concern that we would possibly end up with a society where many are trained and few are educated. The emphasis in the narrow VET stuff with competency based assessment in his opinion was depriving individuals of the personal skills that they need in leadership and management. It is not just a case of knowing how to correctly prepare a meal or weld a thing, you actually also need some organisational skills, which are not imbued by a narrow VET program.

Mr NEVILLE—I would like to pursue this theme as well. You have argued the case for time based assessment and you talk about things being finely tuned and sensitively approached. But hasn't the problem been that the TAFE colleges in the past lost the plot to some extent, that they were becoming ends in themselves and they were

not delivering the sorts of training that employers needed and they were not delivering the skills to apprentices and vocationally trained people? Isn't it the case, then, that we have to move to some sort of assessment that reflects the needs of the employer? And, to take up your other point, the parallel point, the TAFE colleges did not provide a rounded education as such in the same way as the humanities sections of universities do. Certainly some people might have had numeracy and literacy assistance, but outside that field the TAFE colleges and the technical colleges before them generally delivered the vocational training aspects of a particular occupation. Why is it any worse to accelerate those by basing them on the skills and the adaptability of the student?

Dr Bagnall—The historical factors that you mentioned no doubt reflect this situation. As applies with all institutions in periods of relative stability, their own continuation, their self-maintenance as cultural entities, becomes a very important part of their existence. It applies to all social institutions. The extent, though, to which TAFE colleges were not serving the interests and needs of employers, I would argue, is a much more debatable point. I am not aware of much evidence in support of that particular assertion. The colleges also saw themselves as serving the vocational needs of their students as well as the particular needs of employers, and that may be seen as distorting the system somewhat away from the interests of employers.

I would argue that a singular focus on the interests of employers, which we see, I think, with the present system, is regrettable since it results effectively in a serious deskilling of the adult population in Australia because employers, in spite of the rhetoric, are not on the whole interested in having workers who are trained beyond the particular needs that the employers have. No employer is going to pay more for a vocationally educated person than they need to, and it is not, in spite of the rhetoric, the case that a competency based system necessarily leads to higher levels of mobility except in a negative sense, in that people develop a small package of skills and to maintain themselves in any sort of employment they need to keep moving as the needs of particular employers change.

Mr NEVILLE—Let me pick you up on that point. You have said in your submission that the responsibility for representatives of the people has been delegated to sectoral interests, such as employers. Are you talking about, for example, organisations like ANTA?

Dr Bagnall—ANTA's responsibilities, through the ITABs and such like, are certainly focused singularly on employer interests. Yes, that is the sphere of interest that I am referring to.

Mr NEVILLE—Let me take it a step further. If that is the case, is having a body that oversees vocational training really any different from a senate or a council of a university overseeing the diversity of a university? Isn't that just bringing the various aspects of vocational training together with a mixture of people from industry and

academia to direct how vocational training be delivered across the Australian spectrum?

Dr Bagnall—I take it from that question that you understood me to be arguing against the existence of ANTA, which I am not doing. My concern was merely with the singular focus on employer interests across the sector as a whole. That happens to have necessarily become part of the charge of ANTA, but I am not arguing against the Australian National Training Authority.

Mr NEVILLE—I have just one final question, which is a bit of a left field question. As the chairman said in his opening remarks—and I see in your submission that there is this tension—you recognise that vocational training is going to, to some extent, invade higher levels of tertiary education. You say that that is inevitable. At the same time you argue the case for keeping the rounded education of tertiary education in place—and I may have paraphrased you fairly loosely there.

If that is the general thrust of what you are saying, is there a case for the reintroduction of institutes of technology back to where they were between TAFEs and universities? If you want to get that mix of technical, hands-on, vocational training—call it what you will—and a reasonable degree of the rounded education and letting the student be subsumed in the atmosphere of the institution, is there a case for those to come back for those areas of education where there has to be a component of both academic and vocational training? Aren't some TAFEs actually doing that in a de facto way by calling themselves the institute of such and such, trying to claw back, if you like, some of the aura of the old institutes of technology?

Dr Bagnall—Yes, there are certainly attempts to do that. I would argue that that is the direction we need to be looking in. We should not be effectively reintroducing new tiers but breaking down further distinctions so we get a much wider range, which, it could be argued, we have now in the higher education sector with a whole range of different types of universities, some of which are combined with TAFE institutes. We should be seeking to create a similar sort of diversity in the TAFE sector overlapping with that in the universities. We are not going to, I suggest, be seeking to create new distinct layers but rather to broaden the role of technical and further education as it presently is. So some will certainly expand up into what we see as a higher education sector and take the place of what used to be institutes.

Similarly, universities then will have greater flexibility to move into the TAFE sector and to work there with existing institutes. There will be a range from private, of course—fully private—through to very substantially publicly funded too. That is another dimension of the diversity, I think, that we are looking at.

CHAIR—I have some sympathy for a number of the views that you have put, by the way. But you mentioned that the government had more or less abrogated or delegated its responsibility to sectional interests, and in particular employers, in relation to VET.

That is not a criticism I necessarily accept. In fact, some would see it as perhaps desirable that you have a VET sector that is responding to the needs of employers who, in the end, are the marketplace.

The most extreme example we had was in Western Australia. There, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry told us that, so exasperated were employers, basically, with the TAFE sector, employers are paying $6,000 to send their employees to a course from a private provider, bypassing the free sort of sector.

When as a nation we anguish and wring our hands over youth unemployment and then have employers saying, 'This is what we need for our industry' and so on, it seems that it would be negligent of governments not to respond to the needs of employers and that, to some extent at least, governments should give them a significant input over the kind of VET that is being offered.

The other comment that you made was about the low cost of things like training people in hospitality—and I think that was one example you mentioned. I think it was at Regency Park we saw the XYZ smallgoods company sponsoring the kitchen area, and then we saw another food manufacturer or refrigeration company sponsoring something else. Could you just respond to those things?

Dr Bagnall—Certainly. The first point is that I certainly do not want to be construed as arguing against the system serving the needs of employers. It is merely a matter of balance. I certainly support moves by the present and previous governments to give more prominence to employer interests. I feel that that was overdone, and that is the point of my criticism. In your inquiries you certainly may have found—and, from what you say, you have—areas where that does not seem to have impacted, and I accept that.

CHAIR—The most convincing thing though is that, when you go to TAFEs and other providers that are right in there with employers where there is an equal partnership in the provision of VET, they are getting employment outcomes approaching 98 per cent for their students. It is just extraordinary. So, whatever educational and social concerns you might have about that, you have to say that, in terms of getting kids—and they are not all kids, of course—or people jobs, it works.

Dr Bagnall—And I certainly encourage such collaborative developments. I think there should be a lot more of it. So the second part of your question is one of support. Again, we need to watch so that it does not become the singular, the sole way in which vocational education is provided, because there are obviously potentially negative consequences in only being able to work in vocational education in partnership with particular employers to get the resources. We should be doing much more of it.

But, on the other hand, it should not become the only way in which we provide it because of the concerns of narrowing the employment prospects and obviously excluding

areas of involvement where employers cannot be flushed out to provide that level of support. I think that sort of collaboration should certainly be encouraged.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Dr Bagnall. Some of us will think of you as the conscience of our inquiry.

Dr Bagnall—Thank you for the opportunity to appear.

[10.31 a.m.]

CHIPMAN, Professor John Lauchlan Carter, Vice-Chancellor and President, Central Queensland University, Bruce Highway, Rockhampton, Queensland 4702

CHAIR—Professor Chipman, thank you very much for taking the effort to provide a submission and also to come along and speak to us about it. I realise that it takes up your time, and that speaking to MPs is not always the most inspiring experience, so thank you very much.

Mr NEVILLE—Mr Chairman, before this witness speaks I have to declare a potential conflict of interest. I am a member of one of the councils of this university.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Neville. I suggest that that will only enhance the quality of our report—not diminish it in any way.

Mr NEVILLE—It might be said afterwards that I did not say that I had a vested interest.

CHAIR—It is a sensitive issue. Professor Chipman, please give us a five- to 10-minute precis of your submission, which we will then discuss.

Prof. Chipman—Yes. I would preface my remarks by informing the committee that I happen to be a member of the West committee, which is reviewing higher education financing and policy. Some of the information I perhaps would like an opportunity to share with you this morning has come to me in the course of that inquiry. But it is public in that it is contained in documents that are either appendices or publicly available.

CHAIR—Thank you. Would you now like to give us your five- to 10-minute precis and direct us to particular issues that worry you? We will then discuss them.

Prof. Chipman—I will go a little bit beyond the submission, if I may—and my remarks will not be inconsistent with it—just to add a few more recent thoughts that may be of some use to the committee. I believe that the main area of concern is that of potential or actual overlap between the work of the institutes of TAFE and the work of universities. At least that is one of the issues that I perhaps would like to take up with you this morning, if it is of interest to you.

In the course of the research done for the West committee—and this is attached as one of the appendices and, if required, I can provide the secretariat with details—it was estimated that there is about a five to nine per cent overlap in the sense that the student courses in TAFE that are also available in universities, modified by the number of students enrolled, indicate that about five to nine per cent of TAFE duplicates, in that sense, universities. You could put it the other way around: that is a high level of

duplication in this sense—that, essentially, the very same course to the very same award is available through either providers. The estimate—and the reason it is an estimate is that the way you count students is different in the two systems—is most conservatively five per cent; most extravagantly nine per cent overlap, which in one sense is not very high.

But the other thing the figuring of the West committee found is that, where the same award was offered in TAFE and universities, generally the cost of provision was higher in TAFE than in universities, particularly in the accounting and related fields. On the other hand, in the areas that are of somewhat lower demand, such as the engineering related areas, the costs were generally lower in TAFE for the same award than in universities.

So an associate diploma in technology based on an engineering degree generally cost a little less to provide in TAFE than in universities; an associate diploma in finance or accounting generally cost a little more. There are some figures in the West committee document to suggest that. The basis of calculation was to take out of the costs of the university provision that part of the costs which would be associated with research. If you leave that in, then they are all more expensive in universities.

The other areas of overlap are what you might call the 'essential'—if being essential is not questioned—areas of overlap where there are some competencies which beginners in a new field must cover, whether they are entering for a TAFE award or for a university award. A good example would be in the engineering field. Some of the basic competencies to begin a fairly low level qualification in technology are essential also in a degree in engineering, given that engineering does not in its specialised sense build on what has been done in secondary school. Similarly, a certificate in bookkeeping in TAFE and a degree in accounting at a university would begin with certain competencies about double entry, and so on, which have to be mastered in both fields. So the essential areas of overlap are where there are professional or vocational qualifications that begin with the mastery of competencies which are not normally acquired in a pre-tertiary environment. I think that they are just inevitable.

The more serious area of overlap is what you might call the infrastructure overlap; this is particularly true in regional communities. I will just give one that I know well as an example—and I am not saying that it is universal: the city of Rockhampton, which is the headquarters city of Central Queensland University and of the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE, which is a multicampus TAFE. TAFE is on two campuses, which brings its own inefficiencies. One of them is heritage listed and cannot be in any way upgraded without great expense to preserve the cosmetic heritage characteristics; the other is underdeveloped. The university has abundant land; it has a library which is capable of physical expansion.

If you look at the shared infrastructure potential, they both need a library which has the same cataloguing system; they both need student systems which run on essentially

the same software and where the skills of the administrative and clerical staff are the same; they both need student counselling services—if you break up with your boy- or girl-friend in TAFE, as far as I know, it is pretty much the same sort of experience as when it happens in university and there is no specialised skill involved. If you look at what you might call the ancillary student services—counselling, sporting, debating, catering; all of those ancillary services—there is no qualitative difference between TAFE and university.

If you look at the core or generic infrastructure—libraries, wet laboratories, computer banks—there is no inherent difference between the physical infrastructure needed for a university provision and that needed for a TAFE division. If you look at a lecture theatre or a classroom or an office, there is no inherent difference. So, if you look at the infrastructure and the capacity to draw on the same infrastructure, it is quite enormous.

What that means in practice will vary from location to location, depending on the relative proximity, degree of development, and so on, of the two sorts of institutions. However, having said that, if a decision is ever made to combine the two in a physical infrastructure sense, the most important challenge, I believe—and I have been looking with interest at what has been happening in Victoria and the Northern Territory where they have had to embrace that challenge—is not to lose the sense of special mission and identity of TAFE. The danger is one of what you might call 'academic creep'—that, in an environment in which there are other sorts of academic awards, there may be a downgrading of things like hairdressing, trade certificates, trade skills, and so on, which are not part of the academic ambience.

I think it would be very important, in my view, if you were ever to have a merger of the two, to not do what has happened in some universities and scramble it right through the place so that they are mixed into the same departments and they are on different industrial conditions. What I would do if I were in that situation, or what I would propose, would be a comprehensive university with a higher education division, a 'polytechnic' division—because that is an internationally understandable word that covers everything from the advanced technological skills through to hairdressing and the personal services area, which are a very important growth part of TAFE, chefs and things of that sort, and possibly in regional communities an academy of performing and creative arts.

CHAIR—Is there an ideal model that does exist in Australia?

Prof. Chipman—I cannot think of one. I thought at one time that RMIT was going to move in that direction; but for reasons of their own good judgment, they did not.

Mr NEVILLE—Could you put a theoretical one on paper and get back it back to the committee?

Prof. Chipman—Yes, very easily. I can do that in the next 24 hours. It is really a

very simple diagram.

Mr NEVILLE—Mr Chairman, could we request that?

CHAIR—Yes.

Prof. Chipman—Yes, I would be delighted to make that available.

CHAIR—Yesterday in Sydney, the University of Newcastle described a situation, at least in terms of infrastructure, where they have a community college and, I think, a technical institute and a university co-located. At least as it was put to us, the services there comprise a single student service, a single library—there is all that sort of business. Are you familiar with that fit-up?

Prof. Chipman—I have not experienced it, but certainly in Swinburne in Melbourne, which you probably had a submission in relation to, and in RMIT and VUT, Victoria University of Technology, it is a little more complicated because it is distributed over many campuses with different specialisations. But I would go further than saying simply that there are cost savings involved in the shared infrastructure. Looking at the quality of student life, more clubs—cultural groups, societies and sporting clubs—could become viable if you had a larger critical mass of students to draw upon. Again, these interests and abilities are not particularly dependent on what type of post-secondary award you are in, so I think there are benefits for all students.

The other thing that I would offer as a benefit—and I was associated with its introduction at Monash University, where I was previously, as deputy vice-chancellor at the Berwick Campus—is something that is very popular in Monash—I do not know whether it is extended to other universities; I am speaking from the university sector—and on the Gold Coast, as Griffith is doing this in conjunction with the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE: double award programs in which students take concurrently, not successively, a university degree and a TAFE associate diploma or certificate so that the benefits of articulation are actually compressed. It is a bit like taking a law degree and an arts degree where the cross-accreditation is on the run. You do not do quite as many arts subjects as you would if you were doing the two degrees separately, and it takes a year to 18 months longer.

Among the popular ones are a bachelor of business, giving general and theoretical skills in business, with, say, a diploma of hospitality, giving practical skills so that they not only are ready for an industry of choice but also have a wider theoretical environment than the TAFE alone would provide. But that depends upon co-location or close juxtaposition for the logistics of timetabling and so on and, again, for the shared facilities. That also has the advantage of not forcing a choice prematurely on a student.

The experience at Monash with the Casey College of TAFE at Berwick is that they

have some of the highest tertiary ranked students that the TAFE system has, and they have found that to be of benefit to the status of TAFE.

Mr DARGAVEL—As I understand it, the sequence of your reasoning is that you point to some duplication or, as I recall it, competition, which is so much in vogue these days, and to a between five and nine per cent crossover in that competition of propositions offered by both sectors. You point to the obvious potential economies of scale in shared infrastructure and oncosts with some kind of combined polytechnic university.

My concern is that what we would see in reality is universities basically plundering the VET sector for resources and cross-subsidising the high status research projects which they are enamoured with from what is a pretty important sector in VET. Who would essentially run the show? Would universities be essentially absorbing into their mass a TAFE and calling it a polytechnic, and then basically stomping on it and milking it? Would there be as much enthusiasm in higher education if the proposition were reversed and the local university was absorbed into the TAFE and we had a higher education wing of TAFE which did not have a vice-chancellor as such but a head of TAFE who had a deputy who ran his or her university? How do you get over what I regard as a pretty inevitable outcome where you have a plundering of the VET resources and they are milked into the higher ed sector?

Prof. Chipman—It is certainly not theoretical. I know that has been alleged to have happened at RMIT. I am not in a position to verify that. Just for your own information, my first qualification was a trade certificate from what is now the TAFE component of RMIT back in 1962 as a film projectionist, so I have had some experience. What you allude to is a real risk. It is neither desirable nor do I believe inevitable, however, that that risk would be forthcoming.

The importance of the structure is absolutely crucial, and that means a board of governance or conciliate structure which absolutely kept the funding of the two components for the development of course ware and teaching completely separate and that the relationship between the two within the university or the polytechnic division within higher education—and that is important: the higher education or the polytechnic division of this comprehensive institution—was a contractual one.

Mr DARGAVEL—One of the presumptions in moving to a polytechnic/higher education institute is that you get benefit from shared resources and economies of scale. Wouldn't that then mean that in the library in Rocky, to use your example, where you would have some kind of shared budgetary arrangement—you have a shared library, a shared physical infrastructure and so on—there would have to be some determination about what the collection would entail? If in my electorate, for example, the Australian National University took over CIT—hypothetically—and they had to allocate resources on books, I would be concerned that in one of its libraries the uni would probably buy a lot of books that would be of relevance to particular courses of studies there and the poor old

apprentices would miss out.

Prof. Chipman—That might be a comment about the ANU—

Mr DARGAVEL—No, it is not a comment on the ANU per se. Isn't that an inevitable dynamic that arises from shared resources? The proposition you are putting forward is predicated on the assumption that you are going to get benefits from the sharing of infrastructure and so on. Let us assume that. Because things are being shared, how do you keep things separate? Isn't it inevitable that basically one sector is going to dominate the other?

Prof. Chipman—No, I do not think it is inevitable. Remember that the funding of TAFE and universities is separate. The public components come separately, can be separately identified, can be earmarked as a single line within the budget of the conglomerate institution, and the board of governance, which would appropriately be representative of the interests of the sectors involved, would have responsibility for ensuring—it could even be conditional—that the accountabilities of the public component of the funding were expressed through the sectoral contributions.

Mr DARGAVEL—But research funding and teaching funding are also supposed to be theoretically distinct, too, aren't they, within the higher education sector? But we all know that some institutions, to my knowledge, essentially subsidise their research endeavour, because it is basically more important to those institutions, from their teaching funding. That is in an environment of higher education, where you have distinct lines of funding. They are very separate. They were separate entities in government. But what happens on the ground is quite different. I cannot see a lot of evidence in the current arrangements of wholly distinct application versus purpose of these grants, so I would be a little worried, in view of the way the sector is currently running the show—and I am not being critical of that; people have to be practical on the ground—about how that would impact on the vocational education sector.

Prof. Chipman—First of all, we possibly have a difference of view. But, without getting into too much detail, the research and teaching funding of universities are not separate. There is competitively allocated research funding. There is also a block grant, which includes an unfractioned component for research, which the universities are free to distribute internally as they wish. So there is not a separate teaching line of funding. There is a separate additional competitively awarded research grant.

But I go back to your point. I think your fundamental point is that just because the funding is allocated for a particular purpose does not mean it will be acquitted for that purpose. That is a matter of management. Things can be managed to ensure that they are and, if that were important, that can be built in. Like with any organisation, if our internal auditor finds that a fund that was given to us earmarked for a particular purpose was not acquitted for that purpose, we are in trouble and we have to make correction and amends

for that.

I think, as I alluded to myself, there is a real danger of academic creep, and that is the downgrading, exactly as you said, the sniggering and the sneering towards the hairdressing, the personal services, the trade certificates, which are the lifeblood in the sense that many of these would not be done at all if not done in TAFE because they are not attractive to private providers in every case and they are not commercially attractive. There is not often the local scale to do them on a private basis. If they are not done in the TAFE sector, they are not done at all. So it is absolutely imperative that the funding and structural mechanisms do guarantee that through the accountabilities.

Mr PYNE—In the West report there was some discussion about the seamlessness between institutions and sectors. Some people have taken that to mean—I think wrongly—that the West report was referring to the ability of TAFEs to offer degrees as opposed to diplomas, associate diplomas and certificates and the ability of universities to offer certificates, diplomas and associate diplomas. Firstly, could you perhaps outline what the West report meant by seamlessness? Could you also give us your opinion on whether you think TAFEs should be able to offer degrees and vice versa with universities offering certificates, et cetera, or whether you think that blurs the distinction between the two sectors to such an extent that there would be no point in having a distinction?

Prof. Chipman—I might begin with the last question first. I find it almost impossible to conceive of how you can sensibly regulate what type of institution gives what sort of award. There is no reason, given the examples that I have seen of degrees in TAFEs, why they should not be called degrees, given the ones that I have seen and understood. I am thinking of one at Regency Park in South Australia; I think there is at least one in hospitality in the ACT. They would seem to meet all of the criteria. We have private providers that are smaller than many TAFEs offering degrees in many parts of the world. I think whether or not it is a degree is really a matter of what it adds up to in terms of the total depth and breadth of the disciplinary exposure.

The actual education environment in which that takes place is somewhat incidental. Indeed, people can acquire a degree in an environment of one by distance education. To them it does not matter what has spawned that degree as long as the content is of appropriate quality and the test is in the recognition of it—that is, it is accepted as leading to whatever that degree should lead to.

While most universities do not want to offer certificates or associate diplomas or diplomas, there is an equally forceful argument that if a person begins a degree and, for whatever reason, decides to discontinue it but has in the course of that accomplished the same level of study as would entitle them to a certificate, they should be able to take away that certificate and have something tangible in terms of a credential that is negotiable from their course of study even though it was not the intention of the institution to direct students into that. I think surrender value instruments are very important so that a

person does not have to go for three or four years all the way or get nothing to show for what they do—provided it is a meaningful level, provided it is not just bits and pieces but does meet that standard.

So the answer to the second is that, while I would expect that an institution that primarily concentrates on preparing people for a range of vocations which includes the skill trades and personal services as very much their core business would be unlikely to have as part of their core business the provision of degrees in the disciplines that have historically been more associated with universities, I do not think you can exclude it by regulation. My view would be that if it arises in a sensible context, such as the ones I have described as arising in the hospitality and the music fields, then so be it. Can you remind me of your first point?

Mr PYNE—The West report on seamlessness.

Prof. Chipman—That has caused a certain amount of confusion. I think we will probably put it differently in the final document. But one of the things we had in mind in terms of seamlessness was connected with a student's post-secondary entitlement. If we think of a student who has completed 12 years of schooling as having some sort of entitlement to further study, then that concept of entitlement did not seem to us to be something that should be strongly differentiated as to how it would be expressed in a university, how it would be expressed in a TAFE and so on. If there is a degree of public support for students to reach certain levels of attainment beyond school, then it seemed to us that where that was done and the nature of the institution—provided they were appropriately accredited and recognised institutions of learning, be they technical or whatever—should not be differentiated.

At the moment, it is differentiated. To take a somewhat simple example, if you do an associate diploma or a diploma of technology in a university, you have access to HECS and you can repay it through the taxation system. If you take that very same award through TAFE it costs you $500 to $700 a semester. It costs you less than it would to do it at a university, but you do not have access to the tax system to repay it. Some would argue—and it is not my argument—in terms of competition policy that this is a very odd state of affairs when there is one way of paying for something, the same award, delivered through one sector and another way of paying for it through the other.

That led the West committee to think the principles that merit thinking of a HECS type system in university are equally valid, leaving aside all the politics and constitutionality of different responsible authorities. We can leave those aside whereas you people cannot. But the principles seem to be the same—the principle of the student not being disbarred from access because of an inability to provide up-front cash and having benefit of the security of the anti-default provision of the tax system to repay it on an income contingent basis. We thought that should be seamless, that there was no merit argument for distinguishing those two. You can see the politics of it are more difficult.

Mr PYNE—In your submission you talked about ways you could have two sectors operating in collaboration. Could you advise us of the sort of funding model that you would recommend for such a system where you would maintain the distinctions between the two while encouraging their close collaboration?

Prof. Chipman—Let me just say something about post-collaboration first. In a sense, the funding is a bit easier, particularly if, like me, you are attracted to some sort of student centred funding model. It would be almost indifferent depending on whether the student was a TAFE or university student. I have to say that I am endeavouring to physician heal myself—if you have done it and I have not but I am trying to. A lot of our collaboration and articulation is the wrong way round. Sorry, I should not say the wrong way round but is concentrated on one way. You have probably been told—and it is correct and it surprises many people—that there are more people in TAFE who have been to university than there are people in university who have been to TAFE.

It is not just university drop outs who are in TAFE. There are people in TAFE who have completed university qualifications. To give some examples, some of my friends who are engineering graduates have then gone off to do a bookkeeping course in TAFE because they want to run their own small business. There are examples of many professionals who take these sorts of courses in TAFE after they have got their qualification to help them manage what they need. I believe, at the moment, that that is not given sufficient recognition.

The other thing is a particular example of the type of collaboration which I believe is actually attractive from an export point of view. The way it works commonly at the moment is that a student might do an associate diploma of hospitality in TAFE and then get some recognition of that towards a business or commerce degree in a university, get some advance standing because they have covered some marketing or covered some accounting and then they can complete a university degree. That is completely the wrong way round going from the particular to the general.

An alternative might be to, say, take a business degree and then in your third year of your business degree you will be clearer about the industry you might want to enter. Then you can cap it off with a certificate or a diploma in tourism and hospitality from TAFE, or you could cap it off with something that was specific to the health industry or specific to the entertainment industry or whatever the industry was you would enter.

If you could present that as a package and say it is a four- or five-year program which consists of a three-year degree and a one-year or a two-year certificate or diploma at the end, I believe that as a total package would be very attractive, given that TAFE is not well understood in the countries that are very attracted to our university provision.

But a university degree with a specialist vocation or application, the nature of which you can determine in the course of your degree, has benefits for the students;

benefits for exports, in that it would make the total package more attractive; and benefits for industry, in that people would enter the industry with the industry readying qualification at the top end of the program of study rather than the industry specific qualification being at the bottom end, the more general qualification in the middle and people having to do some retraining, adjustment or a period of refinement to be ready for industry, so it is win-win for exports, students and industry.

CHAIR—When you come back to Mr Dargavel's question, which was really talking about the predatory behaviour of universities in relation to the VET sector and TAFEs in particular, especially if you consider the physical integration of the sectors in the ideal model that you are discussing, the question I ask myself is: how can you achieve that whilst maintaining separate funding models? Your defence to Mr Dargavel's concern was that the TAFEs would not be part of a hostile takeover because there would be separate funding systems et cetera, but I sit here and think: how can you achieve that—I agree with you on the ideal; that is the goal we want—whilst maintaining a completely different funding system for each sector?

Prof. Chipman—I think it is actually a little easier to achieve with a different funding system, with respect, because it is more traceable. Ultimately, you may need to look in the West committee at a seamless approach to funding but it would still be possible to earmark it in the way now that medical education is earmarked and in the way now that provision for indigenous people is earmarked. I can tell you, as you would know, the indigenous people in institutions are very quick to look at the documents on how much money the university got for indigenous people and then to look at the budget to see how much is being spent on that.

CHAIR—I am not aware of an organisation that is not capable of redirecting funding intended for one thing to another. We cannot even get the Commonwealth and state governments to meet to uphold their commitments in relation to indigenous health funding and hospital financing. I agree with you but it sounds just a touch idealistic.

Prof. Chipman—Especially with the clever accountants.

CHAIR—Every day I am more exposed to government behaviour—state and federal—the more convinced I am that the noble ideal that you are espousing is simply not achievable.

Prof. Chipman—With respect, I would say that you must have identified the dollars going in and you must have a transparent reporting procedure—and we do not always—through boards of governance that can identify the dollars being spent: 'In this column X thousand dollars was provided for vocational education and training through whatever mechanism; Y thousand dollars was provided for higher education. What is the expenditure in relation to those two?' Yes, in any system there is sanitising, laundering and so on but in the end you have to rely on appointing quality people to boards of

governance and councils—people with perhaps stronger skills than many of the people who have historically been on them. To take that example, last year my own university had $115 million in revenue, only half of which came from the Commonwealth. We have a budgetary system which treats the half from the Commonwealth differently from the rest.

What we need in our boards of governance—fortunately we have some—are people with strong business skills with that sort of budget who know the dangers and the risks and how to manage those risks and dangers and whether there is any snowing in the accounting. So in the end it is the competence of, and your relative confidence in, the boards of governance and what their fiduciary responsibilities are—which are not as clear in the case of some public bodies, as you would know—the extent to which the fireman's case or whatever applies to them. So I think imposing on them the same sorts of responsibilities as would apply in a board of directors is one way of ensuring that you have the calibre of people.

Mr DARGAVEL—If the council at your institution was dissolved and the committee of management or whatever it is called for the local TAFE then essentially absorbs your organisation, I would imagine there would be a number of individuals within the university who would be concerned that it would be milked rather than the other way round. Could that be adequately defended by the proposition you put forward about separate funding streams and accountability, in terms of the academic community? Would they cooperate with that?

Prof. Chipman—It would work the same way. The danger of putting a university into a comprehensive institution which was essentially a TAFE is in terms of the profile that the university depends upon, which is an international profile. The profile the TAFE depends upon is essentially local. To subsume the international into the local is to suppress the visibility that is necessary for its reputation. But the funding you could work in any way; it would not be an argument for one or the other.

Mr NEVILLE—You would have heard the previous witness—

Prof. Chipman—The last part, yes.

Mr NEVILLE—Lament the invasion of vocational training into the university system. You have heard some of my colleagues say that the predatory nature of universities might come to the fore in that field. Bearing that in mind, do you think this model of having a polytechnic division within a university is a much preferable model to reintroducing, say, institutes of technology?

Prof. Chipman—I do, but remember that the example I gave was a regional environment. In a large metropolitan area there is room for greater specialisation of single institutions and the advantages of shared infrastructure are correspondingly less powerful.

It is the regional provision or the relatively remote provision that I would be concerned about, and that is presumably the reason that the Northern Territory has gone in that direction. So I would not recommend, if it were for me to recommend, that it be a universal provision.

I was in New South Wales when the institutes of TAFE were formed there; I was involved with the Illawarra TAFE and its relationship with the University of Wollongong. As the term was first used, it was in that context, and honourable members from New South Wales may remember this better than I. It was connected with clustering individual TAFEs together into groups that were multi-campus entities but still had some local autonomy, and those became an institute of TAFE based on a geographical region: the Illawarra region, the south coast region, the north coast region or whatever.

In terms of institutes of technology, that is in one way a narrow view—either you have a stretched meaning to the word 'technology' or a narrow view—of what a TAFE does. I see much of the growth of TAFE in things like this: I just saw some figures on the demand for chefs, which is going through the roof. Is that a technological qualification? Cooking and preparing food I would not see as technological, and I would not see hairdressing as technological, although they would acquire some technical skills. That is why I prefer the word 'polytechnic', or many skills, many techniques.

Mr NEVILLE—Given the model you have just talked about, we understand how the vocational education may move up into the traditional tertiary sector. In your model would there also be the rounded education, some academic training, filtering down to the polytechnic type students?

Prof. Chipman—I would not see it as down and up. I do not think the model would work if it was down and up. That is why each would be headed by a person of the same rank, and even having a third element, an academy of performing and creative arts, which would bring together a lot of regional capacities, would give that comprehensiveness and cultural dimension more meaning, even though that might not be post-secondary.

Mr NEVILLE—We know the traditional role of universities and the fully rounded education, the environment of the university as an environment of learning. When you have one of these multifaceted groups, how do you maintain that atmosphere of excellence and the fully rounded education not necessarily coming from individual subjects or courses but being subsumed from the atmosphere of the place?

Prof. Chipman—It is hard enough to do in a specialist university, given, particularly, the extent to which courses are heavily prescribed for professional accreditation purposes leaving little room for electives. From personal experience—going back to my student days at the University of Melbourne—it is the quality of student life, the clubs, societies, cultural activities, debates and so on, and an environment which

generates, fosters and encourages those sorts of experiences that really has that liberalising influence on the students. The students who wrote for the student newspaper or who were active on the student representative council or in the religious or political clubs or the anti-religious or anti-political clubs were drawn from engineering, medicine, law, philosophy and history. I would see that breadth in a comprehensive institution as giving a greater critical mass of students a greater diversity of aspirations and backgrounds, all of which contribute to the quality of student life. Having some in the performing arts, some in the catering industry, some in personal services, some in professional engineering or law or some in the liberal arts can only enrich the mix.

CHAIR—One witness told us that at his or her institution where they had managed, at least geographically, to co-locate TAFE and universities the university graduates refused to have their degrees conferred at the same ceremony as those receiving associate diplomas. Yesterday we had a teacher from the Randwick campus of the Institute of Technology in Sydney make a very good submission on behalf of her students. They have kids there who have been marginalised—homeless, drugs, et cetera—from the secondary system and who are on the battling end of things doing their higher education certificate. I am listening to you with an open mind, I can assure you, but how is the medical, law or engineering undergraduate going to be mixing with the hairdressing person? This is in no way a critical comment but I am just trying to imagine this in the case of a person who is there to do a welding course. I agree that the cross-fertilisation is highly desirable but I am thinking of the practicalities. I found it difficult as a medical undergraduate trying to get some of my colleagues, as distinct from my friends, to spend time with people in other faculties, let alone people in arts, for example, or who were going to give you a haircut.

Prof. Chipman—Snobbery has always been one of the least desirable characteristics of universities. It depends ultimately on the quality of leadership. I was involved in two institutional mergers: one was in Wollongong before the Dawkins agenda came in in 1982. The smaller Wollongong Institute of Education merged with the University of Wollongong. That produced negative staff reactions on both sides—people refused to do things and all sorts of allegations were made. It lasted about 18 months. People were saying, 'We are not going to have anything to do with people who just teach primary teachers.' Within about 18 months, with the quality of the leadership and the way in which the committee structure was refined to give all of them an opportunity to participate in the academic leadership of the institution, it went out. But it had to be led out. It did not go out because people got bored bitching about it. It was led out because people were focused on what sort of institution we were becoming rather than on what sort of institutions we had been.

CHAIR—I agree. It would do those who see themselves as part of elitist undergraduate courses a power of good to spend a bit of time with some real people.

Prof. Chipman—Especially the regional community.

CHAIR—Yes; dead right. Mr Mossfield, who is not here today, raised a very good point when we had the person from Randwick speaking to us. He asked, 'In relation to a 16-year-old who has had to leave the secondary sector for whatever reason and is having a second chance, what impact does that have on the older person who might be in their mid-30s and is going back to TAFE to try to do a course to get a job?' I am 40, so I have one foot in the grave. But I can imagine that people that are 20 would have a lot of difficulty being in the same sort of educational program that I am in. Do you see that as a problem? It is not a question of what you might call the top end. I do not care what they think. I am much more concerned about what the impact is going to be on people who are doing other courses.

Prof. Chipman—Most universities have pre-entry programs that are offered on the university campus themselves for people who have had incomplete secondary education and who tend to have been in and out of the work force. A lot of them have had backgrounds which are very troubling and this is an opportunity to start again. They are of all ages. Many of them are mature and many of them are pretty battered by life. They are doing something which is at a relatively low level, but there they are in the cafeteria, in the library and so on. My own personal experience is that they have been overjoyed and they have gained from it.

Having taught first-year philosophy, I can tell you that, when you take something like Dostoyevski's *Crime and Punishment*, having a 49-year-old woman as well as a 17-year-old person who has just come from an elite private school talking about Raskolmikov's motives is a much more powerful experience for everyone, because here is someone who has experienced a lot of suffering at a different stage of life and a lot of joy. It is a terrific improvement in the quality of the experience. It tends to happen more in the humanities and to some extent law than perhaps in medicine and in engineering. I suspect that is largely because they depend more on what people have learnt previously and have been less available to people whose prior education is not as specific. But maybe that is changing now with the new ways of selecting people to medicine.

Mr NEVILLE—In your model you said that the quality of leadership is so important to make these two things merge properly. You have talked about the students being enriched by the atmosphere and the dynamic of the university-cum-polytechnic. Would you also envisage that at the polytechnic level, albeit pitched perhaps at a lower level of academic excellence—that those sorts of students would do some humanity subjects?

Prof. Chipman—What the complex institution allows you to do is that one of the most expensive things—

Mr NEVILLE—I might be doing plumbing, say, or building. Let us take a cabinet maker, for example. In relation to his ability to fit into the world better, you might put in perhaps the history of furniture or something like that which he may not get in a TAFE

college—the history of some subject like that which has an element of academic training rather than vocational.

Prof. Chipman—Exactly. Let me give you an example. If I were a professor of philosophy in such an institution, I would be talking to the head of the polytechnic division and saying, 'If I were to develop a history of ideas course that did not depend on a background of intensive reading but just told people a little bit about some of the important influences about Socrates, Plato and Jesus and ran for a semester, would you make it available as an elective?' In the model I have that would be a contractual relationship between the polytechnic division. The course would have to be tailored to the needs of the students, not just be a hand-me-down from the polytechnic division.

If I were the head of the polytechnic division and looking after the business studies, I would say, 'You've got people doing medicine and engineering or whatever. If we were to develop a basic personal, financial or office management course geared for people who have done no accounting but who are going to have to manage a budget and manage a little business or practice, if we were to tailor one to the needs of your professionals, would you be interested?' As the head of higher education, I would be very interested because I think it gives my institution a competitive advantage. Here is something that is relevant and I have the capacity—

Mr NEVILLE—So there would be an academic intervention as well?

Prof. Chipman—Absolutely. That is what I meant by the contractual relationship. The danger, and it is right to raise this, is duplication—saying, 'We're going to do our own bookkeeping.' If you want to run a competition or something, how many different people teach statistics in a university? Everything is different. Sociologists teach theirs and psychologists teach theirs. We have to end all that. This is indeed intended with that sort of model.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. I am sorry we could not speak to you for much longer, Professor Chipman. It was a very thoughtful and very good presentation. If you have any supplementary proposals, then please do not hesitate to send them on.

Prof. Chipman—Yes, and I will do that model and structure and undertake to get it to the secretary of the committee.

CHAIR—We very much appreciate your contribution.

Prof. Chipman—Thank you for the privilege of appearing before you.

[11.23 a.m.]

O'DEMPSEY, Mr James Patrick, Executive Officer, Queensland Nursing Council, Level 12, Forestry House, 160 Mary Street, Brisbane, Queensland 4001

CHAIR—Would you like to give us a five- to 10-minute precis of your submission, which we will then discuss?

Mr O'Dempsey—I start my five-minute presentation with a general comment that the Queensland Nursing Council is a regulatory authority responsible for standards of education and practice for nursing in Queensland. Our interface with the TAFE sector is only new. It has developed over only the last two to three years, as we transferred enrolled nurse education from hospital based certificates to an 18-month diploma level course at the TAFE institutes. Our interface with universities is with the accreditation of their nursing courses. A university wishing to present a nursing course leading to registration needs our accreditation prior to commencement of the course, and it is the same with the TAFE colleges, before we will accept the graduates of that course for registration and a licence to practice.

As I indicated, we have two levels of nurse. The registered nurse is prepared at undergraduate level in seven universities in Queensland. The enrolled nurse is the second level nurse prepared now through the TAFE sector. They require in their licence and in their practice to be supervised by a registered nurse and their role is complementary to that of a registered nurse. They receive very much concrete training in vocational education, rather than academic training.

As to our interface with TAFE and enrolled nurse education, one of the reasons that we supported very strongly enrolled nurses going into the TAFE sector was to give them access to postgraduate education. At the moment that has not developed. We are bedding down the pre-enrolment education. However, enrolled nurses, with the changes in technology and society and the developments in the health care sector, really do need better preparation, and they need top-up preparation at postgraduate level. It has never been available and still remains unavailable.

The other reason that we transferred enrolled nurse education into TAFE was to provide for some articulation between enrolled nurse education and the undergraduate degree. That is one problem that we do have in relation to the interface between the TAFEs and the universities. There does not seem to be very much articulation between the qualifications. We have an 18-month diploma course for an enrolled nurse preparing them for practice under the supervision of a registered nurse. However, the most credit that any university in Queensland offers from that diploma level course is one year.

It would be better, in my view, for an individual wanting to become a registered nurse to go directly to an undergraduate program. We are finding that the people who are

entering the TAFE level course have the secondary school education level for direct entry to the registered nurse program. It seems to be a waste of at least six months of their lives.

Mr DARGAVEL—There is a difference in money, though. You are paying HECS fees for the undergraduate program versus the TAFE program.

Mr O'Dempsey—It seems that the people who have gone on to the undergraduate program see the enrolled nurse diploma as beneficial, so that they can work while they are going through their university degree. However, they can work through their university degree anyway.

Mr DARGAVEL—Isn't the problem the lack of recognition of the full 18 months, rather than just saying, 'Let's chuck anyone into uni on day one'?

Mr O'Dempsey—I think there is a lack in the development of the courses as a joint process between the universities and TAFE. The process for development of the TAFE level course under the national training framework is very dissimilar to how universities prepare their curriculum. The relationship is so distant that our experience was that the curriculum developed for the enrolled nurse course was finalised before the TAFEs started talking to the universities about articulation arrangements.

Anecdotally, that was not the problem with the universities, because the schools of nursing at the universities were available for that level of interaction. The collaboration is just not there and the collaboration may be different because of the differing preparation or different requirements placed on each of the institutes—that is, TAFE as opposed to the universities—and how they prepare their courses. One is very much industry driven, potentially, while the other is academically driven to a higher degree than industry driven.

CHAIR—Do you have anything else to say of a general nature?

Mr O'Dempsey—The only other things of a general nature I would say are, first, that the TAFEs really have not leapt into providing postgraduate education for either enrolled nurses or registered nurses, so there is no crossover, and there is a potential for that crossover where there are registered nurse programs for specialty areas, similar to Professor Chipman's comment about his engineers going and doing top-up subjects, particularly in nursing specialty areas.

The other general comment I would make is that it is easier to get credit to go into a university program than it is to go into a TAFE program, so there is some divergence in processes that needs to be addressed. If I want to go into an enrolled nurse program and get credit, I have actually got to enrol and pay money to have my previous qualifications assessed. The universities will do that prior to entry. So you are taking a bet, as someone entering a TAFE program with a previous qualification, that you are going to get some

credit. Going into a university, you know what credit you have before you enrol.

Mr BROUGH—My first question is on the development of your TAFE course. When did it come in?

Mr O'Dempsey—The first course was in 1996.

Mr BROUGH—How was that developed? We started off doing all of our training of nurses in hospitals, then we went from hospitals to universities, now we are going to universities and TAFE. You say you are missing out if you want to then go on to become a registered nurse because you are not getting recognition. Who developed the course? Was it done in consultation with any of the universities? How did you develop your competencies et cetera?

Mr O'Dempsey—Our national competencies were developed by the Australian Nursing Council, so they are standard. The interaction between these competencies is problematic, and they are being looked at at the moment by that council. The TAFE process for the development of a curriculum is through a curriculum development advisory committee. That had one university represented on it, from my memory. It had more industry representatives and union representatives than it did educational experts so that the interface could occur. It was written and then presented to the accrediting bodies, which were ourselves and the VETEC sector here in Queensland. So we accredited it on the basis that it met our accreditation requirements. We do not have a role to play in ensuring that that articulation is available, even though we would hope that that has occurred between the providers.

Mr BROUGH—Whose choice is it to determine how many of those areas of accreditation will carry forward and give you credits towards your degree?

Mr O'Dempsey—The provider.

Mr BROUGH—And that is it; there is no other to be entered into? So is it possible that the University of Central Queensland, for argument's sake, and QU could actually have a difference of opinion and provide more credits towards their course from the same TAFE college?

Mr O'Dempsey—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—That is ridiculous.

Mr O'Dempsey—As an example, currently Central Queensland University will take any enrolled nurse, whether they have done a TAFE based course or not, and give them a year's credit based on experiential learning as an enrolled nurse and their initial qualification. I know universities in Queensland that will only give one unit's credit for

the diploma of enrolled nursing at the TAFE.

Mr BROUGH—There was a lot of criticism—I am not in this sector, so it is sort of anecdotal evidence—that once we took nursing out of hospitals and put it into, as you say, the more academic stream, the practicalities of delivering a lot of nursing services were removed and some of those practical experiences which they never gained were lost and it then took a series of years after they had completed their academic training to achieve the same practical level they would have been at, not their academic level—

Mr O'Dempsey—It is an interesting view.

Mr BROUGH—Could you comment on that, but, more importantly, how are you delivering more practical training in a TAFE college than you are able to do in a university, when there are still no patients?

Mr O'Dempsey—Both courses at university and within the TAFE sector require on the job experience.

Mr BROUGH—Is there a labour component in the TAFE? I just thought that you were outlining at the start that there was a greater emphasis on practical vocational training at the TAFE and more of an academic base at the university. I am just wondering how they achieve that.

Mr O'Dempsey—The academic base at the university is because of the depth and range of the academic education provided; at the TAFE sector it is a lower level of education that is provided. They have similar on591
the job requirements.

Mr BROUGH—So it is as a percentage rather than as an actual quantity?

Mr O'Dempsey—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—Okay.

Mr O'Dempsey—The issue is in terms of practicality: the practical experience of nurses once they have done an undergraduate or a diploma level course. Research quite clearly demonstrates that at the end of three months their technical, or task, proficiency is very similar to that of someone who has done an apprenticeship style, hospital based certificate, but they are better thinkers, better planners and better doers in the long term.

So the view that nurses educated in the academic arena are not as good as the old hospital based nurses is a view that is formed on that first three months. I always say it is like the medical profession. At the end of their six years and before they get into their residency, they do not know much either. They learn a lot in their residency year, and that

is what nurses do now: they learn a lot in terms of their theoretical component in that first three years and they spend that first year post-registration consolidating.

Mr BROUGH—Thank you.

CHAIR—I was not actually going to raise that issue, but seeing that we are on it, we had the chairperson—I think that is the term we use these days—of the deans of nursing schools, or colleges, yesterday and the lady who is the chief executive of the college of nursing. One of my colleagues put a similar question to them. The response that we received from the chairperson of the deans was that nurses now are better equipped for administration and managerial responsibilities, and some of the more extreme anecdotal views that are received in an unsolicited way from some of the medical profession are that they are more interested 'in carrying clipboards than looking after patients', which is, I guess, a crude and provocative way of putting the view that perhaps, because of the university based education, the career expectations of the nursing graduate are not being met by the basics of what is required in nursing so, if you have done a university degree and you have acquired the skills that are being imparted, you are not going to be satisfied for a long period of time in basic nursing activity and you will want to be doing other things.

That brings me back to where we are in our inquiry, such that in Western Australia the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry told us that last year they had a shortage of 500 nurses and they had to import them, and that the private hospitals especially have a significant and unmet demand for enrolled nurses because it is difficult to get registered nurses to do the basic nursing stuff, plus they have got to pay them more, and there is also a shortage of nurses in specialty areas: intensive care, cardiovascular and neurosurgery. They had more or less put the view to us: 'The nurses are going to universities and now we can't get nurses to do nursing.' In fact, they were not all that impressed with the TAFE based nursing and training and they have been setting up their own training program—at least that is what they told us. You mentioned TAFE could be doing postgraduate training for registered nurses and for enrolled nurses. How would you do that?

Mr O'Dempsey—It is a matter of whether the providers see it as a viable money creating activity. In terms of funding that, at the moment the funding is not available. The shortages in post-registration specialty may be related to the cost involved in university based education.

CHAIR—But are you saying that, in response to the question earlier on, the postgraduate degree in nursing could be provided in TAFE?

Mr O'Dempsey—No, I am saying that particular aspects of that could be provided at TAFE.

Mr NEVILLE—Could you give us some examples?

Mr O'Dempsey—I am trying to move it away from a task, but tasks tend to be easier to express. An emergency room nurse who wants a more in-depth knowledge about reading and interpreting ECGs.

Mr NEVILLE—In TAFE.

Mr O'Dempsey—It is not available anywhere.

Mr NEVILLE—Are you suggesting that should be available at TAFE?

Mr O'Dempsey—I am suggesting that it is a possibility that it could be.

Mr NEVILLE—I spent 15 years on a hospital board and then on the university council for some years as well. Over the last 10 years we had this headlong rush to get the registered nurse training out of the hospitals and into the tertiary institutions. There was a suggestion at one stage that the training might go into TAFE colleges. That was opposed bitterly by the nursing profession at the time who did not want their students going around with people in blue overalls—I think that was the expression I heard at one meeting.

Notwithstanding that, we have gone into this system. Despite what you have said about them being better nurses—and I do not doubt academically that they are—the perception of the medical profession and the public at large is that that is not the case. What adds some credence to that is that I have noticed over the last few years that there is a lot more ward based training coming into it. For example, in my case, the students in Rockhampton are now doing a lot more hands-on training in places like Mackay and Bundaberg, which are the regional campuses of the universities and not the core campus.

So this idea rather gives the lie to the story of five or six years ago that the students really had to be in a core institution on a major campus. You are saying it has gone even further than that—that you could deliver neurosurgical postgraduate courses at a TAFE.

Mr O'Dempsey—What I am saying is that you could present components as long as there was some credit arrangement towards the high level qualification offered by the university. Not every nurse, whether they are hospital trained or university educated, wants to go and do a postgraduate masters. But you do not get training opportunities available unless you have a hospital that is putting certain resources into it for components. My council sees that that would be quite a relevant role for TAFEs to do small courses as long as those small courses had articulation with the postgraduate masters levels so that people would not be wasting their time or their dollars.

Mr NEVILLE—How would an enrolled nurse access that? The point of putting

them in TAFE, as you said earlier, is that both levels of nursing could access the courses.

Mr O'Dempsey—There would be different educational requirements for enrolled nurses than for the registered nurse.

Mr NEVILLE—You are talking about separate courses.

Mr O'Dempsey—Yes.

Mr NEVILLE—I misunderstood you, sorry.

Mr O'Dempsey—When you made you comments in terms of the shortages of nurses, shortages are more than a function of the education. We do not have a problem with shortages of nurses in Queensland. We do have some shortages in special areas. I believe what happened in Western Australia was in relation to the decrease in numbers in the university sector. We are going to have a similar problem in New South Wales in 1½ years.

Mr DARGAVEL—Presumably the increasing costs to the individual of undertaking study as against the anticipated income is discouraging people away from certain professions such as teaching, nursing and so on. They are forking out tens of thousands of dollars in HECS and at the end of the day getting a very ordinary kind of income. It is just the market. People are not going to be as interested.

Mr O'Dempsey—We do not have any evidence of this but we believe that that is one of the problems we are having with shortages in the speciality areas. There are formal education programs available in universities but they are very expensive. A nurse can get a speciality qualification to work in a speciality area but it does not add to their salary.

Mr DARGAVEL—What sort of money are we talking about?

Mr O'Dempsey—HECS is about $900 a unit.

CHAIR—How many units would they do in a year?

Mr O'Dempsey—For a masters, part time, they would do four units a year.

Mr BROUGH—You have a shortage of intensive care nursing, for argument's sake. Are you saying that if they get that speciality they do not get any extra for working in that field?

Mr O'Dempsey—No.

Mr BROUGH—Not in the private or the public sector?

Mr O'Dempsey—No.

Mr BROUGH—So who pays for the—

Mr O'Dempsey—The individual.

Mr BROUGH—The hospitals have a shortage; they have a problem; they are not getting the productivity out of their surgeries. Have they no interest in paying?

Mr O'Dempsey—Some hospitals have been very progressive. We have at least one private hospital, with a second one coming on stream, that is developing courses for our accreditation for critical care nursing. The private hospital is putting on the course and putting people through it. I am not quite sure whether they charge the individual.

CHAIR—We were told that in Western Australia too. There are areas in cardiology and another one in emergency medicine where they were doing just that. The hospitals were paying.

Mr O'Dempsey—Here in Queensland we have a state-wide strategy which has led to the employment of 12 nurse educators in a variety of public hospitals to support on-the-job training for peri-operative nurses—operating room nurses. That is to help address the waiting list issues.

Mr NEVILLE—Why did we ever move things like the theatre certificate, the midwifery certificate and the emergency room certificate from the hospitals? They are largely hands on. You are saying now that we are putting nurse educators in to re-establish that system.

Mr O'Dempsey—Yes. Anecdotally, when we shifted to university education there was a withdrawal by the health care sector of support for education within hospitals. So everything went over to universities. That relationship is starting to become more balanced—hospitals are now taking on parts of that role again, as they appropriately should. We are concerned, as a regulatory authority, that those education courses are developed collaboratively between the universities and the hospitals or the universities and the TAFEs so that what the nurse is doing will not be lost if they want to go on to a higher qualification—there must be credit transfer arrangements.

Mr NEVILLE—Coming back to the original point: there is no articulation.

Mr O'Dempsey—It is hit and miss.

Mr NEVILLE—Where is midwifery going in Queensland? I saw a photo in the newspaper two days ago of the last team of nurses from Mackay or somewhere to do their midwifery training at the local hospital.

Mr O'Dempsey—That is postgraduate diploma level in most universities. We will not have any hospital based training for midwives within the next two years.

Mr NEVILLE—Is that the desire of your council?

Mr O'Dempsey—It is the desire of the profession. As a council we accredit what is submitted to us. We do not necessarily drive the agenda even though we are a stakeholder. We are directed by the public, the profession and the other professions in the standards that we apply to the courses.

One of the things we are looking at at the moment is the clinical component of the midwifery courses. It is very important from the profession's viewpoint to get midwifery out of the hospitals because they are preparing people to be obstetric nurses within what hospital environment. They do not learn much else, whereas with the changes in health care, women are not coming into hospitals for any great length of time when they are delivering. I think the average here in Queensland is less than four days.

There is lots more in the community. There are different models of care in the reproductive area, but our midwives, because they are hospital based, are learning only within that hospital environment and that could be damaging for the future development of health.

Mr NEVILLE—They are not going to learn any more at university level surely, other than the academic style?

Mr O'Dempsey—Different models of care.

Mr NEVILLE—This committee in its manifestation in a previous parliament looked into on-the-job training, and this is still in vogue. In the building industry the TAFE college is not necessarily a lot of brick buildings on a campus, but a classroom is put in a cluster of homes. A new suburb has been built and all the apprentices do their training on site. They might learn in the morning how to do trusses or whatever, and in the afternoon they actually put them on houses.

Based on that model, if you need to have the expertise of TAFE with the enrolled nurses, rather than take the students into the TAFE colleges, is it not better to bring the TAFE lecturers into the hospitals?

Mr O'Dempsey—That is a model that we have. We have a joint model. We have the students coming in for off-the-job training into that college environment in the classroom. In the on-the-job training, they go to the hospital and the TAFE lecturer, or the person that is approved by the TAFE lecturer, provides the on-the-job education working with that person with patients. That is the same with the university based education for our registered nurses. There is a similar amount of time for the on-the-job component for

enrolled nurses. It is about 600 hours in that 18 months.

Mr BROUGH—If somebody's qualifications have lapsed, can they go back through the TAFE system to become a registered nurse? If they were a registered nurse but their qualifications have lapsed, can they go back and do a refresher of some kind?

Mr O'Dempsey—None of the TAFEs have refresher programs. The refresher programs that we have at the moment are in rural health training units, hospitals or universities.

Mr BROUGH—Do you see that as a role that TAFE could take on?

Mr O'Dempsey—Yes, potentially very much so. Any course provider could submit a course to us, but it is the demand.

Mr BROUGH—You have to recognise the qualification. If someone has a part qualification, if they have done two years of registered nurse training in a university, they leave it for whatever reason for three years and then come back in, is there any recognition of what they have done in the TAFE sector when they have been at uni doing a registered nurses course? They do not want to complete the other part.

Mr O'Dempsey—They do not want to complete the registered nurse program; they want to become an enrolled nurse?

Mr BROUGH—Yes.

Mr O'Dempsey—Yes, they would, but they would have to enrol in the enrolled nurse course before the TAFE would give them credit. They would then go and look at what credit they were going to give on an individual basis.

Mr BROUGH—They will not pre-assess them and say, 'We think that you need to do six months', or whatever?

Mr O'Dempsey—From our knowledge, no.

Mr BROUGH—Do you have any input into that? What are your thoughts?

Mr O'Dempsey—We do have input, but it is informal input. We can say, 'We see this as a problem. Can you fix it?'

Mr BROUGH—Is it a problem at the moment, or is it still too small to be concerned about?

Mr O'Dempsey—It is probably too small to be concerned about at this stage, but

potentially it is a problem. As I said at the beginning of this session, our interface is narrow and it is only new. That is why our submission was not as detailed as we would normally do with something of this import.

Mr BROUGH—Do you have standards right across the nation for registered and enrolled nurses, or does it vary from state to state?

Mr O'Dempsey—For registered nurses the standard is very consistent. It is a three-year undergraduate degree program.

Mr BROUGH—Recognised from state to state?

Mr O'Dempsey—Recognised from state to state.

Mr BROUGH—And enrolled nurses?

Mr O'Dempsey—Maybe I should take a step back. Once they were licensed, the state regulatory authorities would recognise them. For the enrolled nurse, the education is not consistent but the licence outcome is. For example, Queensland has a diploma level 18-month course. New South Wales has a 12-month TAFE based advanced certificate course. Victoria is using the traineeship model for enrolled nurses, 12 months. South Australia does not have an enrolled nurse program; you do an aged care certificate level 4 and then a top-up unit after that. In Western Australia I believe it is two years. This is something that we are trying to address at the national level. We cannot control the length of courses as regulatory authorities, but there does not seem to be any consistency in the TAFE preparation.

CHAIR—I wanted to ask you whether there should be a national program for enrolled nursing in TAFEs. Is that something we should be recommending to government?

Mr O'Dempsey—It is a problem. It would be something that ANCI, the Australian Nursing Council Incorporated, with its role under its constitution would be very able to do if you made such a recommendation. It is of concern to us as regulatory authorities. We have a piece of legislation called the Mutual Recognition Act that says, 'Once a board licences an enrolled nurse, you have to take them.' In Queensland we believe the outcome of our enrolment program from this year will be that enrolled nurses will be authorised under our legislation to administer up to S4 medications under the supervision of a registered nurse. But they will not be able to do that when they move interstate.

Mr BROUGH—What about portability? You have done one year in university in Sydney, you move to Queensland and you want to complete the course. Does that portability exist? Obviously there is a problem with enrolled nurses, but what about for registered nurses?

Mr O'Dempsey—Registered nurses—

CHAIR—I want to come back to the training aspect of it. The South Australian Nurses Board and the New South Wales College of Nursing have recommended a national training approach through TAFEs, a uniform program for enrolled nurses. Is that something—

Mr O'Dempsey—We would support that.

CHAIR—As long as it met obviously a satisfactory standard.

Mr O'Dempsey—Yes.

CHAIR—Yesterday Mr Paul Marek, who is the member for Capricornia in Queensland, introduced us to the expression 'OP', which we discovered did not refer to alcohol by volume. It is some sort of educational achievement that people reach in the Queensland education system. How low can an OP score be for a student to still get into a nursing degree in Queensland?

Mr O'Dempsey—It changes from year to year. It depends on demand.

CHAIR—What was it this year or last year?

Mr O'Dempsey—Off the top of my head, I cannot remember. It is not something that we look at as an authority.

CHAIR—For example, I noticed that in New South Wales you could get into nursing with a TER as low as 43, which is low. Some people have suggested that, instead of the nursing course taking in people with such low levels of academic achievement at a secondary level, they should have a minimum level and say, 'We won't take anyone below 55,' or whatever score it may be. But surely that would ultimately have some impact on the quality of the graduate? The university, in the way it is funded, relies on numbers. It has to attract them and get them into a course. Some of the universities actually employ people to recruit nursing undergraduates. Surely there must be a concern? I think the teaching profession has the same sort of problem.

Mr O'Dempsey—We do not seem to have the problem in Queensland, even though I know that it has been a problem interstate. The last I heard was the tertiary entrance score.

Mr BROUGH—What was the TE score?

Mr O'Dempsey—It was about 835. That was the last I heard when it was the TE score.

Mr BROUGH—With OP1 your overall position means you are in the top bracket, and then it goes to—

Mr O'Dempsey—The top three per cent.

Mr BROUGH—So that is what the OPs relate to. OP I think refers to the overall position. As I understand it, it is a broadband of TER. It is just all your subjects and then their weighting.

CHAIR—But as a registering authority—

Mr O'Dempsey—We were concerned with what would happen if that started to drop, because we would be concerned about the quality outcomes.

CHAIR—Finally, why would someone choose—I think it comes back to what Mr Dargavel questioned you about—to do an enrolled nurses course when you have marks sufficiently high to get you into a registered nursing undergraduate program? You said they would want to work while they were doing the degree and so on, but that seems a bit odd.

Mr O'Dempsey—I think they have been marketed well. That is the only answer I could—

Mr BROUGH—That is an interesting comment—that TAFE has marketed something well. I am not being funny, but that is contrary to the advice or the evidence we took in the last inquiry.

Mr O'Dempsey—I am not quite sure whether it is the TAFE marketing it well. I think that there have been a number of players within the industry—enrolled nurses associations, professional associations and industrial organisations.

CHAIR—Thanks very much, Mr O'Dempsey, for producing and providing us with a submission. If you have any supplementary ideas or anything like that you would like to send on, please do so.

Mr O'Dempsey—Thank you. I wish you well with this inquiry—it is not an easy one.

Proceedings suspended from 12.01 p.m. to 1.24 p.m.

STEVENSON, Professor John Charles, Professor of Post-compulsory Education and Training, Head of School of Vocational, Technology and Arts Education, Griffith University, Nathan, Queensland 4111

CHAIR—Welcome, and thank you very much for providing us with your submission. Please give us a five- to 10-minute precis of your submission and then we will discuss it.

Prof. Stevenson—I am representing the Vice-Chancellor of Griffith University in terms of the submission because the submission is from the university itself. Basically, the submission is more an argument for a basis on which to consider decisions about the future of TAFE rather than a set of detailed decisions that could be taken. It tries to advance a number of platforms. Those two platforms are essentially a platform about what Australia should look like, what is a desirable future for Australia; and one on what economic productivity is likely to be like in the future.

The submission conceptualises future productivity as a continuum rather than having a single set of characteristics. Table 3 on page 12 depicts that continuum. The submission then argues that, because of this continuum and the nature of future productivity and the connections between that and what Australia ought to look like, there should be more connectedness in the concerns of TAFE, that TAFE should not be seen in isolation from wider social considerations or in isolation from the needs of individuals and that these things themselves are in fact connected with economic change. The other connectedness that the submission argues is the connectedness between what TAFE does and what other educational institutions do. The implications, then, that the submission argues are that one needs a wider view of what constitutes a vocation, if we are talking about vocational education and that aim of TAFE, and a more connected view of the kind of knowledge that is needed for those vocations. That connected view is pursued largely in tables 4 and 5 on pages 12 and 13. Some gaps in current provision between TAFE and universities are highlighted in table 6.

The submission concludes by arguing for more comprehensive concerns in TAFE—not singular concerns but more comprehensive concerns or a wider set of concerns—and more connectedness between TAFE and universities, but it cautions against possible implications for TAFE if that connectedness were pursued and it cautions about the need not to de-emphasise the development of productive knowledge or practical knowledge, which is something that the submission argues TAFE does particularly well. That is a brief synopsis. I would be happy to elaborate on any of those points.

CHAIR—Could you talk a little bit more about what you see as an appropriate relationship between TAFEs and the university sector. I am sure you are well aware that one end of the debate, if you like, is that universities have core activities related to education, learning, knowledge, personal development, an understanding of history and the inculcation of values, as well as teaching skills, and that as the TAFE sector gets close to

the universities it actually diminishes their role in doing that. That line of thought has it that the TAFE sector has a narrow vocational education and training sort of focus and, as they move closer to the universities, perhaps they are distracted from their core activities. Is it desirable and is it possible to have quite close articulation while preserving the best of each sector?

Prof. Stevenson—I think the submission is really arguing the latter position, that it is desirable to have closer cooperation than currently exists. It is arguing that because it is suggesting that what is meant by economic productivity is undergoing substantial fundamental and qualitative change. That is, it is arguing that what it means to be productive at work draws upon those very capacities that you listed as being the province of universities as much as it draws upon manual dexterity and proficiency in the job—predictable competencies.

It is arguing that the nature of economic productivity in the future is such that all workers will need a range of capacities—from those which universities currently provide through to what TAFE institutions currently provide. But the submission, at the same time, cautions about that approach by suggesting that, as universities and TAFE have better articulation, move closer together, give greater credit and recognition for each other's strengths in courses and combine what each has to offer in the educational programs of individuals, it might be at the risk of de-emphasising too much the practical knowledge that TAFE develops and would hope that that would not occur. It does not believe it is necessary for that to occur. In fact, it would argue that in university courses those kinds of activities are particularly important anyway. You mentioned that when you described the roles of universities.

Those comments I just made are drawn largely from tables 3 and 4 in the submission, where those kinds of knowledges you talked about are depicted in three columns as being required by all workers. Some people would look at the left-hand column and say that is what universities do and then look at the right-hand column and say that is what TAFE does, which would be a simplistic way of looking at the table. The population will not fit neatly into those three kinds of categories or fall neatly into those three kinds of knowledges. We believe those are interlinked, that people will need to draw on all three columns of the table at different times in their lives and even within the one job.

The submission also argues that the core work in the left-hand column will probably be the province of a decreasing number of people and that the right-hand columns will be the province of greater numbers of people. So with mass education through universities and TAFE institutions it will be necessary to cater for the larger numbers of people as well as a small number of people. So it will not be enough to develop knowledge of a particular kind for a very small number of people through either of those sectors.

CHAIR—In your submission you talk about the VET sector, in particular TAFE, offering individual focused education and training. A number of people who have made submissions to us have cautioned against society becoming filled with people who are trained but have very little personal development in an educational sense and said they need skills that require them to take leadership in certain industries. For example, it is not good enough to know just how to prepare food; you need to know how to manage people, relate to them and so on.

How do you reconcile your individual focused VET, which, by definition, is providing skills that employers might not necessarily see at least a short-term value in with the needs of industry? Very good people from industry have spoken to us and said they need so many people skilled in certain tasks in six months, in 12 months and so on. In Western Australia so disappointed are they, at least with the TAFE VET, that they have established their own programs, and employers are paying $6,000 to train their employees. Is it possible in the Griffith model to meet the needs of industry whilst at the same time offering VET programs that have a bit more education in them as well as training?

Prof. Stevenson—The submission is really separating the short-term horizons from the longer term horizons. It is arguing that what constitutes economic productivity is uncertain. We do not know exactly what a person will need in three, five, 10 years in order to be productive and provide employers with the skills and capacities that they want at that time.

It is arguing that the key to that is individual transformation; that, in fact, the key to long-term economic horizons is the development of the individual, rather than only—and I emphasise 'only'—the immediate skill development of the individual. It draws on considerable research in suggesting that, going right back to the days of Dewey, who was writing in the early 1900s. He was suggesting that vocations are the key to developing meaning; that you cannot really develop meaning, unless you reflect upon that meaning—and you do not reflect upon that, unless you are changing as an individual.

So the submission is arguing two things: that vocations themselves are the key to the development of meaning—and you might not expect universities to advocate that, but we are; and that it is the way in which the vocational learning is developed that enables that transformation to occur. So it is arguing that on the one hand. On the other hand, it is arguing that economic productivity being of an uncertain kind will require individuals who can operate on the future, who can change the future, who can adapt to the future, who can meet the challenges of the future. Of course, that is all individually centred; it is not something an employer can predict.

The third thing it is arguing is that, despite all of that, yes, there are immediate short-term skill needs that industry has and, yes, TAFE should be providing them. But it is saying that it should not be providing them in the absence of the long-term needs of industry and the long-term needs of the individual, and the connections between that and

what society wants and the individual's other roles in society as a responsible citizen. So it is not saying that those things should be done in opposition. The submission is really trying to say that it is easy to set those things up as oppositional, but really they are connected.

CHAIR—This morning we heard evidence from Professor Chipman, whom I am sure you know very well. He was suggesting that the ideal model is one where your infrastructure is shared, with preferably co-located, single student facilities and resources, single libraries, and so on, but still with a separate funding system, as this would be a way of preventing universities from taking a predatory approach to skills training. Do you have any view on that? Is that a future you would envisage?

Prof. Stevenson—I think the kind of infrastructure and the institutional arrangements have to be highly contextualised, and that arguing that from a Rockhampton perspective might be different; it might be calling more on parameters that apply to Rockhampton than parameters that might apply in Sydney. But then again they might be the same. I think you would have to look at each set of institutions, their proximity, and how it would work. I guess we can draw lessons from the ways in which CAEs and universities have been amalgamated. I guess one could draw on studies about the extent to which that is cost effective, the extent to which the missions of one versus the other have been suppressed or advanced. There would be research that would enable one to answer that question using the research bases.

It seems to me that, in an area like Rockhampton, it makes eminent sense because it has a small population and it has two sizeable institutions—and this can emphasise the discrete strengths of each kind of institution—which already cooperate very well. So it seems to me that what was being argued for that location would be sensible—and whether it would be sensible for all locations, I do not know—but with all the caveats, of course, that everyone keeps mentioning.

Mr NEVILLE—Professor, we are talking about the potential predatory practices of universities in getting into the vocational area. But we do not talk about where the universities might—especially in these dual models that Dr Nelson has just been talking to you about—humanise the vocational students in an academic environment. What is your comment on that? Just before you answer, you said that in providing vocational education, which you argue must continue, we must not lose sight of the other aspects of education—but you are not saying how they should be delivered. If there is to be a humanising factor or an academic factor being applied to the traditional vocational student, in what way should that be supplied; and how does it enhance his lifestyle, or whatever?

Prof. Stevenson—I think there are a number of important points in what you have just raised. That universities have been predatory over TAFE and TAFE has been predatory over universities I think is an important one not to forget. Also, what is valuable in universities should not be lost in any coming together of the two sectors; what is meant

by a degree, a higher degree and research, and so on, I think are valuable and need to be preserved.

As for the second part of your question—how would you actually go about humanising vocational education in such a way that people are more prepared for the future, more able to adapt and more connected with their social roles?—I think the answer lies very much in developing those kinds of capacities in a highly contextualised way. That is, instead of adding to a TAFE curriculum, say, liberal studies—which has been tried before and which simply distances students and makes them feel dislocated, and they see it as being something separate and they have no interest in it—and doing it that way, my belief is that it should be drawn out of a highly contextualised approach to developing the capacities that are needed in today's and tomorrow's workplace. It should be explicitly vocational, but those kinds of things that universities offer as disciplines should be drawn from the everyday practice that surrounds economic vocations.

Mr NEVILLE—Are we talking about subjects from the humanities that might be aimed at the capacity of those students, or are we talking about more lifestyle skills things?

Prof. Stevenson—I would hate to call them 'lifestyle skills things' because words like those have already been used in pre-vocational courses—participation and equity programs and those kinds of courses—in the past, when students have seen them as being either watered down, irrelevant, something you do not have to do, of low status or not being valuable to the employer. So they do not work. We know they do not work; we know that when they are seen as separate they do not work. If you call it 'economics' or 'liberal studies', I suspect it will not work either. It will be seen as being too hard; they will have difficulty engaging with it and so on.

There are already models for doing it. These models, strangely enough, come from America, which has a less highly developed vocational education system than Australia does. Recently I was reading something which had eight models for doing this. I cannot remember all eight at the moment, but it had eight models: eight alternative ways in which this was being attempted in vocational education in the United States.

The one that I can remember most of was treating a vocation in a historical kind of way; that is, trying to bring a historical element into the vocation itself so that history was not being taught over there and vocational skills over here but, while the skills were being developed, their context within the history of that vocation was being explored as well, and the role of that vocation in contemporary society was being explored. So that was giving the person more pride in their vocation: seeing its value within society was enabling them to articulate that value and to be critical about that value in respect of other kinds of vocations.

It was highly contextualised but it was drawing out the same kinds of skills as you

would get if you were learning economics in university. If you were learning economics in university, you would be learning the history of economic thought; it would not be related to a particular vocation. So it seems to me that one ought to move one this way and one ought to move the other that way but, to preserve what is strong in TAFE or in vocational education generally, these kinds of capacities need to be highly contextualised, so my simple answer is contextualise them.

Mr NEVILLE—I know where you are coming from but I still cannot conceptualise it in my mind. If I am a student of plumbing or carpentry and I am in one of these joint institutions or in an integrated structure where there is good articulation in subjects but I want a more rounded future because I am going to have to grapple with things beyond nails and hammers or wrenches further down the track, I cannot see myself—as a student—necessarily doing first year university English and doing Blake and Marlowe and the like.

How do we have this more rounded education in the vocations? I want to get a feel not for the theory of it but for what the practice of it will be. Are there any models that you know of where this has been done in Australia? How are they delivering, for want of a better word, these humanising factors to the vocational occupations?

We had a witness this morning—I think he was from your university—giving an individual submission who was very critical of competency based training on the grounds that it was moving a person through the technical facets of a particular occupation but they did not gain any of the dynamics and atmosphere of the institution where they might otherwise have been studying on an annual basis. He did not use the word, but I think they are becoming human robots.

CHAIR—He said:

It needs to be recognized also that the national mandating of educational fetishes and cure-alls, such as that of the competency-based movement in current vocational education and training legislation and policy, will inevitably cause enormous damage to the public value of education in and through the systems so affected.

That was Dr Richard Bagnall.

Mr NEVILLE—What can the university, the joint institution, the integrated institutions or affiliated institutions deliver that will provide a balance, if he is right, for the danger that that sort of thing might provoke?

Prof. Stevenson—I think there are a number of ways of answering that. The first is that competency based training does not leave much space for the kinds of capacities I am talking about. The basis of competency based training is that you ask employers and employer groups to predict what attributes are needed in the job and then you seek to develop those against performance criteria in a private provider or in a TAFE institution. I

think the answer lies in seeking to involve in the curriculum development process more than the competencies derived from industry—that is, to return to a situation where you have a curriculum development process which sits between the setting of industry standards and the teaching in a college so that you can bring into the curriculum those competencies, which are important but which are limited, and bring into that curriculum the other things that are needed to connect that individual with wider social roles.

This used to be the case once, but there were curriculum development processes which sat between those two activities. The criticism at that time was that the curriculum development activity was not responsive enough to the needs of industry. What I think Richard would have been arguing, and what many of us do argue, is the fact that the competency based training agenda has now displaced all other considerations from the curriculum development process. So the argument that is being made is to redevelop the curriculum development process, to include in that curriculum development process inputs from sources alongside—not instead of—those from industry and then to develop a curriculum which relates them together. I am still not going to answer your question by saying, 'Add liberal studies to a TAFE college curriculum,' because I do not think it will work. My suggestion is that you redevelop a curriculum development process where they are included so you can work out a way of doing it.

You asked, 'Are there any models in Australia where that is happening?' I am not aware of any. The only place I have been able to find models is in the United States, where someone has gone to the trouble to collect these models from various schools in the United States where they have tried to bring vocational education into schools. That is not the best model for a TAFE institution, because you are trying to do the opposite; you are trying to bring more social development into a vocational institution. You try to end up at the same point, but you are starting from a different starting point. In schools there is already a curriculum development process, but in TAFE colleges it has gone. It used to be there, but it has gone.

Mr NEVILLE—And you think competency based training has been part of that?

Prof. Stevenson—I think it has been the major cause of it.

Mr NEVILLE—How would you answer that when you get some universities like Bond University where, while they have not called it competency based training, they have an accelerated law degree? If you are prepared to work through the June semester break and the December-January semester break, you can do a law degree in about 2½ years. Isn't that the academic world's version of the same thing?

Prof. Stevenson—I would not have thought so. There is a fair bit of slippage in the jargon that is used. They use words like standards, competence, competency and so on. The competency based training agenda that I think Richard would have been criticising with respect to TAFE in vocational education and training has a very tight definition. It is

very clear what it is. It is standards set by a competency standard body set up under such and such, and so it goes on. It has performance criteria, it has elements of competency and all the rest of it.

None of that happens at Bond and other universities apart from where a profession has come together—professions such as pharmacy, veterinary science, law and a number of others—and said, 'These are our standards.' Those standards look quite different to practice in TAFE colleges. They are nowhere nearly as disaggregated. They involve much more judgment in setting them up, determining what they are, assessing for them in teaching. There is much more space within them to include a whole range of things and there is a curriculum development process between the setting of the standards and the offering of the course. That curriculum then gets accredited by a body, by the university itself. There is room in that process to include considerations beyond the minimal set of competencies and in the two cases, competencies are defined in a different way, and certainly practised in a different way.

CHAIR—Why should you have a vet treat your cat with conjunctivitis when the vet's assistant can do it after a two-month course? Competency based assessment. On page 7 there is a statement which says:

Despite the current arrangements and the interventions that had led to them, many problematic issues, such as the following, still exist:

The first point is:

the low status of vocational education and its impact on student demand;

The final point is:

dissatisfaction of industry with the nature of knowledge that young people bring to the workplace.

Do you have any evidence to support those assertions? Our experience has been that, in fact, there is a high level of student demand for vocational education and training. In fact, in some of the institutions we have been to, the VET course is actually far more popular than the university course. In terms of industry, we have seen some evidence of industry dissatisfaction with the training or the quality of some of the graduates but, by and large, it seems to be pretty good. I am not trying to be provocative or confrontational, but do you have any evidence to support these things?

Prof. Stevenson—The first statement has been derived largely from looking at literature. That literature is mainly English and Australian, so it is drawn from those two contexts. There is a raging debate in the UK about the relationship between A-levels, GNVQs, NVQs, the pathways and the like. The concern that has come out of the various Dearing inquiries in the UK has all been trying to overcome the low status of the equivalent of what we call competency based training, vis a vis, A-levels and university

qualifications.

The evidence is very strong in the UK. The primary evidence in Australia is simply by numbers. It seems to me—I speak as an individual—that there has been an artificial creation of demand for places outside universities by restricting university access. You see numbers go up outside of universities partly because there has been a shrinkage in places within universities. When you look at numbers, I think you need to take that into account. The evidence is not primarily for the Australian context, but it is derived largely from secondary writings in Australia and inquiries in the UK. That is the first one. Shall I go on to the second one?

CHAIR—Hasn't there been an expansion in university places, certainly over the last five or 10 years?

Prof. Stevenson—There might be over that long period, but not over the short period. There has certainly been an extension in VET places and a great deal of funding moved in that direction. I have certainly experienced clawbacks where I work in the university system since 1989.

There were large numbers of surveys about the dissatisfaction of industry with the nature of knowledge that young people bring to the workplace. I cannot cite any straight off here, but you get lots of these movements emerging. Literacy is a current one, and there are numeracy and information technology. Employers are saying in multiple surveys that what they want are young people who can think and do something sensible, rather than asking stupid questions. They want maturity.

Those kinds of things come out worldwide in surveys about what industry thinks about education generally. I think it comes as much out of universities, as it does out of schools, TAFE and VET generally, that industry is dissatisfied. Do you think that is not the case?

CHAIR—I come at all this with a very open mind, but the industry representatives and employer organisations who have spoken to us have not expressed that view, with the exception of the West Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. If you could provide to us the documentation, references or author of the document to support that, I would be grateful.

Mr DARGAVEL—Some people have come here and talked about a comparative disadvantage of the vocational sector being able to offer courses that are accessible in terms of cost in comparison to growing costs for students to engage in higher education. Consequently, some universities have been complaining about an emerging competitive disadvantage, where they offer a similar course but students have to pay through the nose for it, versus the TAFE sector which can offer it in a manner which is affordable to either the student or the employer sponsoring that student.

Do you see that for vocationally orientated courses in higher education that trend is discouraging people from universities and accounts for part of the growth in the VET sector? Do you have any comments on that issue?

Prof. Stevenson—Is the argument that it is dearer in universities and that turns people away? Is that the argument?

Mr DARGAVEL—No. The argument is that it is certainly dearer at universities now and that there is a potential emerging where—given that higher education is under increasing cost pressures with reduced funding, unmet wage demands and all the rest of it—the price for a student to engage in higher education is growing versus what they might do by way of vocational education, particularly for things like nursing which does not return to the prospective employee a high wage or income.

That has been a concern about an emerging problem and people in higher education have been casting their minds to what they might do about it. From my cynical perspective it is a takeover bid of the vocational education sector or various collaborative arrangements with vocational education institutions. Do you see that as an emerging issue for higher education or do you think it is a bit of a non-issue?

Prof. Stevenson—I do not think I know enough about it to say anything sensible.

CHAIR—We have certainly had people who have spoken to us pointing out that students are self-selecting. They will do a year of an accounting diploma at TAFE which will give them a year's credit to switch to a degree, so they have saved a year on HECS. There have been some other examples as we have gone along. Whether or not it is a major problem remains to be seen.

Prof. Stevenson—The only thing I could offer there is that, whoever is offering this vocational experience or learning, it is important for them to be funded in such a way that they can provide leading edge skills. That is, they need to be funded in such a way that they are encouraged to do the research that is necessary to ensure that they are at the leading edge themselves in providing the training that people need.

I would be concerned about an argument which said, 'You can do the first two years over here and have a low rate of funding, and you do the final year here with a higher rate of funding.' This is impoverished, because it is people who do not have the time, funding or resources to ensure that what they are teaching is right up-to-date. I think that is related to what you are saying, but I cannot answer your question directly.

Mr PYNE—Previous witnesses have said that one of the ways of maintaining the distinction between TAFEs and universities, but ensuring they are both equally as successful and strong, is by changing the funding mix from what it currently is. Do you see that there is a model which would allow the federal government to ensure that the two

sectors remain distinct but strong through a funding process? If so, what is the funding process?

Prof. Stevenson—I really could not answer that. I have no funding models in mind at all.

Mr PYNE—Neither do we; that is why we keep asking.

Prof. Stevenson—I will stay with what I know; that is dangerous enough.

CHAIR—This is perhaps a bit closer to your area. Do you think that there is a place for research in TAFEs?

Prof. Stevenson—Yes.

CHAIR—Research is obviously a fundamental part of the university sector, but should TAFEs be engaged in research? Why do you say that?

Prof. Stevenson—I think anyone who is developing knowledge amongst others, who wants to ensure that the people who are being developed can operate in a kind of proactive way in society, those people have an obligation to be up to date. The best way to be up to date is by trying to push the horizons back yourself. I see a strong connection between the capacity to teach and research.

I know there are things that can be taught without actually doing the research yourself, but it is a pity if places like TAFE colleges are not doing research in the areas where they are teaching young people and that they are simply taking on board research done by others, but not seeing those connections.

I also think that if you are teaching something you need to be able to get a critical distance from it, which I do not think you necessarily get in TAFE if you are simply inculcating the knowledge developed by others and do not have experience yourself in developing some of that knowledge. I am not arguing for full university research funding for TAFE, but if your question is simply: should research be going on in TAFE, my answer is yes.

CHAIR—I am not suggesting I am opposed to you, but if TAFEs were engaged in research, would they not then effectively be taking on a university role? It comes back to what is the role of TAFE. We have industry needs out there, both established and emerging industries, and their research base is either in the industry itself or in universities. That research becomes knowledge which is then imparted in a TAFE sector.

The average person who wants to do a TAFE course wants to acquire a set of skills. Is that going to be enhanced by having teachers who have research interests and

priorities as well as teaching? It would be a bit like saying that you cannot teach secondary school chemistry or physics because you are not doing any research. Do you see what I mean? There are people who would say that if the TAFEs are doing it, why have universities?

Prof. Stevenson—There is teaching and teaching and there is research and research. The fact that teaching goes on in TAFE and teaching goes on in universities does not make them synonymous; just as if there were research going on in universities and research going on in TAFE, that would not make them synonymous either. That is, the kind of research that people would be doing in TAFE may be different from the kind of research or the amount of research that was going on in universities.

I do not think it is productive for society to fund TAFE in such a way that individuals are not doing any research and that they are not looking to see where technology in particular is going. It is simply research of that scholarly nature—being aware in a scholarly way of what is occurring—going through to actually making changes.

CHAIR—But some of the worst teachers I have ever had have been brilliant researchers, and vice versa. Some people, very good teachers, may well be attracted to the TAFE sector because they do not have any pressure, overt or otherwise, on them to engage in research.

Prof. Stevenson—I guess there are anecdotes like that—that some of your best teachers cannot research and some of the best researchers cannot teach. I guess people have different kinds of skills. I think that occurs within a university itself. There are some people who are better at teaching than research and some people do much more research than others.

CHAIR—Some would say that perhaps there is a risk that if TAFEs developed a research focus, that would distract them from what is their great strength—that is, effectively a narrow vocational education and training focus which is very much rooted in the needs of industry and the workplace. In fact, most of the people who are going there are going there to acquire a skill for a task. As we know, a lot of university graduates are going there too because, having had an education, they then want to go and acquire some specific training skills.

Prof. Stevenson—I think you are right to suggest that a detachment from the practical would be a terrible risk for TAFE. If research activity led to a detachment and an abstracting of knowledge that was not grounded in practice and concrete, I think we would have been moved backwards. So I agree with that. But I do not think it necessarily follows that if TAFE lecturers or teachers were engaged in research of some kind that enabled them to keep up to date and have a positive input into the kind of knowledge they are teaching, it necessarily needs to lead to that. In fact, I would agree with you that measures would need to be taken so it did not.

The other thing is that I do not think that means that it has to be narrow, specific, vocational training because I do not think the strength of TAFE is its narrowness. I think its strength is its concreteness—that what is being done is related to concrete, authentic practice. I think the danger is abstraction rather than breadth—that is, if they can only see it in abstract terms and cannot relate it to practice, I think there are real dangers.

CHAIR—Would you see collaborative research with universities as being an appropriate model for TAFE?

Prof. Stevenson—Yes, I think that would be good. I think that is already happening.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Professor Stevenson. You are very thoughtful. I suspect that you were not the final author of your submission, as I point out to you that there is a spelling mistake in the fifth line of the first paragraph on the fifth page.

Prof. Stevenson—I was not the final author but it might be my spelling mistake.

CHAIR—If you could provide us with any papers or references to support the two assertions on page 7, I would certainly be grateful.

[2.09 p.m.]

FIELD, Dr Donald William, Director, Academic Policy and Programs Unit, Queensland University of Technology, GPO Box 2434, Brisbane, Queensland 4001

CHAIR—Welcome, Dr Field. Thank you very much for going to the trouble of providing a submission and also coming to speak to us about it. Speaking to a parliamentary committee is not always the most inspiring experience.

I represent a Liberal Party Sydney metropolitan seat called Bradfield. On my left is Christopher Pyne, the Liberal Party member for the seat of Sturt in metropolitan Adelaide. Chris has been around education issues for a long time. Steve Dargavel is the Labor member for Fraser in Canberra. On my right is Paul Neville, who represents the National Party held seat of Hinkler here in Queensland.

I invite you to give a five to 10-minute precis of your submission, which we will then discuss.

Dr Field—I hold the substantive position of Director of Academic Policy and Programs at QUT. Pro tem, I am acting head of the Division of Academic Affairs for the next month or so, until it gets wound up and spread to other parts of the university. I guess I am here because I ghost wrote the piece of paper that you received from QUT with the Vice-Chancellor's signature on it. Is that sufficient for the first part of it?

CHAIR—Yes. I did not detect any spelling errors. You are right.

Dr Field—I am happy to bypass the precis. I am not sure, just at this moment, what advantage I can be to you. If there is any advantage to you, it is probably best obtained through your asking me questions.

CHAIR—You probably heard Mr Neville ask the previous witness about competency based skills assessment. In your submission, you talk about articulation between the TAFE sector and universities and the problem that competency based assessment might represent in terms of credit transfers. Could you perhaps tell us a bit about that and how you think it might be addressed?

Dr Field—If a person has got a complete TAFE award at associate diploma or diploma level, it is simple: we just give people block credit, whatever the assessment process. So they get 96 credit points of credit which, for us, is the equivalent of one year of a degree. If it is a business degree, let us say, they go on and do another two years, end of story. In terms of anybody who has completed less than a complete award at TAFE, that would be up to individual faculties to determine. I guess the first approach would be to take a pro rata block credit. If the person had completed one year, they would get the first half-year of their course as credit.

Beyond that, it would be a matter of assessing individual unit curricula, if it came down to that—and not necessarily taking too much notice of the actual assessment that was used there, I suspect. I have not worked in a faculty for two or three years or so doing that sort of thing, so I cannot be more specific than that. It would be done at QUT on a faculty by faculty basis.

CHAIR—Some of the people who have spoken to us have expressed concern about the continuum of the Australian qualifications framework from the TAFE sector into universities. They said that, by having the university sector as part of the AQF, it devalues or has the potential to devalue the merits of the respective awards in each sector. Do you have any view on AQF or whether it ought to be amended? Is AQF okay?

Dr Field—We know of AQF and we do not have any problems. I think it is as simple as that.

Mr NEVILLE—Just as a rider to what Brendan was asking: even when that comes out of a vocational course?

Dr Field—Yes. I do not see any problem with that.

Mr PYNE—What collaboration does the QUT have with TAFEs in your particular area?

Dr Field—What do you mean by 'my particular area'?

Mr PYNE—In terms of cover, geographically.

Dr Field—Our interactions with TAFE have been almost exclusively credit based ones.

Mr PYNE—In which subjects?

Dr Field—Across the board. We have got a general policy. In fact, the headings in the submission that you received from us actually look rather familiarly like page 91 of our handbook where the details of our arrangements with TAFE are set out, particularly the credit arrangements. Most of our interaction with TAFE has been on a credit basis, and so we have worked to build up the fairly standard credit arrangement that I have just described. Therefore at this stage we do not have, so far as I am aware, many particular institution to institution working arrangements beyond credit.

That is a thing that is about to change because we do have a little project whereby one person in the student admin department is about to go off-line and work on furthering credit arrangements with TAFE and any other things, like joint awards or whatever, that faculties feel they want to get involved in. This person is going to spend the next six

months or so trying to further those kinds of arrangements, because we see that links with TAFE are important. That is partly because we have, in the Brisbane metropolitan area, the largest influx of TAFE people into our courses relative to other universities. So we want to maintain that lead and strengthen those kinds of credit arrangements.

We do have some quite close geographical associations. The city campus here is just across the river from Southbank, the Carseldine campus is not far from North Point, and so on. So there are a couple of fairly close geographical arrangements.

We have, indeed, made some attempts in the past to try to set up collaborations. I come from the faculty of science where I was assistant dean for a while. Some years ago we attempted to set up some arrangements with Southbank in relation to medical laboratory techniques, clinical techniques, physiology techniques, laboratory techniques—those kinds of things. But unfortunately they came to nothing and we still have those as associate degrees. There is no particular collaboration between us and Southbank over those. So we have had a go at it. We have not got far beyond the credit side of things, but we do see it as important and we are putting some effort into trying to set up some further arrangements.

Mr PYNE—Do you think it is fair to say that the Dawkins reforms in the mid-eighties to late eighties changed university education from a situation where there were a number of so-called sandstone universities and a number of other universities beyond those, and then there were CAEs and institutes, et cetera which formed, in many cases, into universities—which now gives us 36 universities?

In recent times, perhaps in the last couple of years, there have been TAFEs which have said that they should be allowed to award degrees and universities should be allowed to award certificates—they are allowed to, but there is a growing tendency to award certificates. Now we are going to the next phase where TAFEs are starting to take on the clothes of universities and universities are starting to take on the clothes of TAFEs, therefore blurring the distinctions between the two. Do you think that is a good thing or a bad thing? If it is a bad thing, how can it be changed? If it is a good thing, why is it a good thing?

Dr Field—I think West said something rather similar in slightly different terms in talking about a seamless post-secondary sector.

Mr PYNE—But there is some confusion about what seamlessness meant in the West report.

Dr Field—Yes, indeed. There was confusion about a number of things, I think. But, be that as it may, what we said about that particular issue in West was that we thought it was a good thing. I do not know that anybody at QUT has thought terribly far down the line of TAFEs awarding degrees—

Mr PYNE—But TAFEs are asking. In Victoria, for example, the very strong feeling to the committee was that TAFEs should be allowed to award degrees. Maybe in some cases they should be allowed to award degrees but, once that distinction is taken away, that leaves very little between the two, doesn't it?

Dr Field—I do not know. To go back to the first part of the question, I do not think we have any particular position on that at the moment. I do not think it is being discussed within the university to the extent where I could articulate any particular position. Nobody has expressed any concerns about it, so far as I am aware.

What is clear from our point of view is that QUT does not want to go to the level of less than bachelor awards. I will be careful there because we do have some what we call 'sub-bachelor awards', but they are at the level of subsets of bachelor degrees. We have the associate degree award, for example, which is a two-year subset of a bachelor degree, but it is at bachelor level so students in an associate degree actually do study what is in the bachelor level award just as the bachelor level students do, but they just take the first two years of it. We do have those, but we have no intention of setting up below that, and we have no particular position on the other.

In terms of the second part of your question, there are some areas where there would be some overlap in function. Perhaps if TAFEs were in the general education area and so were universities, that might be an area of overlap. From our point of view there are what you might call professionally or vocationally oriented courses that we offer which might be the subject of some TAFE aspirations—I do not know. But the way those things tend to work, at least in Brisbane, is that where somebody has a degree such as, in our case, in medical science, medical laboratory technology, or podiatry, or optometry, or medical radiation technology, which is to say radiography, ultrasonography and all that sort of stuff, we are the only people who do it, and over there at the other place, at that other institution, they will do occupational health, physiotherapy and all those sorts of things.

We tend to divide amongst ourselves on the basis of who has historically had an interest in it. So if there were going to be a development in TAFE, it would have to be a niche that they saw for themselves to be one which they could get into and it would have to be one that we had not thought of, which would be pretty smart of them. But, otherwise, I do not have any great difficulties about the possibility that they might offer degrees.

Mr PYNE—Would it be better for the federal government to encourage TAFEs to do what they are doing well, as they are in many instances, and provide that skills based training and education of the student, as opposed to the training, education and learning that is available in universities which is judged by the generic education of the student? Would it be better for the federal government to encourage through funding a very strong TAFE sector and a very strong university sector, but very little crossover between the two?

Dr Field—We would all like to have more funding, please. I think it is dangerous to say that one sector does strongly vocationally oriented stuff and the other does not.

Mr PYNE—You have to have collaboration between the two, rather than a blurring of the two systems.

Dr Field—I do not have any strong views on that and I do not know that I have heard any expressed at QUT either. I do not think it is necessary for people to consider either one or the other of those two options as being the definitive one just on any philosophical basis. There might be other reasons that you might look at one or the other.

Mr NEVILLE—If I can just take up from that point, Professor Chipman suggested a model where the associate diploma should be done in parallel with the degree—the associate diploma accredited to the TAFE and the degree accredited to the university; that they should be done in parallel on the basis that we tend to do the associate diploma at the TAFE at the beginning of a course, where the skills being acquired are the manual or operational skills that they need when they come out at the end of the course, and that students then go on to the university, do a degree and then pick up the original qualification they had at the beginning of the TAFE course right at the end of the university course.

His argument was that if you ran them in parallel and you gave appropriate credits in the same way as you might do with a BA LLB, the vocational or operational skills that a student picks up become relevant as the student comes to the end of his or her degree. So you would come out with the academic qualification and the operational qualification at about the one time. What do you think of that model?

Dr Field—This is a joint award kind of arrangement that he is proposing. But, let me get it clear, he is proposing that you do the skill stuff through TAFE first?

Mr NEVILLE—Yes—

Dr Field—But you do not get your piece of paper until the end?

Mr NEVILLE—And that the two courses be cross-accredited.

Dr Field—We do have in our submission the suggestion that we are in favour of those kinds of joint awards. We do not actually have any at the moment, but I do know that the health people are considering it.

Mr NEVILLE—It picks up Mr Pyne's point, doesn't it, that you do not have some fuzzy blurring at the edge, that you actually have a cross-transitional discipline that recognises the importance of both fields of endeavour?

Dr Field—Yes it does. From that point of view, I am just trying to think of disciplines where that might be a possibility. I think in his model you are talking about rather similar sorts of disciplines—I presume you are, anyway.

Mr NEVILLE—He used as an example—it was a fairly loose example—that an engineer requires an academic degree of engineering to be competent to do a whole range of things, but that a lot of engineers do not come out with any practical business sense, so there might be an associate diploma of business in which he learns bookkeeping, time management and all those sorts of things, which he will very much need to put the academic qualification into practice, and, rather than go back to TAFE and do another year or two years, they should be integrated as they go, but with a cross-institution separation—I am groping for the right word there.

Dr Field—I know what you mean. In those sorts of terms, for that kind of example, I would have thought the future of the engineer in the workplace was such that it would be better either to do the course design at the bachelor level to include management and those sorts of business things—

Mr NEVILLE—But it does not happen.

Dr Field—I think it is starting to happen—or, alternatively, instead of doing that basic skills stuff at the front end, maybe you do an MBA or a graduate certificate or something at the back end of the engineering degree. I would have thought that would be a better option for somebody like an engineer than to do those basic skills to start with. That would be my point of view, from a course design view.

Mr NEVILLE—The chairman could correct me on this—I missed a lot of the early hearings of this inquiry and I was quite surprised not so much when I heard the figure for the first time but when I heard it confirmed by a number of institutions—but is it seven times as many people who get degrees go back to TAFE as those who get a TAFE qualification and go on to a degree?

CHAIR—The flow is seven times greater from university to the TAFE sector as it is the other way.

Mr DARGAVEL—But that is people who start in one sector and move to the other, and the flow is from higher education to VET not—

Mr NEVILLE—Not based on completion?

Mr DARGAVEL—No.

CHAIR—A significant number of those are, however, graduates who are going to pick the eyes out of a VET program. But, yes, a lot of them are people who have just

decided to switch or have dropped out.

Dr Field—I have heard that kind of statement, without the figure of seven being mentioned. My understanding was that a lot of that, as I think you were just hinting, was degree people who were going to do a fairly small program in TAFE, so that in terms of equivalent time it might not be a factor of seven at all, or anything like it.

CHAIR—But I think there is a popular perception that you have a lot of people in the TAFE or the VET sector who have great ambitions to go to university and complete a degree, when in fact there is greater interest in university graduates and those who have not completed their university degrees in getting into the TAFE sector.

This might not be something that you have perhaps given a lot of thought to, but one of the issues is the fee issue in relation to the TAFE sector. We have come up against a number of institutions that suffer financially because they have to give a lot of concessions to students and obviously they are drawing from low income cohorts. I suppose that is not something that QUT has got much of a view about?

Then there is the secondary issue of some institutions dealing with internal loans to students. Some people have suggested that there ought to be a deferred payment scheme for the fees that are currently charged up front at TAFE. I think the West committee recommended a uniform deferred payment scheme right across the post-secondary sector.

Dr Field—So I can get it clear, are we talking about those sorts of students at TAFE or university?

CHAIR—At TAFE. There are two issues: firstly, you have institutional loss of income because of discounting to concessional students, low income students; and, secondly, there is the issue of whether there ought to be some sort of deferred payment scheme in the TAFE sector, as there is in the higher education sector. If so, should it be part of that?

Dr Field—I think your first assessment is correct. It is not something that I or anybody else has given a great deal of thought to so far as TAFEs are concerned.

CHAIR—Do you think in a dual sector model that it is possible for a university and a TAFE to retain their core identities and not have the value of a degree conferred in the university sector or a certificate or diploma conferred in a TAFE sector devalued in any way?

Dr Field—Yes, I think it is. There may be some people who view these things with some kind of bias at the moment, but I think from our perspective, we see that that is possible. The qualifications that TAFE graduates have do have validity, and we are prepared to accept those for credit.

CHAIR—We had a discussion this morning with Professor Chipman. He had an ideal model where the library and the student facilities would all be shared and as much as possible the infrastructure of the two components would be shared—higher education versus VET. He also—perhaps by way of a more sociological observation—felt that there was great merit in having the hairdressing students and welding students mixing with the law, dentistry and medicine students. Have you any view on that?

Dr Field—Sharing of resources?

CHAIR—Yes. He is not here today—he is a good guy—but yesterday Frank Mossfield, the member for Greenway, was here. He asked a lady from the Randwick campus of the Institute of Technology how the young kids who had fallen out of the secondary education sector—homeless, drugs, the full hand kind of thing—coped alongside mature age students going to TAFE. She felt it was a positive thing. Do you have any views on that?

Dr Field—I will start with the sharing of resources. We do not do that. One of the things that I put in the submission that you received from us was that we did have one example of shared resources, that of the Queensland Manufacturing Institute, which we shared with TAFE and the Queensland government. Unfortunately, I have to report to you that I discovered about a day or two ago that we have actually pulled out of that one, so I cannot think of anything that we actually do. We have had a go at sharing resources. In principle, what Lauchlan Chipman says is good. He has had the advantage of everybody else talking to him on the West committee; it is unfair.

Those principles that you described that he mentions I think are good. If it were possible, for example, for us at Gardens Point just down the road here to share resources with the people at Southbank just across the river via the new footbridge that the city council or somebody is going to build for us, that would be good.

What we have found in the past in the example I described to you before—when I was in the faculty of science, we tried to set up something with the people over at Southbank—is that there are a number of difficulties at the organisational and administration level. That was a while ago and I do not know whether that has changed. It makes that kind of thing look like a lot of work to get going.

It may be easier for those states such as Victoria, where there are mixed institutions which have a TAFE arm and a university arm, to arrange that sort of thing. But where you have got two stand-alone institutions separated, albeit only by a few hundred metres across the river, working in different systems, it seems that the organisational and administrative difficulties are fairly large. In principle, it is a good idea. It will take a lot of work, I suspect, to make it happen.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Dr Field. We really appreciate your doing that for

us. If you have any supplementary thoughts, suggestions, ideas or anything like that, please feel free to send them on.

Dr Field—I will. I cannot think of anything at the moment.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Dargavel**, seconded by **Mr Neville**):

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

Committee adjourned at 2.37 p.m.