



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Role of institutes of TAFE

CANBERRA

Monday, 23 March 1998

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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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 institutes of technical and further education; and

the extent to which those roles should overlap with universities.

WITNESSES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCA-
TION AND TRAINING**

Role of institutes of TAFE

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Present

Dr Nelson (Chair)

Mr Mossfield

Mr Sawford

Mr Neville

The committee met at 9.11 a.m.

Dr Nelson took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of 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 conducted public hearings in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra 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, nor an indication of where the committee's final recommendations might lie.

Today in Canberra the committee will hear evidence from organisations with an interest in vocational and further education. I now call Mr Aidan O'Leary representing the National TAFE Science Network. Please provide us with a five to 10-minute precis of your submission which we will then discuss.

O'LEARY, Mr Aidan, Convenor, National TAFE Science Network, c/- Canberra Institute of Technology, PO Box 826, Canberra City, Australian Capital Territory 2601

CHAIR—My name is Brendan Nelson and I represent a Sydney metropolitan seat called Bradfield for the Liberal Party. The Deputy Chairman of the committee, Mr Rod Sawford, is the Labor member for Port Adelaide. Rod has a long standing interest in these issues. On my right, Mr Paul Neville, is the National Party member for Hinkler in Queensland.

Mr O'Leary—I have given you a written submission from the Network. I have just made a few points that I would like to bring up today. Firstly, I will give you some background. The TAFE Science Network is a group of senior TAFE educators from all states and the ACT. We do not at this stage have a representative from the Northern Territory.

Science based education in TAFE is very broad. It is not limited to the sorts of things people would normally see, say in universities. It ranges from things like industrial chemistry—which is perhaps the more traditional side—to areas like geoscience, the health sciences including things like massage therapy, life sciences including animal technology, medical laboratory science and other areas such as sport and recreation. So it is quite diverse and it encompasses a number of things that essentially have a science based focus.

The National TAFE Science Network is of the view that a full review of tertiary education with comprehensive involvement from both higher education and the vocational education and training sectors is necessary and overdue. We welcome this particular inquiry and we welcome the West review as well, but we would really like to see the two come together a little more.

The network is of the view that it is not appropriate to regulate the role of TAFE institutes without exercising similar regulation in the higher education and secondary education sectors. In other words, having established an education market, at least in vocational education and training, it is not appropriate to limit the roles of one set of providers without similarly limiting other providers.

The role of TAFE institutes is primarily in the provision of vocational education and training at levels required by students, by industry and by the community. A restriction of TAFE to subdegree level qualifications is not necessary, desirable or functional. Much of the overlap between universities and TAFE is due to the movement of many, if not all, universities into vocational education and training at degree level after the establishment of the present higher education system in the late 1980s.

Just as an aside, if you actually have a look at the offerings of universities, especially the ones that are increasingly becoming public, they no longer represent the

sorts of views that might have been put forward by idealists such as Cardinal Newman, that represent programs such as accountancy, business studies, law, medicine and a whole range of vocational programs. The overlap in our view is largely caused by that shift that the universities have precipitated.

Comprehensive credit transfer arrangements fully recognising students' achievements in TAFE, would go a long way towards reducing the overlap between TAFE and universities. Unfortunately, many universities, despite their vice-chancellors' rhetoric, which is in favour of credit transfer, have not been prepared to fully recognise TAFE qualifications. For instance, the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee established a group to work on credit transfer arrangements, but many universities, in particular the sandstones, have not endorsed the findings of their own committees. They have not participated in those particular findings. Not surprisingly, though, some universities are much more generous in recognising their own associate degrees. That is all I would like to say for the moment. Would you like to ask me any questions?

CHAIR—Yes. Amongst the issues you have raised you identified the question of credit transfers. How should we go about dealing with that? Should there be some national uniform approach to it?

Mr O'Leary—It is a difficult question because, as I said, the vice-chancellors attempted to establish a national approach on their behalf. They did involve people from TAFE in working on their parties, but unfortunately the individual universities have not been prepared to come to the party in many cases, or have not been prepared to come as far as some of those committees recommended.

Doing it by legislation or by regulation is only going to encourage people to try to find ways around it. One of the problems that universities seem to have is the fact that they offer three-year programs in many cases and we offer two-year programs in TAFE. If they fully recognise a TAFE qualification to the extent of two years, they are only seen to be adding on a relatively small top-up to a TAFE qualification.

The situation in the United States, where they have four-year universities, four-year colleges and also two-year colleges that can feed in at the midpoint of a degree level, seems to encourage greater credit transfer arrangements. It maybe that what is necessary is to look at the nature of degrees and look at the nature of the TAFE qualifications and see whether there is a better arrangement that could be devised.

CHAIR—Implicit in your submission was the view that TAFEs ought to be able to offer degrees. Am I right in making that assumption?

Mr O'Leary—I do not think we would encourage wholesale movement of TAFE into degree programs, but we have definitely explored this idea, and we believe that, in areas where universities are not offering programs and where there is a distinct need

within vocational education and training, there is no need to restrict TAFE from offering degree programs. But it should not become the end in itself. If it is appropriate, it should be possible, but not where there are other providers who can do the job.

Mr NEVILLE—In that instance, where there was not a university interested in the area, should the core course be devised by TAFE itself or should it be delivered from a tertiary institution by TAFE?

Mr O'Leary—TAFE institutes are tertiary institutions. You mean by a higher education institution?

Mr NEVILLE—Higher education, yes.

Mr O'Leary—There are a number of different models. In my own institution, the Canberra Institute of Technology, we have one case where we are offering a degree on our own. We have another situation where we are aiming to work with the University of Canberra and we have another situation where we are aiming to work with an international institution.

It becomes a matter of having a look at what is appropriate in the particular circumstances. But we do not see that you can draw a line at any particular level and say that is where one type of institution begins and where another type of institution ends.

Mr SAWFORD—You said in your submission that you think there is an increasing amount of VET in schools. Would you like to give us some examples of that?

Mr O'Leary—I am not necessarily saying that in a negative sense.

Mr SAWFORD—No. I am not putting the question in the negative sense.

Mr O'Leary—In the ACT there are Certificate 1 and Certificate 2 level programs being offered in the senior secondary colleges in areas like tourism, hospitality, child care and some of the metal trades areas. The actual system in New South Wales has the ability for students in the secondary area to do vocational education and training type programs, sometimes in conjunction with TAFE institutes but sometimes on their own. I believe that the same situation applies in Victoria.

This has actually got some pluses in that it opens up a pathway for students that perhaps did not exist in the past. In the past my view has been that secondary education has been primarily focused on getting people into university. If we can get secondary education to focus more on vocational education and training so that those sorts of pathways open up, that would be a good thing. One issue is going to be resources; how you actually go about resourcing secondary colleges in an appropriate manner to deliver programs to the right level.

Mr SAWFORD—Is your view coloured by the fact that in Canberra there are senior secondary colleges, whereas in other states there are not?

Mr O'Leary—There are, actually. In Victoria and Queensland they have some institutions like that. There are a number of secondary institutions which only deal with the Top End in Queensland and in Tasmania they have them as well.

Mr SAWFORD—They are not in Western Australia and South Australia?

Mr O'Leary—No.

Mr SAWFORD—From an interesting point of view in terms of VET in schools, the Premier of South Australia, John Olsen, who is not of my political persuasion, actually made a statement about favouring technical high schools and the re-establishment of them, maybe not in the terms of the fifties and the sixties, but in the context of where we are now.

The Australian Education Union came out and spoke very strongly against them. What is your view, in view of what you were saying before that secondary schools traditionally have catered for the 30 per cent? Some people would argue that they have not done that very well either.

Mr O'Leary—I think they have probably done that quite well. They have done a good job for the 30 per cent and for some of the others. There is the model that applies in the United States and I do not necessarily see them as being the ideal for everything.

Mr SAWFORD—There is the four and two?

Mr O'Leary—Yes, they actually have a two plus two, plus two option where you can begin an associate degree, which is accredited from a local community college, while you are in the final two years of high school. At the end of those two years, they have a program there that they call tech prep. At the end of that tech prep program, as well as having qualified to continue on into an associate degree in a community college, if you have chosen wisely students still have the option of proceeding to one of the four-year colleges. So they do not cut off any options by making a decision to do tech prep.

The concern that some people have about technical high schools is that students might have to make a decision at around 16 years of age that might limit their options. So it is question of balancing how you leave options open against how you actually make sure that you do get some focus into your life.

Mr SAWFORD—Does that argument stand up when you have 30 per cent of the youth of our country unemployed?

Mr O'Leary—The figure of 30 per cent unemployment for youth, I am never quite sure how to use it. Because if it is 30 per cent of those people who are not in university, are not in TAFE and not doing some other things, then that is a relatively small number in absolute terms. My understanding is that the actual number of people who are unemployed, if you take the total cohort, is about equivalent to the rest of the community.

In fact, if you were really going to focus on unemployment issues, you would probably look at the 24 to 35-year-olds who have family commitments where there is probably just as a large number of people unemployed. That is an aside, I guess. I do not think that the level of unemployment, if it is eight per cent or if it is 30 per cent, would be an argument against providing people with skills for employment.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think technical high schools can be set up in the current context, work successfully and still cover academic areas?

Mr O'Leary—I do not know. I do not have any experience with them. All I can say is that I understand that the situation in the United States where senior high schools offer this tech prep type of program as well as a tertiary preparation option, where students do not cut off their options by choosing one or the other, seems to be a reasonable approach. I really have no experience with technical high schools.

CHAIR—It would certainly be going against the stream, in that we have got closer articulation, if not in some cases co-location, in the post-secondary sector for VET and higher education. And to completely separate them perhaps as they were in the past with technical high schools, might be actually going against the stream.

In terms of school VET that Mr Sawford raised, there is not any national uniformity here at all as we discussed earlier. Some states have got it; others have not. Some schools do a terrific job. We have spoken to some of the principals who provide excellent programs, but they have to fund it out of their own resources, or, if they put money into school VET, then they have to take it out of something else.

Others have pointed out that you will have schools spending limited resources on kitchen facilities, welding equipment and so on and then there is a TAFE only two or three kilometres away that has got the same, if not arguably better, equipment. Should there be a uniform approach to this? Should it be nationally mandated and who is the best to provide VET? Should it be provided by TAFEs contracted by schools? Do you have any thoughts on how it ought to be done?

Mr O'Leary—What I do know is that the way are things are set up at the moment, schools are encouraged to focus on academic programs. So finding some way to provide a vocational option within secondary education is going to be a useful thing and it cannot afford to be mickey mouse.

You cannot afford to have a situation where people are running, let us say, Certificate 2 programs in tourism and hospitality which are supposedly addressing industry requirements—and running them out of something that is equivalent to a home kitchen. How to ensure that you do not get duplication, how to ensure cooperation between the sectors—we do not seem to have cracked it at the moment.

I think it is true to say that there are programs right across Australia and there are different models, but I think every state and territory has arrangements whereby schools are starting to become involved in vocational education and training programs.

Speaking personally now, because we have not discussed this in the TAFE science network, in the ACT we have found that the financial pressures on schools—where they have to run programs out of their own funds—encourage them to seek funds from other sources. So, for instance, they might seek funds from labour market programs or they might seek funds from special sources that enable them to set up their own internal capability. We have tried to make TAFE resources available but, nonetheless, there seems to be more than a semi-permeable membrane between TAFE and secondary schools, in the same way that there is in the other direction. Once again, I do not think that you are going to solve it by directing people that they must do it in a particular way. But on the other hand, it is clear that the present system is moving only really slowly towards some kind of an appropriate arrangement.

Mr SAWFORD—One of the problems with VET in secondary schools, when you talk to anyone in a secondary school who has got a vocational area—whether it be in music, sport, the art and craft area, whatever—they will all tell you that when it comes to divvying up the budget they get outvoted all the time by the disciplines. In terms of home-grown initiatives that can take place within the school in VET, unless the principal is a very strong person and will push that particular area, those initiatives in VET just do not happen—simply because the make-up of the secondary school staff, in terms of divvying up the available resources that are there, is going to favour the disciplines that are set up. The VET people will always complain that they can never win an argument in a secondary school.

Mr O'Leary—You are probably right and there will not be very many people who come from a vocational education and training background, because the schools primarily recruit for what they see as their main game. I think a lot of it is about raising the status of vocational education and training, wherever it is offered. That is why we would like to see pathways for students up to and beyond degree level, if necessary, so that people do not see that vocational education and training is a lower status activity. At the moment, preparation for going to university and doing a degree is the high status activity in schools—in my opinion and, I think, in the opinion of my colleagues in the network. Consequently, the schools are always going to put their resources into it.

So a lot of it comes down to people in government and industry enhancing the

status of vocational education and training; not of TAFE institutes, but of that level of training for that particular purpose. It is not happening at the moment. It is improving, but it is not improving quickly enough.

CHAIR—That is right. The status symbols are how many kids you get through to their HSC or VCE, and how highly scored they were. There is never any publicity given to how many kids leaving that school actually got jobs or whether they had any effect—

Mr O’Leary—There was an example in New South Wales, in the western suburbs, a couple of years ago where a particular school got really pilloried because of so-called TER results. The focus on TER in schools is—

CHAIR—Like the Holy Grail.

Mr O’Leary—It is just amazing. How do you change it, when you have got a whole generation of teachers who see it as being the purpose of the school?

CHAIR—It is part of a philosophical dimension to our inquiry, really; but part of it is a re-prioritisation of society’s values, in terms of what a successful educational outcome is. I think many young people have realised that a university degree, or even two degrees, is no guarantee of either happiness or a job. A bit more emphasis on VET, for many students, would be a better outcome for them and for society.

Mr NEVILLE—I would like to return to the articulation thing. You would have found a good friend in Professor Chipman, from Central Queensland University, who says he does not see any reason at all why a TAFE institute should not deliver a degree, providing the rigour, the discipline and the depth of course-work and delivery can be demonstrated to be present. Having said that, a lot of kids complain to me that they have done a course at TAFE for two years, sometimes more, and they want to use this articulation to go into university work. They find that the two years work translates into the equivalent of about six months worth of university units, and they feel cheated. This debate has been around for 10 or 12 years now. There does not appear to be any imperative in the education community to do something about it. As you say, the sandstone universities tend to hide behind what they call their own standards.

We talk about associate diplomas, advanced certificates and associate degrees, and the universities have their degrees and associate diplomas. It seems the word ‘diploma’ itself is now only used with graduate diplomas in advanced tertiary work. I wonder whether the ordinary diploma, that was around 10 or 15 years ago, might not be a better mechanism. For example, there could be a standard attached to a diploma that TAFE would be required to meet, and that universities would be required to accept. What do you think of that concept of some linking mechanism?

Mr O’Leary—In part, your question actually demonstrates one of the problems

that we have had over the last few years in terminology. We have changed the nomenclature of the TAFE level qualifications so often that people do not understand what the present situation is. The term 'associate diploma', for instance, is no longer used. The latest set of qualifications which come out under the Australian qualifications framework have Certificates 1, 2, 3 and 4. A lot of people find it difficult to understand what the difference between them is. Then, we have a diploma which is, roughly speaking, what some of us used to know as an associate diploma—it just got an upgrade in its name. Now, there is an advanced diploma, and it is roughly what used to be a diploma some years ago.

There are standards that have been set down for determining what level a qualification is at, and those standards apply equally to universities, if they want to offer those qualifications, as they do to TAFE. In the past, you could link those qualifications to years of study. An associate diploma was two years full-time study, or part-time equivalent. Under the new set of arrangements there is no linkage to duration. You now find advanced diplomas that might take 18 months. Universities, therefore, start to wonder what these things really mean. If you have got a qualification that is called an advanced diploma, but it only takes 18 months, how much credit are they going to give it?

I think we have changed the system so much in the last few years that now people do not really know exactly what the qualifications are. The situation with the student who only gets six months credit is exactly the problem that we are always confronting. Our aim for the last few years, in TAFE generally, has been to get at least one year's credit for a student who does a two-year diploma—or what would probably now be a diploma.

CHAIR—Can this issue only be addressed on a case-by-case basis, at an institutional level, or is it possible to mandate something?

Mr O'Leary—If you mandate it, you run the risk that you have a TAFE qualification that has been designed for certain vocational outcomes, and a university degree that has been designed for its purpose. If you say there must be a certain amount of credit transfer—let us say it was 100 per cent—then students trying to transfer from this to this actually fail. So then you would get into the issue of designing the interface, and ensuring that this set of qualifications, which is primarily about vocational outcomes, takes into account the credit transfer requirement.

What we have been doing—that is, in CIT and in a number of other TAFE institutes—is to look at other options and other models. For instance, in Western Australia, there is now a model where one of the central TAFE institutes—and they have changed their name again just recently; it was the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centre—has negotiated an arrangement with Edith Cowan University where they have been able to get full recognition of the TAFE qualification, with the students going on to do a degree and getting 100 per cent credit transfer. There is a similar arrangement between CIT and the University of Canberra in the child-care area. I would like to see us develop those

other models and then encourage institutions to use them.

In the same way, we have been able to negotiate an arrangement with Auckland Institute of Technology, where students who finish diplomas at CIT can, for one year's further study, upgrade to a degree from Auckland. The reason for this is because their degree and our diploma actually fit well together. But I would not like to constrain, let us say, Sydney University to make their degrees fit in the same way—because they see a different purpose in their degrees. That is the dilemma. In some cases, if you cannot negotiate an appropriate arrangement, then it may be that we end up offering a degree in TAFE, in order to make sure that people do get the appropriate credit transfer. At the same time, there are national standards for degrees, and national accreditation arrangements, that would ensure that they are at a degree level.

CHAIR—Are there some universities that are particularly uncooperative when it comes to credit transfers? You do not have to name any, but is it well known within the sector that some universities are particularly obstinate in this regard whereas others are more progressive?

Mr O'Leary—I mentioned the sandstones. When the Vice-Chancellors Committee established its committee on credit transfer, they produced a whole range of pamphlets that set out credit transfer arrangements between universities and universities, and between TAFE and universities. The situation may have changed just recently, but at the time that I looked at this, in about 1996, in the areas that I was interested in there was not one of the sandstones that were participating in the agreements. Although the universities had negotiated these arrangements, the back page of the pamphlet listed the participating universities, and there was not one sandstone. Just recently, I think Melbourne University did participate in geoscience and there may have been a couple of others; but, essentially, it is in that particular area.

CHAIR—You are in the science area and obviously representing TAFE sciences. To what extent are TAFEs undertaking research? Is it something they should be doing or doing more of? Or is that one of the critical areas of differentiation between the university sector and TAFE?

Mr SAWFORD—Just before you answer, maybe you could distinguish between scholarly research and research that often a lot of universities do, which actually substantiates claims for further funding—self-survival research.

Mr O'Leary—The issue of research is a bit of a difficult one. Some TAFE institutes are doing some research at the moment, but it might be into things like educational methodology—

CHAIR—Yes, that is right.

Mr O'Leary—Appropriate methods of delivering vocational education and training or whatever.

CHAIR—But you are teaching industrial chemistry and stuff like that.

Mr O'Leary—There is not a great deal of research going on, in TAFE institutes, in discipline-related areas. However, one of the problems that I think we are going to run into, is that some TAFE institutes will aspire to offer degrees and, as it stands at the moment, the accreditation arrangements for offering degrees are likely to encourage TAFEs to therefore get into research, because that is seen as being part of what you do if you offer degrees.

Once again, in the United States, there are plenty of universities primarily focused on undergraduate education and training, which are not focusing on research and do not see it as being a core business of offering degrees. As it stands at the moment, in Australia and in New Zealand, if you want to get into degree level education, you will need to demonstrate that you have some research capability—although it could be in areas like education and training. It is mainly about research methodology, not about the particular kind of research that you are doing.

CHAIR—Is there not a risk, in terms of the narrow vocational education and training role of the TAFE sector, that a research component would necessarily distract it from its core activities? Mr Sawford made the remark about research simply to get funding, and you could end up risking a situation where you have got people who are working and supposedly teaching in the TAFE sector, who are actually working away at research and research grant applications.

Mr O'Leary—If the work that those people are doing has some positive benefits for the rest of what they are doing or for the rest of the institution, then that would not necessarily be a problem. One protection at the moment is that, with the purchaser-provider type arrangements that largely apply in TAFE in Australia, it is very unlikely that our purchasers are going to want to purchase a research capability. Our primary funding source is going to want to buy education and training from us, not research.

If we do a little bit of research, it is going to have to be funded from other sources. Generally speaking, university sources of funds are not available. I suspect that it is always going to be somewhat limited and constrained. My preference would be to not require a research capability for an institution that wants to offer a degree in a couple of areas. For instance, if you want to offer a degree in fashion, why would you need to have a research capability? What you need to be able to demonstrate is that people have an appropriate, scholarly background—because the degree is still going to have certain aspects to it that are not purely vocational.

CHAIR—It is time for us to finish. I very much appreciate you and your col-

leagues preparing your submission, presenting your views and taking the time to come and speak to us about them. Thank you very much.

Mr O'Leary—Thanks very much and we look forward to getting the results of the inquiry.

CHAIR—So will we.

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

That a subcommittee chaired by Dr Nelson and comprising Dr Nelson, Mr Neville and Mr Sawford be established to continue the public hearing this day.

[9.49 a.m.]

ROWLEY, Professor Susan Elizabeth, Chair, Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools, c/- ANU Canberra School of Art, GPO Box 804, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2601

CHAIR—Thank you very much for coming along to speak to us about your submission. Could you give us a precis of the submission which we will then discuss.

Prof. Rowley—The submission from the council, which is referred to as ACUADS, sets out the relationship between university and TAFE sector provision of education in art and design. Our submission basically says that we are interested in seeing a proper articulation, and have taken steps to contribute to that process. But we still retain the view that there are distinctive characteristics about TAFE and university education, and that these are of value in training professional artists and designers, and of value in producing Australian national culture.

CHAIR—In your area, within the prospective student population are TAFE courses more highly sought than university courses, or is it the other way around? I know that, as we saw in Perth in the performing arts area, for example—which I realise is different from yours—everyone wanted to do the TAFE course and few wanted to do the university degree.

Prof. Rowley—You are talking about WAAPA?

CHAIR—Yes.

Prof. Rowley—WAAPA is a combined TAFE-university course. It certainly has TAFE funding but Edith Cowan is the university, and WAAPA is standing within the community as probably a combined TAFE-university course with aspirations to function as a university course. Certainly, the School of Visual Arts is within WAAPA but it plays an active role in the university and would regard itself as a university course. I do not have at my fingertips enrolment figures between TAFE and the university. I could possibly get them if you want me to do that.

Mr SAWFORD—One of the interesting things in your submission that is quite different from the evidence that we have received anywhere else is about TAFE students going on to university, whereas most of the people who have put forward arguments to us would suggest that it is 7-1 the other way. In other words, it is a matter of university graduates going back to TAFE at a level of seven to one the other way. Is this something peculiar to art and design? Is it quite consistent right across Australia?

Prof. Rowley—That is true in the statistics as well as the submissions, is it?

Mr SAWFORD—Your submission is saying that in art and design you are getting more going from TAFE to university than the other way around.

Prof. Rowley—I am surprised if that is not true of the other disciplines.

Mr SAWFORD—It is not.

Prof. Rowley—However, you need to bear in mind that the Australian art and design schools were not part of the university system until the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the universities of Tasmania and Wollongong being the earliest in the early 1980s, so I guess the art and design school sector's finding its feet within the universities is part of that story. Yes, I think it would be the case that more frequently TAFE diplomates come to universities than university graduates go to TAFE. But it would be our view that it would be desirable if there could be some recognition that university graduates may well go to TAFE, typically for specific skills or the introduction of a new technique or something like that.

Mr SAWFORD—Why is it art and design that is quite separate?

Prof. Rowley—I am surprised that it is the other way in the other disciplines.

Mr SAWFORD—It is.

Prof. Rowley—In our case, going to TAFE is partly another way of entering into art and design at a professional level but it is also another way of entering into university training for art and design. The choice to be an artist is an unusual choice in the Australian context. A student coming out of HSC may aspire to go to university and, to get into a university art and design course, would probably need a TER in the mid-70s to come to the University of New South Wales and probably one in the mid-60s to go to many universities, so the TAFE offers another opportunity.

I think a number of mature age students would also go back to TAFE and if they were enjoying it, particularly the conceptual development side, they may well seek to go on to university. As my submission indicates to you, probably the key to the way we would regard the difference would be in terms of skills acquisition, on one side, and a kind of conceptual grounding on the other. Perhaps people begin with an idea that artistic practice and even design practice are skills and a technical thing do learn, but it actually requires very sophisticated, cultural understanding and conceptual resolution.

CHAIR—University graduates in art and design: that is an area I do not know anything about.

Prof. Rowley—Surprise me!

CHAIR—That is probably obvious. Students do an art and design degree and then go and do a TAFE course—is that right?

Prof. Rowley—They would not usually do that, but they might if they wanted—and I would see it as a possible role for TAFE—to pick up a specific skill. They might, for instance, have trained as a ceramicist and there might be a new glaze technology available to them through a TAFE course, or they may look towards the TAFE for a new computer program opportunity.

CHAIR—So does a university degree provide everything that a TAFE course would provide, just a lot more in terms of values, history, personal development and, as you say, the conceptual aspects of art and design? If you do a degree, are you covering everything that would be done in a TAFE course?

Prof. Rowley—You could probably get different answers from different representatives of the sector to that. It would be our view that you could go into a university and complete the appropriate skills base and the conceptual education to emerge—in the arts area—as an emerging practitioner, and it would normally take you many years to secure that as something that you had some standing in. In the design sector, our students certainly walk out into employment.

CHAIR—What sort of employment rates do they have?

Prof. Rowley—It is a little bit hard to gauge that across the whole sector because the way in which the figures are compiled is very deceptive, and they aggregate. In the visual arts: probably not high—probably amongst the highest of the professional educations that one undertakes—and I would suspect in design they are near the high end.

CHAIR—In your submission you advocate a national credit transfer system. I presume that is just in the art and design area, not right across the whole education sector. How would you see this working?

Prof. Rowley—We have been a participant in the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee credit transfer project, which I presume you are all very familiar with. We were certainly not the first of the disciplines that the committee took on board for investigation, but we were taken on because we were quite a well organised sector—we have been quite well organised because of the issues related to research in the universities—and, I guess, because there was a need for a coherent sector that had to move as a single unit into the universities.

We are proposing to our members that we participate in the two-year pilot scheme, run by the AVCC committee, aimed at establishing some benchmarking levels along similar lines to other disciplines. We would then be looking at credit for a diploma to a degree in the same specialisation as at 33 per cent for a three-year degree or 25 per cent

for a four-year degree. This would not necessarily be a block credit for first year; in fact it probably usually isn't already. It could be spread, as different universities find appropriate, for the degree. The aim of the two-year pilot scheme is to see whether some kind of national benchmarking minimums can be successfully implemented. It is the executive's belief that that would probably work in our sector.

CHAIR—Professor Chipman, of Central Queensland University, advocated to us in Brisbane—and others have done this as well—that, wherever possible, there ought to be co-location—single student facilities and single library—and, as much as possible, an administrative but not necessarily an educational amalgamation of the institutions. Would art and design lend itself to that? I presume, by the sound of it, you are teaching people a lot of the same things—TAFE as a subset of a university education.

Prof. Rowley—We would not probably advocate the same system across the 35 schools within universities that we represent. We have a range of current configurations from RMIT—where you have co-location and the same faculty with the same dean, so a very close integration—to places that have good collegial relationships that have been fairly well determined, credit transfer and sharing of facilities, and right through to places which basically do credit transfer on a one-off individual basis. We would see value in encouraging our members to consider what the kind of appropriate arrangements were for them. It probably depends on where you are—if you are in central Queensland or in Sydney.

Mr SAWFORD—Or Victoria.

Prof. Rowley—Yes. I guess the university might be interested in the Randwick racecourse for this.

CHAIR—The Randwick what, sorry?

Prof. Rowley—I was thinking of my own university and suggesting that perhaps the Randwick racecourse might be an appropriate facility. In fact, in Sydney there are a number of TAFE courses which are very successful and where there are collegial relations between the two.

Mr SAWFORD—One of the emphases that came across in our public hearings is that, when you get the sandstone universities involved in cooperation, the cooperation always seems to assume that they will take control of the administration; that seems to be a given. Whereas, when you talk to the other universities—I will give the example of Edith Cowan University in Western Australia—you find they are more attuned to a collaborative alliance with TAFEs. Is there too much emphasis on the articulation between TAFE and universities? Does this diminish both in terms of their own strengths?

Prof. Rowley—I have to comment on your last question first.

Mr SAWFORD—That is fine.

Prof. Rowley—Edith Cowan inherited a Western Australian academy with substantial TAFE funding and they are likely to have a very strong interest in retaining that position. I am not so sure about the term ‘sandstone universities’. If you were asking, the universities’ term would probably be ‘the GO8’, which would include Monash and UNSW. For instance, ‘sandstone’ tends not to include UNSW. I am not sure where you stand on that, but UNSW would certainly see itself as playing a role.

I think that, if there are going to be students who seek to move and to take advantage of Australian higher education as a system, some possibility of articulation is desirable. I have students who, to gain entry, would prefer to have some knowledge—and this is my own view—that it was a carefully worked out relationship, based on knowledge of the course from which they have come. I guess some students will continue to be given entry on a case by case basis, but it seems to me to be probably a bit tough on a person who turns up and they have done this course at Enmore and we invent—on a case by case basis—what they are entitled to, when—by a stronger set of knowledge about the courses—we could probably make their induction into the university much easier.

I do not think it should be assumed that all people who go to TAFE will aspire to, or appropriately head on to, university—not in our sector or in anywhere else. It is only that, if they do so, there should be some attention to making sure that that is a successful transition and one which they feel comfortable about and have confidence in.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you tell us about any of the VET schools in art and design? What is going on in secondary schools in VET—in art and design? Do you have much connection with the secondary school system in Australia?

Prof. Rowley—I could tell you how it worked for my daughter, who did art and design and technology last year, and extrapolate from that if that would be of any use to you.

Mr SAWFORD—That would be fine.

Prof. Rowley—But you will have to guide me about what you want to ask.

Mr SAWFORD—I am asking about what is happening in art and design in secondary schools.

Prof. Rowley—In the higher school curriculum?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, in the higher school curriculum.

Prof. Rowley—I will have to think about that as I respond to it. The higher school

certificate visual art curriculum is very strongly—I am groping here because I am trying to collect a number of things that I need to say that would be useful to you—

Mr SAWFORD—As for the students who do that, would they be more likely to go to TAFE or more likely to go to university?

Prof. Rowley—The students who do visual arts, and you understand there has been a debate about the three-unit issue—

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Prof. Rowley—are quite likely to be interested in going to university, and they are being prepared to go to university, if they see their role as an artist. But they may go either way; it would possibly depend on what their teacher has in mind.

This is an area where my colleagues who work in art education at the college of fine arts could probably do a better job than I am doing—I am trying to think what Amanda would want me to tell you. Certainly, the universities play quite a strong role in the shape of the visual arts curriculum and its assessment and would see themselves as producing a contribution to their potential intake. But that is not spread evenly across our system, so some universities will basically prefer to take students on portfolio and interview, and trust that experience more highly than they would trust the HSC result. Other universities, such as my own, which play a strong role in the HSC curriculum would prefer to trust the HSC result and contribute to how it is shaped.

My guess would be that students are quite likely also to go to TAFE, and that will depend on what it is that they think they are looking for, and how well they do in the HSC, and how much they also want a university degree. In terms of the design and new technology, I think it is not quite so simple because—to my knowledge, but I would need to check—most universities, including my own, do not see the DNT subject as the visual arts prerequisite.

Mr SAWFORD—Would it be accurate to say, and I am only guessing, that school leavers are more likely to go via the university, in terms of visual art and design, and that the mature student is more likely to go back via the TAFE system? Is there any truth in that?

Prof. Rowley—That would be an impression that I have, but one would need to actually access the statistics to see whether that is true.

Mr SAWFORD—But you would have that impression as well?

Prof. Rowley—Yes, I have the impression, but I certainly know youngsters who have gone to TAFE straight from school. Certainly, we would encourage them to go to

university, if they were able to achieve university entrance.

CHAIR—Should TAFEs be offering degrees?

Prof. Rowley—It is probably not our preference that they do that, because it does not retain the emblem of the distinctive character. I suppose it depends in the end what you think the degree of a bachelor—or, for that matter, a master or anything else—means. Given the emphasis on intake on skills and techniques and the concurrent lack of emphasis on the strong conceptual development, we would not see it as an appropriate direction, and I think that emphasis is built into their competency-based training standards.

I have recently served as an expert panellist for an advanced diploma in jewelery—which is an area that I have particular interest in—in Enmore. That will be a three-year advanced diploma, but it will not do what a degree will do. It will probably give the students a stronger technical skills base, but it will not give them the conceptual skills or experience.

CHAIR—Can you elaborate on what conceptual skills are? It seems that, in your mind, differentiation between university and a TAFE largely revolves around the conceptual skills concept. Could you expand on that for us?

Prof. Rowley—Within the degrees, firstly in terms of structure, there is a considerable emphasis on the development of an understanding of the nature of contemporary practice and where it has come from and where it might be heading to, and a belief that artists and designers will need to be able to see their practice in terms of this context in which they are operating, and also to take some of the current thought, I suppose, into the way in which they actually make visual works. So we would have a stronger practice in providing a historical and theoretical set of subjects for them in which to locate their practice and also expecting them to be able to see the work that they are actually making in those terms as well.

CHAIR—Is there any place for the TAFE sector to go into graded assessment or should they stick with competency based skills assessment?

Prof. Rowley—I am not sure what TAFEs should do. I know that the universities—including my sector—are not willing to take on board competency based assessment precisely because it does not really address the underpinning foundations in a strong enough way.

CHAIR—Would closer articulation between the sectors be more easily achieved if TAFEs moved to a graded assessment program? I hasten to add that a lot of TAFEs would be quite opposed to that. Some people have suggested that their competency based assessment tends to create a culture of perhaps not mediocrity, but within the system there are some students who perhaps would prefer a graded assessment. Is part of the credit

transfers problem the lack of graded assessment?

Prof. Rowley—I do not think so. It is to do with the fact that the fundamental objective of the TAFE diploma, as we perceive it, is a different one, and we would see that as a positive thing. If competency based training is the way in which that is most appropriately assessed then that is not a problem for us. The real question is something to do with developing a systematic way of assessing what they have done or what their students have done vis-a-vis our students. Instead of assuming that they have simply missed out on everything that we value, we need to start to be more nuanced about saying that they have actually achieved some things but they have not achieved other things. Similarly, when they take our students they presumably will do the same thing. It is certainly not a totally symmetrical relationship.

You asked me whether a single campus—total integration—was the way to go and I said that one would not legislate but that there are some situations in which that works. One of the situations in which there is value in sharing is if there is fairly expensive plant that can be shared. There is certainly value in some facility sharing.

Were you pursuing with the previous gentleman aspects related to research? Did you want a comment from our sector on research?

Mr SAWFORD—If you would like to, yes.

CHAIR—I was hesitant to ask you about research in arts because I thought I might demonstrate my ignorance in asking the question.

Prof. Rowley—Certainly, one of the complex issues for arts schools and design schools being located in the university is to develop what has been centuries old artistic practice into an idea of research which enables us to compete for ARC funding and university funding and the professional practice and production of knowledge to be recognised both by universities and by the world. Many colleagues within the TAFE sector would be practising artists just as they would be in our area. Probably the TAFE sector would not require their practising artists be able to negotiate a debate about research because there is no funding attached to it in that area. We would not see that as necessarily a positive thing. In our area, being able to think about the way in which art and design practice is contributing to national culture and the production of knowledge is a key issue that will continue to distinguish and probably widen that gap between TAFE and the arts schools as we, if you like, take on the agenda of the university in a more complex way without losing sight of our role as art and design schools.

CHAIR—Would it be possible to develop a model where those who are interested in research in the TAFE sector could do so collaboratively with a university? Effectively you would have research going on in a TAFE that is supervised by a university.

Prof. Rowley—That would be something like TAFE staff enrolling in postgraduate degrees with universities. The third player for us is the art and design industries and the art and design world. Our artists and designers, but also the artists and designers from TAFE, to varying extents participate in that world anyway. If you looked at the level of casualisation in TAFE you may find that many practitioners are actually coming into TAFE to teach. It is a question of the integration with the art and design world. There is no particular value, I do not think, in that kind of supervised research relationship. It is one that says that practitioners are working in these sectors because they are a large part of the training base.

CHAIR—At the moment, if you were a highly motivated person, in your case in art and design, who wanted to work in the TAFE sector because you were interested in second chance education and helping people to get into jobs, and also do some research you would have to be teaching in a university, you could not be in a TAFE. Am I right in saying that?

Prof. Rowley—No, not really in our sector because there are so many professional artists working outside either universities or TAFEs who are in that context functioning as independent researchers. The main beef from our artists and designers is that their teaching overwhelms their capacity to get any work done; I am sure that is true for everybody.

TAFE sector teachers, just like university lecturers, are engaged in higher education programs so that is a form of that kind of relationship. I had quite close contact with two or three people who have completed doctorates from TAFE.

CHAIR—Thank you.

[10.24 a.m.]

CROMBIE, Dr Alastair, Executive Director, Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, PO Box 308, Jamison Centre, Australian Capital Territory 2614

CHAIR—Good morning, Dr Crombie. Thank you very much for preparing a submission and for being prepared to come and speak to us about it; we are very grateful to you. I represent a Sydney Liberal Party seat, Bradfield. Mr Sawford, the deputy chair, is the Labor member for Port Adelaide and works pretty hard in that job. He has been around education issues for some time. Please give us a five to 10 minute precise and then we will discuss it.

Dr Crombie—Are you happy for me to extend beyond our submission and raise one or two other issues?

CHAIR—Yes, providing we do not get onto native title or anything too far off the subject.

Dr Crombie—I did not have that one in mind.

CHAIR—People do tend to try to get all sorts of issues up.

Dr Crombie—I will sketch a little bit of background. Our national association is the peak body for the adult community education sector. We see one of our prime roles and activities as a national advocacy organisation for adult learners. So a good deal of our policy development work and advocacy is about seeking to enhance opportunities for all adults to have learning throughout life.

The sector that we represent, the ACE sector—Adult Community Education—is now recognised as one of the three types of providers in the national training market. It has become reasonably standard to identify in relation to vocational education training there types of providers: a public provider, which is obviously a major focus of your inquiry, private providers and so-called community providers. A large proportion of the community providers are members or affiliates in one way or another of our association.

Part of our interest here is that over the past decade adult education has been caught up in the development of the national VET strategy and has been invited to become a player in the national competitive training market, with consequences for our relationships with TAFE institutions, with whom we have been encouraged in certain respects to compete.

An important aspect of this is our very strong commitment to a conceptual and policy framework of lifelong learning, which seems to be on a bit of a roll internationally

and increasingly in Australia. It has been part of our rhetoric for a long time but there are some reasonably hard-edged policy commitments coming in behind it. The most visible are those of the present UK government. There are many elements to this, but one of the key focuses is a shift of policy emphasis to the demand side, to a focus on learners, so that we start looking at what is happening in education and training through the perspective of the needs and interests of learners rather than the needs and interests of institutions. By and large, the association that I represent is very strongly in favour of that shift and we believe that public policy can increasingly move in that direction with benefits nationally to communities and to learners.

There are two particular points that are more directly apposite perhaps to the inquiry. Our special interest in TAFE is the final two capital letters, the FE in TAFE. This is an interesting story to reflect on. It seems to us that the impact of the national training reform process has been to marginalise to the point almost of disappearance in some jurisdictions the FE part of TAFE. This is debated and argued about.

If one goes back more than a decade or so, then there was in most systems a strong commitment to that area of work known as further education, which included general education. There was some commitment in our technical education system to general education subjects, including, for example, the history of our land, civics, geography and so on—a great deal of emphasis on access and bridging preparatory education for those citizens who for various reasons had missed out and so on.

The impact in many of our TAFE systems of training reform has been to obviously intentionally, purposefully, sharpen their focus on industry's needs and to relate themselves to the strategic plans of ITABs—the Industry Training Advisory Boards—and so on. The further education domain does not have a similar or parallel point of reference and to varying degrees has been neglected. We think that has been at some significant cost.

The Adult Community and Further Education Board in Victoria is taking an initiative to get national support for a new further education framework which would formalise and seek to gain national recognition for a curriculum framework for what are currently predominantly the so-called Stream 2000 courses—the bridging/preparatory area. We are very strongly supportive of that and think that might be one way of remediating the current situation.

Secondly, it is our belief that the entire post- compulsory education and training system has become extremely complex from the perspective of learners. The diversification of pathways, learning opportunities, including the increasing range and variety of Internet delivered and other distance education opportunities, has made it more and more vital that we take seriously now the need for a national information, guidance and counselling service. We do not have this. We have a case of 'cultural lag' in that we have still by and large got most of our resources for educational guidance and counselling

parked at the front end of people's educational lives, the final years of secondary or, of course, universities, to attend to their graduates.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I get you to expand on what you actually mean by national information and cultural services. We are not in Bill Gates's world, are we? What do you actually mean by this?

Dr Crombie—By the information, guidance and counselling service?

Mr SAWFORD—Oh, counselling service—sorry.

Dr Crombie—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—What do you actually mean by this?

Dr Crombie—What I mean is that we have now got a very serious level of suboptimal use of resources because people are unable to identify with any ease what are the next steps available to them in their learning—

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of pathways?

Dr Crombie—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Okay, I am with you now.

Dr Crombie—Adult education is full of these stories of people flogging around for five or six years and finally landing on the one thing that was terrific for them. You say, 'What a lovely story, but what a shame there was not a better process.' If a 45-year-old bricklayer gets laid off now, has got some skills, does not have them recognised and so on, and needs to reconstruct his work life, there is no obvious place where that person can go and reliably be introduced to the spectrum of learning opportunities.

CHAIR—Some of the institutions do it to varying degrees at an institutional level, but you are right. It is the school sector as well. It is not just the person you describe in their 30s or 40s; kids have got the same sort of problem. National information and guidance—or counselling?

Dr Crombie—Well, we have tended to use those three words: information, guidance and counselling. The core is the information. That, I think, we are reasonably good at. But information by itself is inert and many of the adults that now need to be making intelligent, productive decisions about their next step as a learner need someone who can guide them. Then there is a category of people who have such low self-esteem or low self-confidence, have difficulties with language or so on, that it is difficult for them to find the right pathway, and then there is a counselling component. So there are three

interrelated—

CHAIR—Would this be a stand-alone service, or would it be attached to Centrelink or some other national organisation?

Dr Crombie—I think it would not be sensible to create a new stand-alone service. The only feasible way, I think, in practical terms and economic terms would be to have it as an adjunct to existing institutions and systems but to make it radically open. At the moment, sure, a TAFE institute may well have somewhere within its student services area that capability, but it needs to be parked right on the edge of the institution and have a shopfront.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have an exposition paper on this particular concept?

Dr Crombie—I would certainly be happy to provide one. I do not have one here with me.

CHAIR—Yes, if you could, that would great.

Dr Crombie—We have made the point that the government scoping of the investment in the national training market is now something like \$7 billion, if you aggregate the public investment and private investment. To create the kind of service that we are talking about, you could make a very good start with about .001 per cent of that. If that is the size of the overall market we are talking about and we really want that to operate efficiently, maybe that is an appropriate way to conceptualise what we should be putting into the lubrication perhaps that enables people to make wise choices.

CHAIR—In your submission you are advocating really doing away with a lot of sectoral barriers between higher education and the TAFE sector. If we went down that road, however it was achieved, if there was much closer articulation between the university sector and the VET sector, would that not increase the barriers for many of those whom you represent today, many of those who are accessing community education? Would they not feel intimidated about being too tied up with fairly academic institutions?

I think of some of my mates and the people I have known over the years who may not have completed secondary education, spent 10 or 15 years in the work force, and find themselves unemployed. We had a person—a very good woman, I might add—who presented to us in Sydney last week from the Randwick campus of the Sydney Institute of Technology and she was describing kids who have fallen out of the secondary education sector, some of whom are homeless, marginalised, the full hand of bad news, and they were going into the TAFE sector. You just wonder if perhaps it might be a little too intimidating if the sector was too closely aligned with universities.

Dr Crombie—My judgment is that both TAFE and higher education institutions,

under the pressures that they are, are becoming increasingly user friendly. So I think now in the kind of competitive situation they have there is a growing recognition that they, as institutions, need to lower all the barriers, including the psychological barriers to those categories of people.

Let us for example, look at the situation here in Canberra. There is open speculation that the University of Canberra and the Canberra Institute of Technology within two or three years might well become a single institution. That would seem to me to be quite a productive and positive step for learners for whom the issue of what institution they are attending becomes decreasingly relevant. What they would know is that this is a doorway through which they can pass which can offer an extraordinary range and variety of learning opportunities. If we were to move systemically towards policy and practice of life-long learning, institutions would in fact be less dominant in the educational landscape.

Mr SAWFORD—Dr Crombie, is that more peculiar of Canberra itself in the sense of its being part of regional Australia? I am not having a crack; don't look at me like that. In regional Australia the alliances and the collaboration between higher education and TAFE seem to me to be just sensible. Who administers that in regional Australia becomes a question, because you get the view that sometimes the sandstone universities, if they are involved, just take it for granted that they are going to run the show.

I find that a little arrogant, to say the least, whereas when you get the former CAE universities involved with TAFEs in regional areas you seem to find a more collaborative and an alliance model that is a genuine sort of sharing. Maybe outside of Canberra we need to recognise the individual strengths of both TAFEs and universities, and maybe there is too much emphasis on the articulation between the two. But in regional Australia it is a different kettle of fish.

Dr Crombie—But I would say that, if you look back to Canberra, it is not the regional situation because you could not imagine the ANU taking a moment's interest in amalgamating with the CIT. So what is happening on the university side—and, again, quite appropriately and productively—is differentiation, and I think we should support and encourage that. So there will be different kinds of universities. There will be some that will want to go for an enhanced international reputation as global centres of excellence in scholarship and research and so on, and we need those institutions. And there will be others that will become much more, if you like, customer focused, learner oriented, and will seek to maximise the range of learning opportunities available.

I think what you say is true, but the ANU would never, I imagine, be interested in taking such a step, whereas for the University of Canberra, without the same kind of background, it would be sensible.

I want to just briefly come back to your focus on a category of learners who may well suffer if you had that kind of amalgamation. You were talking about people who

have problems of self-esteem, self-confidence and so on. I think this is very important. There is a very significant number of adults who have had experiences of failure in schooling and need a very easy step back in. One of the strengths increasingly recognised, I would have to say, of the adult education sector is that it is that first easy step. That includes a national network of some 900 neighbourhood learning centres, now present in all states and territories, which are in the suburbs—walk straight in the door, no demands, no pre-requirements or anything. These are working extraordinarily well as places where people can present with whatever their life has in it at the moment, but find themselves on easily graded steps towards getting back into learning. Insofar as there is a category of people who will need encouragement and support then it is appropriate. I think that the adult education sector should be looked to, asked and, to some degree, resourced to undertake that, if it is important nationally.

CHAIR—I also wanted to ask you about the fees that students confront when they come into the sector. Are they a problem?

Dr Crombie—Into the adult education sector?

CHAIR—Yes.

Dr Crombie—Yes, they are.

CHAIR—What sort of fees are students facing and what sort of problems do you have with them?

Dr Crombie—There is an extraordinary variability of providers, of course. There are subsidies by and large for language, literacy and other courses of that kind of bridging character. Universities who offer continuing education, such as the program at the ANU, are charging \$400 or \$500 sometimes for a 15-week course. The rate at many community adult education centres would be more like \$4 or \$5 per hour, but they pay their tutors what they take in, basically.

Surveys of adults who participate in adult education show that you are dealing generally with better educated people in full-time work on reasonable levels of income. So while there is this dissonance between some of the ideals and aspirations of adult education, which has always been to look after the marginalised and disadvantaged, it is a user-pays service by and large, and, yes, a very significant number of people are cut out.

One of the responses to that that the current British government have introduced is the learning account idea. They have created a million learning accounts. The proposition is there that an individual who puts forward £25 of their own money would gain access to a further—I believe I am right in saying—£250 of government funds into a learning account, and these are finely targeted to adults who have had least earlier education. In our service, it would be those who left school at 14, 15 or 16 or something. It is obviously

an experimental process and one will look carefully to see whether this does, in fact, mobilise some of those who have had least education.

CHAIR—Is the establishment of the learning account predicated on a reduction in funding to learning institutions? In other words, is it becoming a kind of de facto voucher system? Has the British government said, ‘Well, we will reduce—

Mr SAWFORD—It is not de facto; it is.

CHAIR—Is that what it is? In other words, have they taken a little bit of the funding away from the institutions themselves and put the money into the learning accounts and then said to the students, ‘Put up £25 and then you choose where you are going to go’? Is that how it works?

Dr Crombie—I am unable to answer. There is a raft of quite expensive initiatives in the whole lifelong learning area. My own judgment is that there would have to have been a net increase of expenditure to undertake what has been undertaken. The other characteristic of this million learning accounts is that the actual expenditure, of course, is unknowable, because it depends on the take-up. That in itself is going to be an interesting thing to monitor. What does the incentive of matching funding of 10 times of what you put in do? Does it, in fact, get these people on board? And that is an open question.

Mr SAWFORD—Alastair, your submission mentions that ACE providers could deliver more remedial preparatory professional and trade courses than what is happening at present. Could you tell us what the current involvement in these courses is from adult and community education?

Dr Crombie—You mean the extent I am interested in quanta or—

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Dr Crombie—The most authoritative statement on all that, and it is pretty authoritative, is this report commissioned by the Australian National Training Authority, undertaken by Kaye Schofield, which makes it clear that the statistics available to her were woefully inadequate. But with that proviso, she has made very brave attempts to scope some of the key facts and figures.

Mr SAWFORD—This seems to be a problem throughout education, doesn’t it, with TAFE—the data that is available?

Dr Crombie—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—You may have heard Brendan ask a question of a previous witness about research. It is interesting in that we have had varying responses to that

question in the sense that some people would make the statement that they do not want TAFEs to get involved in scholarly research. But one of the disadvantages is that, in terms of sometimes arguing for more funding, the data just is not there. So, in terms of strengthening arguments that are put to government, sometimes the arguments are greatly weakened by the fact that the data is so unclear.

Dr Crombie—Again, if you take a radically customer-focused point of view, if you have, as I believe we have, a spectrum of adult education providers—in Sydney, for example, there are 20 or so fairly large and capable community and evening colleges; those organisations have the capability to delivery accredited programs of this sort—the argument for doing it is basically that it increases access and opportunity for Australian adults, because there is another provider closer to home.

However, in New South Wales, something that is interesting—and I would not want to make this a cause celebre here—is that, because TAFE institutes in New South Wales are suffering from their competition, including at the hands of ACE providers—with the recent putting out to tender of the adult migrant education programs, and so on, there were adult education providers involved in consortia there—the TAFE teachers have initiated action to try to ensure that teachers and tutors working in adult education are paid the appropriate award rate. One can understand that motivation. But, if that were to succeed, if they were to start paying their people \$50 an hour, as happens in Randwick TAFE College, the high street adult education provider in Moree or Coonabarabran, or wherever, would just get knocked out of the game completely. So competition is causing its frictions.

Mr SAWFORD—How would you make TAFE more responsive in regional Australia? I think in your submission you say that TAFE institutes should be able to respond to the needs of the community. Perhaps you are implying that TAFE in some jurisdictions does not actually meet the needs of the community. What I am trying to do is focus in on regional Australia.

Dr Crombie—Yes. Again, there is enormous variability. In Western Australia, they have cut their providers adrift; they are autonomous, they are on their own. I have not finally resolved in my own mind the argument that leads you to that point, but I think that is an appropriate direction in which to go.

I think in regional Australia, if we were to liberate to the maximum possible extent and put those colleges under councils or governing bodies constituted by key regional stakeholders—and one would have to think carefully about who they were to be—and increase devolution of responsibility and autonomy to the college and get governing bodies which clearly represent the interests of local stakeholders, it would be driven much more by the actual needs and interests of the local community.

Mr SAWFORD—Voting with their feet. You are giving a very different view to

the view we have been given in this public inquiry. Basically, the general tenor in regional areas has been for everybody to collaborate.

Dr Crombie—Yes, I think that is part of it. But I was just saying that the recipe for a TAFE institute is not going to work well if they are tied very closely to a big head office. So that is as far as the TAFE institute is concerned.

I am absolutely in agreement that we will not get best value for money in regional Australia, or anywhere else, unless we can nurture much more collaboration. That would certainly be a very strong interest of ours. There is something like 2,000 providers of adult and community education across the Australian landscape, and we are going through some very silly things in terms of competition.

Mr SAWFORD—Are the award rates for your people the same as TAFE's?

Dr Crombie—No.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you give us an example of how they would differ?

Dr Crombie—Only in Victoria is there formal coverage of adult education staff. By and large, you have part-time tutors—there might be a local beekeeper who teaches a beekeeper course who is not a formally enrolled teacher.

Mr SAWFORD—The remuneration they receive is dependent on the numbers attending the course?

Dr Crombie—The further you get away from the metropolis, the more likely it is to be 'How much can we raise from income?' and, 'Would \$200 be enough for you, Fred?'

Mr SAWFORD—To run the course?

Dr Crombie—Yes. Fred wants to run the course, and there are only six people; if he is keen to do it, he will do it. 'Award wages' is still not a prevalent nostrum in the adult education service.

In response to this problem in New South Wales, I gather that providers are now giving undertakings that they will create enterprise agreements. So there will be localised solutions to that problem, and there will be some degree of formalisation of what tutors get paid.

There is an enormous volunteer effort in Mosman at the evening college and other similar institutions; there are people putting in an enormous voluntary effort to make them work. In wanting a totally level playing field in the national training market, there are

some interesting frictions that arise with how you treat an ACE provider of that sort compared with a TAFE college.

CHAIR—What proportion of students who undertake adult and community education go on to other forms of post-secondary education, particularly in the VET sector? Do you have any idea? Is there any research or data on that?

Dr Crombie—There is data, but not at my fingertips now. There have been various surveys of pathways. I will follow through on that and dig out the appropriate information.

CHAIR—It would be interesting to know. I guess it is a question of whether it is a personal interest/hobby kind of activity for many people, or whether it initiates another career. Does it become a stepping stone to going into perhaps formal TAFE and then having a job?

Dr Crombie—I think it is very significant; I think you are probably looking at about 50 per cent who go on to some further kind of education, or it is a stepping stone into work. Surveys reliably show that 70 per cent of participants in adult education will specify work related motives. So it is a pretty significant part of people's motivation.

CHAIR—Thank you, Dr Crombie. We very much appreciate your giving evidence. If you could forward to us any data that you may have on subsequent career pathways for those who come into the sector, that would be much appreciated.

Dr Crombie—I will do.

CHAIR—Thank you.

[11.10 a.m.]

MORAN, Mr Terry, Chief Executive Officer, Australian National Training Authority, Level 11, 10 Eagle Street, Brisbane, Queensland 4001

CHAIR—Thank you for providing us with a submission and also for being prepared to come along and discuss it. Would you please give us a five- to 10-minute precis of the submission which we can then discuss.

Mr Moran—Mr Chairman, I am accompanied by Ms Karina Veal, who is a principal project officer with ANTA. She has a range of responsibilities, including, in the last few months, work on the West review. Papers relating to the West review are amongst those which we were able to provide to the committee. We also provided some papers on the notion of a training market; and a report on the results of our consultations around Australia which involved many hundreds of people on that initial paper and where people thought a training market might go in the future.

As to my opening remarks, the range of issues dealt with in those papers, both for West and the training market, are considerable. I do not think I would do them service if I were to summarise them in five minutes. But perhaps there are a few issues that I might touch on.

Firstly, in looking at TAFE, the history of TAFE is very important. TAFE in Australia is a national initiative. It came about because of the Kangan inquiry in the 1970s; that inquiry proposed that sundry bits and pieces of what is now technical and further education be brought together within one sector. Later on, the growth of TAFE within Australia was really spurred by the Commonwealth's commitment of very substantial capital resources to building new facilities for TAFE around Australia and, in more recent times, refurbishing existing facilities. This capital program was carried out in concert with the states and territories. But certainly during the 10 years I have been associated with vocational education and training, the Commonwealth's expenditure has always been in excess of that by the states and territories.

More recent times have seen additional Commonwealth expenditures for recurrent purposes which have grown to quite a considerable level. So, in very rough terms, about 30 per cent of the money which goes out to TAFE is derived from Commonwealth sources in a very direct way these days.

In the period since the 1970s, TAFE has emerged as a major educational sector. At the time of Kangan, it had fewer than 400,000 students—I think the figure was about 370,000 to 390,000. Now, excluding those students funded by fee-for-service activities—which are of great importance in TAFE—there are about 1.2 million students, and they are not in the areas that occupied TAFE's attentions all those years ago; they are really spread across courses catering for nearly all areas of the economy.

The thing that is important about TAFE, I think, is that it has a distinctive role. It is not an extension of schooling, nor a shadow of universities. It is self-consciously there—and this has been so since the Kangan time—to respond to the needs of industry and, in doing that, serve the interests of the students who are enrolled in its programs.

What has happened over the last 10 years is that the means by which it can respond to industry's needs have been greatly changed. Those changes have been sometimes controversial, but obviously, from our point of view, we would think they are of enormous importance.

However, even with all those changes, TAFE has kept what in the past would have been described as the FE side of its operations as well—or, as we would classify it, general education. The general education component of TAFE remains strong and, within that, very many students are given opportunities to acquire higher levels of ability in language, literacy and numeracy, or undertake remedial programs that will help them do the mainstream vocational programs which TAFE otherwise offers.

Having said though that TAFE is a distinctive educational entity in Australia, it now sits within a broader vocational education and training sector. This too has meant some difficult changes for TAFE. Ten years ago, TAFE had the monopoly on what we now call vocational education and training qualifications. If you went to a private provider, they might give you what they called a qualification—for example, it might be a diploma after three months of study. But that was not recognised, it was not portable and it rested solely on the reputation of the provider that offered it.

So, from the beginning of the 1990s, the monopoly that TAFE enjoyed over courses leading to recognised qualifications was withdrawn. Now, on our last count—and the number is probably greater—there are over 2,500 recognised private providers who can offer courses leading to qualifications that are the same as those available through TAFE.

After that was introduced, the funding which had previously also been monopolised by TAFE, except in the case of traineeships, was also put through more competitive processes. There have been a variety of these, including competitive tendering and user choice.

But TAFE, I think, has keenly felt the arrival of this side of competition. There are still many in TAFE who think that, if government wants to spend money on vocational education and training, other than in the most extraordinary circumstances, that money should be spent with TAFE; whereas governments have basically said that it is in the public interest for there to be more competition for those funds as a means of encouraging TAFE to become more flexible and responsive in its dealings with its clients.

Our view of the future of TAFE is that it does not lie in a concept of TAFE as a homogenous network of TAFE institutes—whether 84 TAFE institutes or 70 TAFE

institutes, whatever the number might be. It lies in each TAFE institute developing a competitive strategy that can fit it into the broader VET market so that it can prosper—and that is not only the broader VET market as it applies to government funding of vocational education and training but also the broader VET market that embraces private expenditures on vocational education and training which are roughly comparable with government expenditures on vocational education and training.

We would basically say that one can turn to the environment within which TAFE operates; one can help it come to terms with the changes which have been undertaken; one can seek to sensibly manage change. But, at the end of the day, there is a more competitive environment, and TAFE institutes have to find their way within it.

My final point is that, having said that, and having been seen by some as the chief proponent of independence for TAFE institutes because of my time in Victoria before joining ANTA, I recently have been arguing publicly that there are changes under way which may make that model look too simple, and that we should look to a better means of getting TAFE institutes to act in concert. In that context, I propose that one model we might look to is that of the Maricoppa community colleges in Arizona; they have found a balance that works between centralisation—in their case, strategic direction of the centre—and decentralisation directed to achieving more flexibility and responsiveness at the provider level.

CHAIR—Could you give us, firstly, for the record, an outline of the structure of ANTA, what ANTA's specific role is and who or what comprises the ANTA board?

Mr Moran—Firstly, there is the ANTA Ministerial Council of 10 ministers. It is chaired by Dr Kemp as the Commonwealth minister, with Senator Ellison as the second Commonwealth minister. At a state level, it is either the state's education minister—that is Mr Aquilina in New South Wales—or, in a state where schools' education is separated from training, it would be the training minister; in Queensland that is Mr Santo Santoro, and in Victoria it is Mr Phil Honeywood.

Under the agreement and the act, it is the ANTA ministerial council that makes the key decisions. So the ANTA board is essentially advisory, although, within guidelines set by the ministerial council, it has some responsibility for a modest amount of program funds for VET which it administers.

When first set up, the rationale for the ANTA board was that it should be small—five members—and that it should not be linked into any of the established interests within the operation of the system so that it could stand back from the system and give the ministerial council advice from its perspective on where vocational education and training should be going. I remember that the minister at the time was Mr Beazley, who was most assertive about the independent view of the ANTA board as to what needs to be done to fix vocational education and training in Australia.

In recent times governments have agreed that the board's membership be expanded by two. At the ministerial council meeting in November last year, it was said that those two additional places are to come from the states and territories—one from a large state and the other from a smaller state. I think the people are to be industry members of state training authorities who are also members of the ANTA board. Therefore, there would be a link achieved between those states and territories and the ANTA board, which would go around the links which already exist at an official level between me, and people like Karina, and people in the states and territories.

When the ANTA agreement was reviewed about two years ago by a parliamentary Senate committee, and by Ray Taylor, who was acting under the authority of the Council of Australian Governments, I think there was an argument that the ANTA board should include educators. It was felt that it was insufficiently knowledgeable of, or insufficiently responsive to, the needs of educators. That issue consistently has been considered by a succession of ministers, and those ministers have stuck with the original rationale for the composition of the ANTA board.

Beyond that, it has always been a feature of the ANTA agreement that major documents coming forward are subject to very wide consultation. So those training market papers that I mentioned before involve me and others going out into states and territories, and sometimes into regional centres, to meet with groups of people and take on board what they have to say. Those groups of people included educators as well as representatives of industry and representatives from state authorities, and so forth.

I think that there is a continuing sensitivity about the extent to which educational interests are actually at the board table. But, to be honest, it is not a sensitivity that I am troubled by, because we go to such efforts through our consultative processes to bring in educators and many others.

In any event, if you wanted to see educators around the table, who would it be? Would it be somebody from TAFE, somebody from the adult and community education sector, somebody from a private provider, somebody from schools, or somebody from higher ed? You are up to five already against a principle that the board should remain small so that it is not encumbered by the deficiencies of a representative basis for its composition.

CHAIR—One of the problems that we have come up against with TAFEs is that TAFEs seem to vary as you go around the country. On the one hand, it is narrow—that is, it is vocational education and training based, industry specific and seeks to meet needs that industry have, so people are trained in specific tasks. On the other, there is the role of second chance education—it is more or less a community service obligation. To what extent is that tension going to be further emphasised if we have closer articulation between the two sectors—the higher education sector and the TAFE sector?

Mr Moran—In my mind, articulation would not mean that TAFE lost its identity within a broader or redefined concept of higher education. It is absolutely essential—with some exceptions, as always—that TAFE retains its distinctive character. It employs different sorts of people as teachers—people with industry experience—it is not necessarily on the basis of their academic qualifications. It bases its programs on what industry says it wants in the form of competency standards.

What is interesting in respect of adult and community education is that over the last few years a very large number of adult and community education providers have been recognised as providers of vocational education and training and have received funding for that purpose, funding which previously would have been tied up in TAFE institutes. Particularly in New South Wales and Victoria, and it is starting in Queensland as well, we have been seeing the emergence of a much stronger adult and community education sector than was the case previously. Frankly, while leadership at the state level is always important, the flow of funds tied up in the ANTA agreement to providers, particularly in those two states, has also been extremely important.

I think the position of adult and community education, which I would see as having improved in the life of the ANTA agreement, is better seen from the perspective of the market that I mentioned before. Within that market context, there is scope for more funds to flow to adult and community education providers, particularly for—but not solely for—the delivery of programs leading to recognised VET outcomes.

I know that that has not been without heartache for a lot of people in adult and community education, particularly in Victoria. At the start of this process, many within adult and community education thought that they would be supping with the devil if they started to offer programs that were accredited—in the jargon of that time—and led to outcomes that you would otherwise get from the vocational education and training sector. The impression that I have is that disquiet has subsided in that time, and people in ACE have been welcoming of the additional resources and the new recognition that has gone with it.

Having said that, ACE remains an immensely important area of activity. Because it has its own distinctive clientele—overwhelmingly, the people undertaking ACE programs are women, but I have forgotten the exact number; I think it is in the order of 80 per cent, but you would no doubt have heard about that anyway—that wants a particular experience out of ACE, it is critical that ACE remain distinct and be nurtured by governments. Certainly, for its part ANTA has always nurtured, and will continue to do so as best it can, the development of the adult community education sector.

Mr SAWFORD—What is ANTA's role in the provision of VET in schools?

Mr Moran—One of the things that ANTA provides is the basis for the recognition of providers and the expression of the outcomes to be achieved through an educational

experience that industry would like to see. The means of doing that is competency standards, and now there are competency standards included within training packages.

What the schools sector has started to say is, 'We will take those competency standards and use them as the basis for educational experiences within schools'—usually, but not solely, at years 11 and 12. That is so that school students who would prefer to include within their educational experience some exposure to vocational education and training can get it, on the understanding that they are getting an educational experience that is a response to a definite expression of an industry need. That is the general proposition. We develop training packages that schools can use and, before that, competency standards. There are hundreds of schools that are recognised as what I called private providers before.

Beyond that, there are a number of funding programs which affect schools as well. The Commonwealth government introduced a program involving \$20 million a year for four years, flowing to all school systems—that is, government systems, Catholic systems, and independent systems—through the relevant state training authority. The aim being to have most of that money available ultimately at the level of the individual school as an incentive for that school to move more and more into the delivery of programs that relate to vocational education and training. There is also a smaller program of about \$5 million a year designed for schools—preferably a consortia of schools, and preferably schools, or a consortia, in regional Australia—to help them build skill centres so that they can better deliver the programs to their students.

Finally, a new initiative is about to start whereby we are contracting with the curriculum corporation—I am not sure we have settled the amount with them, so I should not mention what it is—for them to take our training packages and then develop, for a given training package, the tools and resources needed by a school if it is to do the best possible job of delivering a program that goes back to the content of that training package, particularly the competency standards. I am reasonably hopeful that, in a relatively short period of time, we can equip schools with a far more solid basis in materials for them to more actively participate in VET.

One final point is that sometimes all this is characterised—not to put it too bluntly, I hope—as VET in schools driving out general education. In my view, this could not be further from the truth. The best programs combine students having a continuing experience of general education with an experience of some aspect of vocational education and training, whether it is specific to one industry, a couple of industries or whatever. I think that is the way to go.

There have been higher school certificates, or Victorian certificates of education, or whatever, which very much have a general education focus. It is not our aim to push them to one side and, in the case of at least some of the students in school, say, 'You do a VET program.' Our aim would be to see VET elements incorporated within the structure of that

higher school certificate that people might do.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think that TAFE should have a role in providing VET in schools?

Mr Moran—It does already.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think it is effective?

Mr Moran—It varies between states. It receives more emphasis in some than others. It is more evident, for instance, in New South Wales than it has been in Victoria, although in Victoria individual TAFE institutes are becoming involved with individual schools to support them in delivery of vocational education and training.

I just happen to have read last week five case studies prepared and published by, I think, the Victorian Association of Independent Schools. Each of those case studies dealt with an independent school in Victoria that was delivering vocational education and training programs. Three, possibly four of them, were doing it with a very substantial alliance with a TAFE institute to support them. The Box Hill institute was most notable here, as were the William Angliss and Eastern institutes.

CHAIR—That is not the norm, though, because we have seen an instance where a school is providing TAFE, both teaching and infrastructure, to which in a relatively close proximity there is a TAFE that has similar sorts of resources. In some cases—in fact, many—schools are not funded to provide the VET, and the funds are taken out of other things. For instance, they raise money from raffles and stuff like that. It seems that there needs to be some national direction in this regard.

Mr Moran—It is always difficult to persuade states that a detailed view at the national level should be taken on matters which they regard as operational. That is the first point I would make. The second point is that a precondition for sorting things out is to allow school principals more discretion over at least some element of their budgets than they have at the moment. Failing that, one could do what the new director-general of education and training in New South Wales has recently indicated that he wants to do—that is, more actively manage the sharing of access to facilities at the local level. For my part, I think this will be of some use but will not solve the problem.

CHAIR—Should the schools ideally be contracting VET training from TAFEs?

Mr Moran—Absolutely. That was the essence of the relationship between TAFE and those independent schools in Victoria who recently published something about what they are doing. It was a transaction within a market context. I think it is only if a market in that sense is possible that you will get the best possible result. If a school wants to use a TAFE facility in place of the ordinary classrooms that they have, it should be possible

for them to pay a reasonable rental for that facility. If they want to have TAFE teachers teach part of a subject, they should be able to buy that service as well.

A centrally planned approach to sharing resources will always break down because people at the school level or the institute level will feel that a remote source of authority is compelling them to do something rather than their being in a position to do something that they think meets their local circumstances using the resources they have to bring it about. That is the problem.

Mr SAWFORD—A week or so ago the Liberal Premier of South Australia, John Olsen, made a statement about favouring the reintroduction of technical high schools. The AEU came out and condemned what he was saying. He said it three or four months after he had been elected, so you would not have thought it was part of an election rhetoric—maybe he actually seriously believes it. The technical high schools were established by John Walker, who was a particular director-general who had a very short term and was very influential in terms of education in Australia. Alby Jones and those types of people all were mentored by John Walker.

The technical high schools that operated so successfully in South Australia not only accommodated general education but also complemented it. In other words, they did both. Often the most progressive principals, and the most progressive teachers, were involved in those technical high schools. They were a particular success and a particular baby of John Walker. In that sort of context, is there any role for technical high schools?

Mr Moran—I think you are leading me into a potentially contentious issue. Perhaps a bit of history will help answer your question. Before joining the Australia National Training Authority nearly five years ago, I was for five and a half years CEO of the Victorian training system. Prior to my taking up that role with what was then the newly established State Training Board of Victoria, I had observed changes in schooling within Victoria arising out of what had been called the Blackburn report.

That report proposed, amongst other things, the creation of what became known as the Victorian Certificate of Education, which embraced all educational activity in years 11 and 12. Leading from that was the closure of Victoria's technical school system in favour of high schools which were thought to be able to cover general education and what was then described as technical education.

The reality was that the culture of the high schools, with their focus on general education, totally obliterated technical education. So, with a stroke of a pen, it brought about the merger of a few institutions at the same time as re-doing the years 11 and 12 curriculum. A proud tradition in Victorian education was just extinguished.

In retrospect, I think it was a tragedy. It need not have been so if the high school culture had not been so free to totally swamp the old technical education culture and if

governments had been serious about maintaining the resources needed in those technical schools to do a decent job, rather than, for example, having people persist with programs that were totally outdated and not in any way related to where the labour market was at. Even in those programs that still had some currency, school students were working on totally antiquated machinery and were being taught by teachers who were totally out of touch with industry, and all that sort of stuff.

In my view, in that particular case there was an entirely regrettable neglect of and then extinction of an educational system of long standing that had a very valid role in the state of Victoria. It may be in response to a realisation of some of the problems of getting up vocational education and training in a high school context that the South Australian Premier has made the remarks that he has. I was not aware of those remarks and I do not know what their context was.

CHAIR—Is it about \$900 million that the Commonwealth provides to ANTA to the distribute for the states?

Mr Moran—That is the money out of the VET funding act which is destined for state and territory authorities under the ANTA agreement. In addition to that there is money for national programs, which I think is currently in excess of \$60 million, and then the modest amount for ANTA's own operating expenses.

CHAIR—Should the Commonwealth be a bit more prescriptive, do you think, in terms of what the states deliver in terms of VET through the ANTA agreement?

Mr Moran—To what end? It depends upon your view of what needs to be achieved at the national level. The states and territories have been, despite some of the media coverage, extremely cooperative in implementing the new national training framework, that is, the Australian recognition framework and training packages. They have been quite cooperative in implementing new apprenticeships and user choice. They have been very active in greatly improving the quality of data about vocational education and training in Australia, particularly management information, and that is in circumstances where that quality data has often created problems for them that they would rather have avoided, around the efficiency issue, for example, but there are many others. The states have been very cooperative on a range of national initiatives from time to time. For instance, we are working with some people at a state and territory level, and soon with a greater number, I hope, on a major flexible delivery initiative which would not only benefit TAFE but other providers and also the adult and community education sector and schools.

If it were believed that at a national level operational authority needed to be exercised over what the state and territory systems did, you might do it differently. I would argue that, if the information systems are adequate to providing quality information and if state governments are prepared to take a reasonable approach to agreeing key

national initiatives which are needed to be taken and if you can reach agreement about the basic structure of the system and the importance of TAFE and things like that, the current system is the best one we could have for managing life in a federation. There would be pressures from some quarters to relieve TAFE of some of the pressures of change that it is subjected to in a variety of ways, but a judgment as to what you would do would need to be made in the light of a debate about the environment within which TAFE must work in the future and how you actually get to the point of getting the best possible fit at that time between TAFE and its environment. It is that debate which is more important, I think, rather than a preconceived view about more or less national authority.

CHAIR—When we spoke to the Vice-Chancellor of RMIT, he made the comment that he felt that TAFEs were very good at training people for yesterday and for today but not particularly good at training people for tomorrow. Then he went on to elaborate that the TAFE structure did not give it sufficient freedom, nor was there actually money available in a form that enabled them to quickly get up training programs for emerging industries: multimedia, biotechnologies and certain health technology areas. The suggestion emerged that maybe some sort of training innovation fund into which industry, governments, and the institutes themselves, put some money might be a model. I have asked many people who have appeared before us whether they think that there is a problem and whether that is a reasonable solution. Some people say, ‘We can get a training program up in six months.’ Others feel that the system is a bit cumbersome.

Mr Moran—There are already two training innovation funds nationally, but they are not called that. One is the national projects fund, which has about \$25 million in it, and the other is national programs, which I mentioned before. The purposes to which the funds under national projects are applied are constantly changing in the light of perceptions about how to manage change in the system. For example, I mentioned that initiative on flexible delivery. In the first instance that would be funded out of the national projects fund which I mentioned. My view would be that these two funds have actually been the key to bringing about a lot of change within vocational education and training since ANTA was established.

Professor Beanland’s insight that you can do a lot with a little bit of money is in fact quite correct, but I do not accept the premise of his statement. I have known him for a long time and I have had a long association with RMIT. The Victorian system, in particular, is not of the character that he describes in terms of its impediment to developing new ideas and developing programs for new industries and so forth. In fact, even with the flexibility that the Victorian system provides, the implementation of a new Australian recognition framework will give RMIT, as a TAFE provider, far more independence in the accreditation of courses than it has had previously, provided that state authorities quality endorse it at the highest level.

The most unsatisfactory point from my point of view about RMIT is that it has persistently argued a university paradigm for vocational education and training, which has

been designed to let RMIT find its own way, in respect of both TAFE and universities, in the Victorian economy. I think that has been more an expression of institutional conceit than a considered view of how over time an institution might best serve the needs of both its students and industry as well as possible. Therefore, I do not have much sympathy for the persistent view that comes from Professor Beanland that he walks around with his hands tied behind his back when it comes to vocational education and training in a way that is not the case with universities.

That having been said, his hands have been tied on some issues, and so they should be. The regrettable thing about the pattern at RMIT has been that the VET effort has been shifted towards the higher level qualifications—the diplomas and advanced diplomas—and away from the traditional heartland of TAFE, which is the certificate level programs. It is the certificate level programs that actually appeal to that majority of the Australian population that do not have, do not want, cannot get, a university degree. It is those programs which are also the basis of the second chance education role which TAFE still has. There is a role for some TAFE institutes specialising at the diploma and advanced diploma level and demonstrating good progress by taking many of the TAFE graduates into university programs. But I think it would be regrettable if the system generally were to allow all TAFE institutes to abandon the millions of clients that they have had, and will have in the future, at the certificate level in favour of the more pleasurable educational experiences which they can devise and offer at the diploma and advanced diploma level.

I might say that one of the major reasons given for multi-sector institutions to go to the diploma and advanced diploma level at the expense of certificate programs has been the notion that there would be strong articulation on from those programs into degree level programs. That does not appear to have occurred. In fact, the flow into TAFE, as you would probably have heard, is three times at least in favour of graduates going to TAFE compared with TAFE graduates going to universities. This whole issue has been surrounded by a lot of rhetoric and a lot of institutional self-interest, all directed at giving a place like RMIT as close to absolute freedom as it could have to do whatever it wanted to do.

I think that is not necessarily in the interests of the principal clients of the TAFE system and vocational education and training generally, which are to be found in industry, and it is also not necessarily in the interests of the students, because I am not aware that RMIT has achieved any greater admission of TAFE graduates into its university programs than places like Deakin or Monash, which do not have a TAFE division within them.

CHAIR—Although that should not necessarily be an objective, I suppose.

Mr Moran—In fact, I would argue that it should be available to people—

CHAIR—Of course.

Mr Moran—But the principal objective of vocational education and training programs ought to be to achieve an outcome that stands in its own right. If you want to go and do a diploma in engineering because your employer, or prospective employer, would value that in a person who might become a technician, you should be able to leave that diploma of engineering with all that is required to meet that expectation and not find that there is something missing which can only be satisfied by going on and then doing a bachelor's degree.

CHAIR—Yes. Professor Chipman from Central Queensland University told us that he thought there should be, as far as practicable, co-location of facilities, single libraries and single student facilities. When it was put to him that the predatory nature of universities might disadvantage the core or the certificate level activities of TAFEs, he defended that on the basis that you would still have separate funding arrangements for the two educational sectors. Have you got a view on his model? Is that something we ought to be pursuing?

Mr Moran—All I know of Professor Chipman's model is what I have read reported in the newspapers, where I think he has circulated a paper within his university encouraging debate about this issue. I think that Professor Chipman has done it for the best of all possible reasons, because in Central Queensland, as with many other regional areas of Australia, it is possible to achieve a better result for people by getting a better linkage between vocational education and training and universities. In our response to the discussion paper from the West committee, of which Professor Chipman is a member, we set forward a range of views on how you could make the pathways easier for students between the sectors, and we argue that that could be done without homogenising financing and regulatory arrangements. From what you have said of Professor Chipman's comments, I think he is recognising that the regulatory and funding arrangements should not be homogenised.

Beyond that, with the one qualification that you would need to make some changes in management systems, I think it is sensible for Central Queensland to get more out of publicly provided facilities by universities and TAFEs coming to more sensible arrangements for the use of facilities. But it ought to be on the basis of an arrangement devised by consenting and mature adults rather than something that is imposed upon TAFE from a university perspective because of a strategy that the university wants to pursue. The benchmark for what you should do must ultimately be the students and their interests and needs. You have to sort those out first before then turning to the institutional arrangements that might be devised to serve those interests and needs.

CHAIR—On the other hand, I am sure you are aware that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry are arguing that the infrastructure of the TAFEs be separated, if you like, from the provider functions and do increase contestability in the market. How do you feel students are going to fare in that sort of environment?

Mr Moran—This is a measure designed to increase third party access to TAFE facilities. I could not be precise but the capital value of the facilities available to TAFE would be \$6 billion plus, so it is a very substantial national investment. The third party access issue is a difficult one and ministers have had some discussion as to what might be done, and have agreed that ANTA in fact undertake this year—and it is now under way—a major review of the infrastructure program which would involve, amongst other issues, some regard to the utilisation of TAFE facilities and so forth. The unanswered question behind what has been put to you by the ACCI is: are those TAFE facilities lying idle a lot of the time? If so, could they be put to better use? I would hope we would have a better insight into that problem as a result of this infrastructure review than we have at the moment.

Putting all that aside, however, I think it is important that Australia preserve TAFE as a major national institution and that TAFE should not have visited upon it measures, such as implied by those comments, which are not applied to other parts of education.

Mr SAWFORD—Is that the view of the ANTA board as well or is that a personal view?

Mr Moran—That is a personal view.

Mr SAWFORD—What about the ANTA board?

Mr Moran—I could only speak for the chairman and I suspect that the chairman's view would be similar. Apart from that, it has not been discussed in sufficient detail by the ANTA board. If behind your question is the suggestion that an industry based ANTA board is pretty keen on that proposition, that is in fact not the case. The ANTA board is quite keen to see the results, however, of the infrastructure review. In fact, that review is being led by one of the board members, who is chairing the steering group that is taking it forward.

Perhaps I should have mentioned in answer to an earlier question that the ANTA board has on it people with considerable experience of education. For instance, one board member, Stella Axarlis, was a member of the council of the Casey Institute for some time and made a major contribution there, as well as having been a teacher in her earlier life. Another member, Geoff Ashton, was a member of the New South Wales Board of Studies for quite some time. Admittedly, that is secondary education rather than TAFE, but he had a strong involvement in the development of curriculum there. Stuart Hornery, the chair, spent a lot of time travelling around Australia visiting TAFE and then, having done that, visited comparable institutions, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, and has formed the view that the best of TAFE in Australia is world best practice, full stop. Therefore, he is arguably, at his level within business, the strongest and most vocal positive advocate of TAFE's strengths and what it can contribute to Australia. I could go back to the ANTA board and find out what they think but, if I had a guess, I would say

they would have a view similar to my own.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I was just interested in the point you were making there relating to the hierarchical function of ANTA. I was wanting to know to what extent you delegate your role down the line to other vocational education and training authorities, particularly in view of the fact that we have had criticism previously that a lot of the courses are designed by national ITABs and it is very difficult when it gets down to the regional level to implement those courses, which do not always relate to the businesses at the grassroots.

Mr Moran—Coming from Queensland, I am aware that industry people in Queensland will occasionally say that some program has been well designed for the needs of Melbourne and Sydney but there is a less satisfactory fit in Queensland businesses. What you are referring to there are, I think, the competency standards which are the basis of the greater number of vocational education and training qualifications. Apart from now including competency standards in training packages, we have changed the process by which they are developed. The national ITABs are under a greater obligation now to work with their state and territory affiliates in the development of those competency standards. Secondly, before they submit those competency standards, now as part of training packages, for endorsement by the committee of the ANTA board that looks after these things, they must actually validate them with a range of firms of a range of sizes in a range of states. We will not look at them unless they have done that validation with actual firms who say they are happy.

The other point is that the changes that are tied into the national training framework are all about giving the individual providers a lot more flexibility to respond to local circumstances, particularly where they are, as I described before, quality endorsed and able to do that. So I think that you will see increasingly over time a better fit between providers at the local level and the firms, group training companies, community groups and students that they deal with, supported by the national level reforms that have been agreed in recent times.

That having been said, there is still a shift in mindset required within the system. Our argument has been for some time now—but we have made this point more strongly in recent times—that the primary relationship in the system has to be between the individual provider, whether it is a TAFE institute or a private provider, and the firms, group training companies, community groups and students with which it is to deal. At a state level or a national level there should be as few intrusions into that relationship as care for public funds and the minimum regulation of a major government system would require. It is my strong belief that the changes which all governments have now agreed will over a period of a couple of years deliver that shift to focus on that relationship and, as a result, a much healthier relationship between individual providers and their clients.

Mr MOSSFIELD—You were talking about VET in schools when I came in. What

would your suggestion be as to what level students should be exposed to VET training and also the development of future employment prospects based on that training, bearing in mind that we have been told previously that in some cases a lot of school children see their future as the weekend.

Mr Moran—I do not think there is any one answer. It depends on individuals. So we need education systems and schools within them that can be flexible in their response to what individuals actually need. The fundamental problem we face is a declining retention rate through to the end of year 12 in schools. You can have a debate about why that is so, but the reason most commonly given by informed observers of education is that there is an insufficient breadth in the education experiences available in many schools such that students switch off and just want to think about the weekend, as your question suggested.

The answer, therefore, probably lies in broadening the educational provision such that there are a greater number of things that can be relevant to the needs and interests of those young people who only want to think about the weekend, and VET in schools is part of that but not all that is required. I think the best answer on VET in schools is the one that was implied by the chair's question earlier, that is, we should not reinvent the wheel in VET in schools. The program should tie back to what industry says it wants through training packages, but we should look for means by which individual schools, having considered what their kids need, can then, if they wish, have access to or make better use of the huge resources that are locked up in TAFE, both capital resources and teachers.

There are two things standing in the way of that: firstly, in some quarters—and they are only limited—some remarkably old-fashioned views, regressive views even, of what years 11 and 12 can legitimately be on about; and, secondly, the management arrangements to actually allow the resources to be attached to the purchasing of the experience. It is not rocket science; it is pretty easy to sort out.

Mr SAWFORD—Three questions, one on curriculum and a couple on apprentices. Several submissions to this inquiry have suggested that vocational education should aim to develop a broader range of competencies in addition to the competencies they have now. How well does this view sit with industry?

Mr Moran—Industry has supported key competencies and their inclusion within training packages as part of competency standards, so one of the tests that we apply to a training package coming forward from an industry group now is: does it cover the ground in terms of key competencies? You know what I am talking about here—the key competencies that have been around for a while to affect both schooling and TAFE. Those key competencies actually hang off what business people say they would like young people to have when they actually come into the workplace. So there is a nice symmetry there, still.

Mr SAWFORD—The kids will have a very different view of that in terms of their

experience—but still.

Mr Moran—Well, yes, perhaps. But that is what people are saying, and that informed the original development of key competencies. So I think the policy is there to embrace key competencies in training packages. But I think we could do a better job at the provider level in allowing providers more flexibility in designing educational experiences that will deliver on those key competencies.

What we are in effect saying is that vocational education and training should rest on key competencies and a tighter approach to the assessment of educational experiences so that you can then award nationally recognised qualifications, but that the educational process—what TAFE does, what the private providers do—should be deregulated to the greatest extent possible in the interests of the educators having as much freedom as they want to innovate and be flexible and do new things. How well they do will be apparent from the results that their students achieve through these improved assessment processes, with that assessment pinned back against the competency standards in the first place.

This will be a huge professional challenge to people in TAFE. As yet, I don't think that the operational sides of preparing TAFE teachers to cope with the challenge have received sufficient attention, but all states in their own ways are working on it.

Mr SAWFORD—Just a couple of quick ones on apprentices. Is there any data yet available on the success or otherwise of the new apprentice arrangements?

Mr Moran—Some states are reporting big growth in traineeship numbers, but the marketing of new apprenticeships really is at a very early stage. There have been a few qualitative studies done where people have gone out and spoken to people in industry. What is emerging is that the fundamental problems there, from the view of business people, hinge around often, for the traditional industries particularly, the quality of the applicant pools for apprenticeships and whether firms can attract the right sort of people. There is some dispute as to whether this is true or not, but that is what people are saying.

So over the next couple of years I think we have to pay a bit more attention to how employers in building and construction and metals and engineering in particular can be helped to do a better job in marketing themselves into the school leavers market to pick up better people, if that is what they think they need. There are examples of that having been tried—one in South Australia, which seemed to have worked, that is, professional effort was put into marketing some apprenticeship opportunities—I think in the electrical/electronic area—to prospective school leavers, and the number and quality of people went up appreciably.

Mr SAWFORD—The Australian Business Chamber made a submission to us, and they thought it was worth while for TAFEs to offer apprenticeships without being indentured to an employer. What is your view of that?

Mr Moran—In a sense that is already happening, in two ways. One way it is happening, and another way is about to begin. The first way is through pre-apprenticeship or pre-employment programs. A person could go along to a TAFE and do an institution based course which involves no experience of the workplace as part of the course, or not much anyway, and as a result of that course acquire much of what would be obtained through the off-the-job training that that person would take if he or she were an apprentice.

To give you an example: some years ago brick manufacturers realised that one of the impediments to their industry was the availability of bricklayers. They were not getting them through the traditional apprenticeship system, so they negotiated with various parties to get up a pre-apprenticeship which, I think in eight or 12 weeks, got young people to the point where they were competent in the bricklaying you would find in domestic dwelling construction, for example. If they wanted to be a fully qualified bricklayer, they would have to go on and complete an apprenticeship, but that eight or 12 weeks was time off the off-the-job training they would have to do anyway.

The second initiative is, I think, that some TAFE institutes will choose to become group training companies and be able to employ apprentices and trainees, train them themselves but then, through their links with industry, as all group training companies do, have those apprentices and trainees posted out to employers, often in small business. For my part, I think this would be an excellent development and would add another dimension to TAFE's ability to contribute to our society.

Mr SAWFORD—While we were in Western Australia, I think the Western Australian chamber actually said to us that WA had to advertise overseas for 500 nurses. It just seems that governments, TAFEs and universities are often not very good at predicting job possibilities down the track and that sometimes young people themselves want to have a bit of a punt. They want to be a plumber, for example. They could not get indentured to an employer but, if that course was available, maybe, as you suggest through a group training or group training in TAFE, they may be right in terms of what the possibilities are in the future, particularly if they are determined to succeed in that area. Yet there do not seem to be many opportunities for people to be able to do that.

Mr Moran—I think broad national manpower planning is pretty well discredited. You are not going to have people arguing that we should try and assess at a national level whether the output of nurses from university is right. I think the best that can be done is to improve the quality of information going to school students about opportunities and how people with particular sorts of qualifications fare in the labour market and what the income streams are like X years out from graduating. All of those things are there in a sense but they could be a whole lot more sophisticated, and at the end of the day you really have to leave it to people to sort it out, I think.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Moran. I appreciate very much your very helpful contribution. If there is anything else that you think of of a supplementary nature, please do not hesitate to send it on.

Mr Moran—I think most of what we would want to say is in the papers that we have provided to the secretary.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Moran—If it is not apparent from the remarks that I have made, we are very hopeful that your committee's work will come up with a reaffirmation of the importance of TAFE within our society, along with an acknowledgment that everything around us is changing and the TAFE has to change as well to match its efforts with what Australia might need at any particular point in time.

CHAIR—I can assure you that will be the case. Thank you very much.

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

That this committee authorise publication of the evidence given before it and its subcommittee at public hearings on this day, including publication on the parliamentary database of the proof transcript.

Committee adjourned at 12.14 p.m.