



# **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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

**Reference: Role of institutes of TAFE**

**CANBERRA**

**Thursday, 5 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**

**VEENKER, Mr Peter, Chief Executive and Director, Canberra Institute of Technology, GPO Box  
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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND**  
**TRAINING**

*Role of institutes of TAFE*

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Present

Dr Nelson (Chair)

Mr Barresi

Mr Mossfield

Mr Bartlett

Mr Neville

Mr Dargavel

Mr Sawford

Mrs Elson

The committee met at 9.05 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 and Melbourne, 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 that have been 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; the funding anomalies between TAFE and higher education which affect both students and institutions. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the issues to be considered, nor an indication of where the committee's final recommendations might lie.

Today the committee will hear evidence from the Canberra Institute of Technology.

**VEENKER, Mr Peter, Chief Executive and Director, Canberra Institute of Technology, GPO Box 826, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2601**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. Would you give us a precis—five to 10 minutes at the most—of your submission, then we will ask you questions and engage in dialogue.

**Mr Veenker**—Thank you, Chair. In our submission we wanted to highlight a number of things and I could briefly summarise those. We believe that TAFE has significant differences with the university sector. Both TAFE public institutions and universities have a vital role to play in post-secondary education. However, there are significant market differences and we try to address those in different ways. Some of the differences revolve around the types of students that access the services of TAFE providers, especially the public ones. Also, there are differences in the way TAFE is managed and the way it is governed, and in the way the services and products that we deliver are actually developed.

The importance of pathways between the sectors needs to be highlighted further. We endorse the approach that has been taken by many tertiary institutions to try and facilitate free flow between institutions, especially between universities and TAFE and vice versa. We think mechanisms that will further strengthen the seamless approach to education in the tertiary sector are very important.

The TAFE public sector institutions have a proud history of achievement in serving the community and industry. One of the very strong characteristics of TAFE institutes is the link that they have with community groups as well as with industry. The development of courses, in particular courses that are based on what industry demands, is a unique feature. That really revolves around a different approach to the development of curriculum and, in many instances, a different delivery strategy as well, because of the types of programs that are offered. In terms of the client group that we service, quite a few of them are part time. Many of them have very clearly stated employable outcomes that they want to achieve from their TAFE programs.

The approach of working closely with universities we highly endorse. We have come to the conclusion that there are probably two main pathways to follow, or two main areas to address. The multisector model is one way of bringing the two sectors more closely together and the other one is one of cooperation between freestanding TAFE institutions and the higher education sector. On balance, we would favour the latter approach. However, we think there is room for both types of models within a diversified tertiary education sector system.

**CHAIR**—The vice-chancellor of RMIT made the comment that TAFEs are very good at training people for the present and the past but very poor at training people for the future. That view was reinforced to some extent by Sturt TAFE. In a sense, what they are saying is that with the so-called sunrise industries—biotechnologies, multimedia and some things in health technologies—it is very difficult because of the funding system to quickly establish a training program to meet an emerging need in the marketplace. Is that something you have identified?

**Mr Veenker**—The approach that we have taken is that at the institutional level we work very closely with local industry and industry advisory groups, and at the government level, government actually purchases training opportunities and training places from the TAFE institutes like the one I represent. Government also has a very strong advisory network.

The experience that we have had is that we have moved into what you might call sunrise industries, and that has been in response to industry groups. We sometimes respond because of a particular industry need where they require specialised training and they find that the broader generic type education will not necessarily address that. A good example of a sunrise industry is the animation that is associated with a lot of modern pictures, for example, the film *Babe*. The development of the software was done by many of our ex-students, and the skills to actually work and manipulate that software is a training program that we are involved in.

The higher education sector has been very good in terms of providing the broader generic skills. However, for some of the emerging industries and the skills that are relevant to making people employable at an almost immediate start phase, there are examples where TAFE institutes have been responsive. But the industry advisory groups that are set up to advise the TAFE system represent current industry and traditional industry.

**CHAIR**—Okay. Are you satisfied with the Australian qualifications framework?

**Mr Veenker**—Yes, we endorse the framework and we think that we can work within it. Students benefit from institutions working within that framework.

**CHAIR**—Okay, thank you.

**Mr SAWFORD**—A number of witnesses have used the idea that you have, multisector, and distinguish between a cooperative model, but most people are using the alliance model. Is there any problem in using that as the distinguishing mark, calling it the alliance model where both institutions keep their own individuality?

**Mr Veenker**—The cooperation or alliance model, and that is really what I meant in the latter model, is something I have seen a great deal of success in. For example, with this particular submission that we have put before you, we discussed it with the University of Canberra as well as the department of education and training. So, we were keen to talk with not only our school and college colleagues, but also the higher education university sector. There are many examples of very fruitful cooperation arrangements in terms of pathways between TAFE institutions and particular universities.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But that sort of rhetoric is often used with the multisector part, the cooperative thing—

**Mr Veenker**—Yes, that's right.

**Mr SAWFORD**—whereas the alliance model actually says it has separate administration.

**Mr Veenker**—The alliance model allows you to focus on your core market and be responsive. It allows you to develop a program profile that really is responsible to the government that is buying the services and the community that is demanding the services. In my view, it allows you to respond very quickly to a whole range of programs. Sometimes the danger of the multisectors is that the program profile of the TAFE part of the multisector is skewed towards the upper end rather than towards the broad range of training activities that really are demanded by the community.

For example, at CIT we offer traineeships and apprenticeships right through to advanced diplomas. We are very conscious that we have that very focused broad market to meet. Our administration and management systems allow for students to come in at different times of the year and to undertake short courses that meet their particular demands.

This is a personal view because I have worked in multisectors at a very senior level. It is more difficult when you have a shared administration that is servicing both the higher education sector as well as the TAFE sector. There are complexities in terms of the way the two sectors are funded and the way they respond to various initiatives. I genuinely believe that the systems are very much skewed towards meeting students on a semester basis and, therefore, it is sometimes difficult to be as responsible as one would like.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Could I get you to clarify and perhaps expand a statement you wrote on page 5 of your submission about research? You said:

There is no case for resourcing TAFE to acquire a general research capacity. There is therefore no case for TAFE institutes to provide programs with a research component beyond degree level.

I understand what you are saying there. A number of witnesses have spoken to us about the seemingly gross lack of research capability right across Australia in TAFE. I am not talking about specific scholarly research, but research and data information that assist TAFE in terms of funding applications or even perhaps putting forward arguments to governments that there are needs. In other words, people are busily involved in the programs. In distinguishing that sort of research from the scholarly research, would you make some comments on research needs in that category?

**Mr Veenker**—The comment in the submission refers to scholarly research. I think there is a very strong case for having a research capability that actually assists in underpinning some of the policy changes that are being made in VET. There are some opportunities there to underpin some of the decisions that are made at the policy level with appropriate research and also in terms of more knowledge about your clients and the quality improvement that needs to take place in the institute. I think a research capacity that is focused on the development of VET policy, and that focuses on the client base, is appropriate and desirable. We have that within our own institution. However, the research that further develops the knowledge base of a discipline or field of study is not the core business of a TAFE institute.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I think East Gippsland TAFE said when we were in Melbourne that they were subsidising up to \$300,000.

**CHAIR**—Between \$300,000 and \$500,000.



**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes, they were not sure. It was between \$300,000 and \$500,000 for students who were unable to pay. Does that situation where TAFE fees are the first concessions apply to CIT and to what degree?

**Mr Veenker**—It is about 47 per cent. I know that region. I was a director of East Gippsland TAFE prior to my appointment. The level of subsidy there is very high. It represents the community that actually accesses TAFE type training. The community that we service here in Canberra is quite different and, therefore, the number of concessions are nowhere near as high.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Have you got any idea what they are?

**Mr Veenker**—They would be in the vicinity of 15 per cent of our total fee structure.

**CHAIR**—Rod is touching on something we have come across that seems fairly important. East Gippsland, for example, is drawing on a lower socioeconomic cohort. You could argue that the needs of the students are possibly higher than they might be in higher income areas. Their problems are compounded by the fact they are losing up to half a million a year in income, through concessions, off a \$20 million budget.

Should there be some kind of funding mechanism which compensates TAFEs who are double disadvantaged, if you like, through this kind of system? Also, some of the TAFEs, and Gippsland was one of them, actually provide loans themselves to students. We have been asking people if they see a need for some kind of deferred payment system for fees for students to apply in TAFE, as it currently does in higher education.

**Mr Veenker**—On the deferred payment system, there are examples that I am aware of and within our own institute where we do have an institutional type of arrangement for that to occur. The danger with a HECS type of system for TAFE institutes is that many of the fees that are paid by students in TAFE institutes are reimbursed by employers. So if you introduce a HECS type of system, you might find that there is some cost shifting from the employer back to the individual. That is one possibility.

I also think the arrangement in terms of reimbursing an institute like East Gippsland can be quite easily accommodated through purchasing arrangements that state governments enter into with particular TAFE institutes. It is relatively easy for the institute to determine the amount of income forgone and to negotiate an appropriate position. To have a blanket purchase arrangement where you are given X number of dollars per contact hour and then no adjustment for a particular community that you are servicing is a little stark and does lead to the sorts of situations that you have alluded to. Further refinement of the purchaser provider arrangements in terms of how the contracts of purchase are negotiated will help alleviate that model. But the fees in TAFE institutes are used very much by those institutes.

The other comment I would make about a HECS type of system is that it is relatively easy, once the system is in, to start to move the fees upwards. I reinforce that many of the people that we are servicing in TAFE are from a different socioeconomic background. That is worth bearing in mind. The other thing is that, because of the range of programs that we offer in TAFE, it would be a very difficult administrative matter to deal with. Some courses may be only 30 hours. If you want to apply a HECS type of system to that, it is an administrative nightmare. I think some of the problems that TAFE institutes are currently experiencing are

solvable in other than a HECS type of arrangement.

**CHAIR**—You have been around the TAFE system quite a bit. What changes, if any, would you like to see made to TAFE institutes—funding, administration, training, whatever?

**Mr Veenker**—As the government, through territory or state government, is the major client, the major purchaser, as well as the owner, to have three-year arrangements for funding would make it a lot easier to actually develop your program profile and your staff in such a way that you can be even better, more responsive, in the future. To enter into annual purchase agreements is all very well, but it really makes it difficult in terms of moving the institute quickly to be responsive. Therefore, a rolling three-year funding arrangement through purchaser provider would make a huge difference in how we would work in the institutes.

The other observation that I would like to share with you is that TAFE institutes that are governed by councils and therefore are somewhat freestanding are very responsive and are able to work very well in terms of how they relate to staff and how they develop their program profiles, rather than TAFE institutes that in a way are a de facto branch of a central office. That certainly does vary greatly around Australia; the systems are very different. I believe the move towards greater autonomy would be welcomed.

**CHAIR**—Triennial funding and increasing the autonomy of the individual institution would be two—

**Mr Veenker**—Yes.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Is there a demand in the TAFE system to retrain all those retrenched people? What research has been taken into this field and does TAFE market these sorts of programs?

**Mr Veenker**—Certainly TAFE institutes do target older people who are very much wanting a renewal or diversification of skills. We do that. The funding is not always targeted to that. The funding tends to be to purchase X number of hours in the following programs or suite of programs but, through the mechanisms of wanting to be responsive to a community, the TAFE institutes do target older people who perhaps want to either find new employment or diversify their skill mix in the existing employment situation.

**Mr NEVILLE**—Peter, I am very interested in just exploring this matter of alliances a bit more. You say in your submission that you believe that the articulation between institutions should be negotiated at a bilateral level. I suppose in Canberra that makes a lot of sense but in the wider world—take Queensland and New South Wales—you might have 15 or 20 major TAFEs in the country with different universities. My experience is that the articulation is not that good. Different universities impose different standards. Kids come to me in my office and say, ‘Well, I have done this bloody course for 18 months and now I cannot go anywhere with it. I thought I was going to get 12 months credit for university.’ How do we overcome that problem? You do allude to that in your submission, but I find that we must be about 10 years out—would that be right, Rod?—from when the previous government mandated that that should happen. There should be portability of units between courses and yet it is still not happening as well as it should. Obviously you are doing it well here. The other question associated with that is: why do you have to interface with Auckland?

**Mr Veenker**—Perhaps if I come back to that last question—

**Mr NEVILLE**—On my other committee I have chided people for asking three questions and I am afraid I have just done it myself.

**Mr Veenker**—It is fair to say it was difficult some years ago to talk to our university colleagues about pathways and appropriate credits. The very public push to create better pathways is having an effect. Here at CIT we talk to a number of universities and have credit arrangements not only here in the ACT, but throughout New South Wales. We try to be very public about the sorts of arrangements we have and that has encouraged others who have perhaps been a little reticent to offer credits to reconsider. At the institutional level we have worked hard at that and the publishing of the various statistics assists in terms of institutions being able to see how well they are doing in this particular area.

**Mr NEVILLE**—Do the ANU and Canberra University give you the same level of accreditation as Auckland does?

**Mr Veenker**—Yes. It varies from discipline to discipline.

**Mr NEVILLE**—Right.

**Mr Veenker**—Just touching on Auckland, we have a memorandum of understanding with Auckland. That is part of our internationalisation because we want to very much let our students have the opportunity to study in other institutions outside Australia as part of their program and get full credit. That was part of the motivation to have a number of institutions around the world that we could work very closely with, so that we could maximise an international experience for many of our students and staff. That is part of the motivation there. But I think that working closely with a well-respected institution like Auckland also assists local universities to have a very good look at maximising the credit transfer and it is fair to say that I have certainly pursued that policy. It has assisted me in terms of working with local universities.

**Mr NEVILLE**—What proportion of your students who go on to a degree have to get through Auckland, as distinct from an Australian university?

**Mr Veenker**—Very few. The motivation for working with Auckland is in fact—

**Mr NEVILLE**—Just the international thing, is it?

**Mr Veenker**—Yes; it is to provide an international arrangement.

**Mr NEVILLE**—Broadening the horizon, rather than just another form of articulation?

**Mr Veenker**—That is right. However, the Auckland arrangements do allow us to deliver the program from Auckland here in the ACT, if we need to.

**Mr NEVILLE**—Right.

**Mr SAWFORD**—When we were in Western Australia, the Western Australian chamber gave as an

example that they were 500 nurses short in Western Australia. In fact, they were advertising overseas. That seems to be appalling. Governments, higher education and TAFEs do not seem to be very good at predicting job vacancies in the future. I am not putting it all on you—I do not think any of us are very good at it. It seems that sometimes people themselves, individuals who are seeking training, have a better idea of what the job market is than institutions or governments do. So what do you think of the Australian business chamber's suggestion that TAFEs ought to be offering a full trade training option to people who are not indentured to an employer. In other words, as a young fellow I decide that I reckon in the future there is a gap in the market in plumbing. I do not get an indenture to an employer, so I cannot do it.

**Mr Veenker**—We would applaud that strongly. We think the people who choose to pursue that particular course would be far more employable in the future as well. To always have to arrange an indentured situation is difficult. Certainly group training companies have assisted in terms of bringing more people in, but to offer broad, applied vocational skill type of training would be something that we would like to respond to.

**Mr NEVILLE**—How would you handle the experiential part of that?

**Mr Veenker**—Many TAFE institutes, including this one, do have close industry links—I suppose that is one of the real strengths of the system—therefore student placement, rather than a full indenture, we can arrange, and we do that. The other thing we do is set up practice firms where we actually work in a simulated situation. But that practice firm is actually overseen by a host employer, so as far as possible we try to simulate the real experience. It does not replace the full indentured type of approach, or the full partnership approach, but it is a long way towards it.

**Mr NEVILLE**—Right. It is very interesting that, prior to going into tertiary institutions, pharmacy was delivered that way. You had to work in a pharmacy for so many years, then you had to go away to a pharmacy college, then you came back for a year and you were a chemist.

**Mr Veenker**—The type of program that you are alluding to in terms of the broad hands-on training without an indenture has been piloted to some extent, but it comes under a different name. It is pre-employment type of training. It is probably not at the depth of what you are alluding to or the chamber is alluding to; but it does work and the response from employers is very positive, because it means that the students, when they do find employment, are able to run rather than having to have that other workplace experience that sometimes does take a lot of time.

**CHAIR**—They are not being carried financially.

**Mr Veenker**—That is right.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I have one last question before I have to go, and it is a crystal ball one. Are there any particular trade or training options that, in your experience, would fit into that category of TAFEs? Do you have any anecdotal information? You have had a long experience in TAFE. Are there any particular trade training options that could be completely done in TAFE?

**Mr Veenker**—You mean particular trades?

**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes.

**Mr Veenker**—The building construction area is one that is certainly well worth pursuing. There is basic electronics, and developing that further. And some of the automotive type of training is also—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Road building?

**Mr Veenker**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In a previous inquiry we were told that the average age of people who were operating that very complicated and very expensive machinery in road building was 54.

**Mr Veenker**—That is right. We actually run programs like that, and the experience is almost identical to what they will be doing in the workplace. They are grading and building roads, so the course at the institute and the actual work experience is very close.

**Mr DARGAVEL**—Here in the ACT we have four higher education institutions: the Catholic University, ADFA, under the University of New South Wales, the University of Canberra and the ANU. To varying degrees those institutions are coming under increasing financial pressures. The ANU and the University of Canberra have both had funding cuts. They both have overdue wage demands and arguably unsustainably low wages. I think wages account for something like 80 per cent of the budgets of those institutions, certainly of ANU and the University of Canberra. So they are under increasing cost pressures. They have looked at handling those pressures partly by downsizing and through redundancy, but increasingly they are going to be looking at improving their revenue base, aren't they?

**Mr Veenker**—Yes.

**Mr DARGAVEL**—I know that at least one of those larger institutions is seeking to negotiate flexibilities to deliver the sorts of courses that CIT currently delivers and that I would assume would constitute a reasonable part of your revenue base that is not direct from government. I am talking about the sorts of short courses that people roll up and pay a couple of hundred bucks for and do a three-day or four-day course or what have you. My question is, one, how significant a proportion of CIT's revenue is that sort of course and, two, are you going to get creamed?

**Mr Veenker**—On the move into shorter courses by universities, certainly there is a market and they may very well be moving into areas that we have traditionally serviced. I do not worry about that competition. It is, in some areas, a thin market here, but we would be seeking to take on that competition. The straying, in a formal sense, of universities into areas that were traditionally offered by TAFE institutes is something that is worth thinking about and we certainly do talk to our higher education colleagues about that. For example, in the area of hospitality and tourism, the industry is closely involved and, for a long time, advanced diplomas, along with a whole suite of certificates, have met that industry's need. Because of the popularity of tourism, many universities have drifted in their undergraduate programs to offer bachelors.

The challenge for us is to make sure that we do market the value to the community of the sorts of

programs we are undertaking. However, it is fair to say that with many school leavers there is a perception that a degree is better than an advanced diploma. We are working hard with the people who advise young people in particular about career choices about the value of vocational education and training. I am not sure I answered your first question all that well.

**Mr DARGAVEL**—The first part of the question related to how significant the revenue from those shorter courses is to CIT. You send around to every household, as TAFEs do around the place, a lift-out that lists all sorts of wonderful courses that people undertake—various languages, for example, or computer packages or what have you. How significant is that income for CIT?

**Mr Veenker**—If I can answer it this way, it is not a major part of our revenue and we are looking to diversify our revenue sources other than the straight purchaser arrangements. At CIT, 26 per cent of our total revenue comes from other than the purchase agreement with the ACT government. We would be seeking to increase that and I imagine that our higher education colleagues are also seeking to increase that. The courses that you alluded to are not highly profitable and are very much in response to a community need. Our motivation is to really meet the community need. They are not a significant amount of our total revenue base. They are not that profitable; they usually cover costs, and that is about it.

The other significant areas of revenue revolve around international students. I think it certainly helps universities in this region to work with other universities and the TAFE institute in terms of maximising our marketing effort there. I note that in the state that I come from, Victoria, the higher education sector often works with TAFE institutes in terms of marketing arrangements for overseas students, as well as pursuing the individual marketing plans.

**Mr DARGAVEL**—Are there many overseas student full-fee paying arrangements coming into CIT?

**Mr Veenker**—We have approximately 500 international students and we would be seeking to increase that to maybe 1,000. The motivation for that is not only money.

**CHAIR**—That is 500 of a total student population of—

**Mr Veenker**—We are the largest tertiary provider in the ACT and we have approximately 20,000 students.

**Mr NEVILLE**—Are they all full-time students?

**Mr Veenker**—No; that is the total number.

**CHAIR**—This issue that Steve raises is quite important to our inquiry. One of those who spoke to us in Perth—I forget his name—had the concern that we are increasingly moving towards a society of training and that there is less emphasis on education, arts, language, history—that kind of thing—and that by virtue, to some extent, of the funding system and also the understandable needs of students for training that leads to jobs, the universities are increasingly doing what Steve is worried about: encroaching on your turf.

**Mr Veenker**—That is correct.

**CHAIR**—And some universities are offering basically what should be TAFE courses as a revenue raising activity. Then, of course, there is pressure being placed by some people on the TAFE sector to offer degrees of one sort or another, because they are perceived to be more valuable in the marketplace. To what extent should governments be drawing a line and saying to universities, on the one hand, and, indeed, to TAFEs on the other, ‘You cannot be doing this’?

**Mr Veenker**—There are grey areas. Universities perhaps are straying into areas that were traditionally serviced by TAFE institutes. In the senior secondary area there is also development of vocational types of programs that were traditionally serviced by TAFE institutes. So the comment that we are being squeezed from both ends is a fair one. But I also think that puts a positive pressure back on us to demonstrate that what we are doing is really meeting the need. Certainly in terms of working with a secondary cohort, I welcome that. I think it is terrific that the curriculum is broadened, that there is a vocational option, and I hope that many of those students articulate into an institute of technology.

In terms of working with the universities, I would be against outside intervention about defining what could be their market. We are able to work that through ourselves in terms of being responsive and being good about what we do. That, in the end, should be the correct way to sort out some of these demarcation areas over program delivery.

**CHAIR**—In relation to the schools—which was something else I wanted to ask you about—they have a problem in that quite a few of them quite rightly see the need for them to be offering VET, and particularly entry level kind of stuff.

**Mr Veenker**—Yes, that is right.

**CHAIR**—Should there be a uniform model for that to apply? We frequently find that schools are not funded to purchase services from TAFE, and they will be offering their own kind of VET of sorts. They will be funding it out of their own budgets and other sources—from wherever they can scratch the money together. In some cases we have seen duplication in that you will have an institute here or a TAFE here with a good kitchen set-up or lathes or whatever, and then a few kilometres away is a school that is setting up similar things. Should there be a single model for articulation between the schools and the TAFEs, and what should it be; what is the ideal?

**Mr Veenker**—I am not sure that a single model addresses it, because I genuinely believe that, to have a responsive school, TAFE, institute or university, they do require a degree of autonomy. However, I think the owners and the people who govern the institutions, and the management, need to make decisions that really maximise the return to society.

**Mr NEVILLE**—Thereby coming back to a bilateral model again.

**Mr Veenker**—That is right. Therefore I think that before capital investment decisions are made—and the owners really are the government in public institutions like the one I represent, in the schools and in the

universities, although the universities do have a greater degree of autonomy there—you really do need to assess what is available in the community.

We have addressed it here in the ACT and we have also done it in regional Victoria. In fact, when I was in East Gippsland we had a senior education board which had representatives from the senior secondary colleges, the TAFEs and the universities, and we talked about making facilities available to one another. Sometimes you then hear that there is no recurrent money to actually buy that service. That can be solved by appropriate discussions between the various departments that administer and provide the funding and the management to those institutions.

Certainly here in the ACT we have very good facilities at six campuses of CIT, and we would be encouraging the secondary colleges to access them. However, I think there are examples around Australia where you do find that particular colleges or schools want to invest in their own facility—for various reasons. I think that is a matter that needs to be very much up front and carefully talked through, because I prefer a cooperative alliance type arrangement.

**CHAIR**—Do you send people to the schools to talk to students about the VET that you are offering?

**Mr Veenker**—Yes, we work with career advisers. We have been invited to a number of secondary colleges to meet counterparts and to talk about the sorts of programs we offer, and we have produced documentation. We work it through with the career adviser so that the student understands not only the range of programs that we offer but the pathways that result from that so that they do not cut off options. In fact, we are wanting to do more and more of that.

**CHAIR**—Peter, thank you; it has been really useful. We have been all over the place and talked to a lot of people, but it has been really good to talk to you because you have experience from all over the place. If you think of anything else or if you hear of other submissions or things that are put to us that prompt some other thoughts, please send them along to us and they will be taken on board, I can assure you.

**Mr Veenker**—Thank you very much.

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

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

**Committee adjourned at 9.49 a.m.**