
# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**Reference: Factors influencing the employment of young people**

**BLACKTOWN**

**Thursday, 28 November 1996**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**CANBERRA**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Members

Mr Charles (Chair)

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| Mr Peter Baldwin | Mr Griffin |
| Mr Barresi | Mr Marek |
| Mr Bradford | Mr Mossfield |
| Mr Brough | Mr Neville |
| Mrs Elson | Mr Pyne |
| Mr Martin Ferguson | Mr Sawford |
| Mrs Gash | |

Matter referred for inquiry into and report on:

Factors influencing the employment of young people.

## WITNESSES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

*Factors influencing the employment of young people*

BLACKTOWN

Thursday, 28 November 1996

Present

Mr Charles (Chair)

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| Mr Barresi | Mr Griffin |
| Mr Bradford | Mr Mossfield |
| Mr Martin Ferguson | Mr Sawford |

The committee met at 9.10 a.m.

Mr Charles took the chair.

**PARTICIPANTS**

Blacktown Boys High School—Mr John Craig, Principal
Mostafa Ahmed
Brendon McKay
David Griffiths
Salvador Tomas
Mathew Kings
Greg Robertson

Blacktown Girls High School—Mr Edward Gavin, Principal
Lidija Aleksic
Allison Divertie
Amie Chapman
Janette Sosa
Andria Georgiou
Jemima Isbester

Evans Hill High School—Mr Tony Fugaccia, Principal
Bilal Kebbi
Adrian Pye
Gabrielle Polczynski
Camille Wilson
Neil Gendle
Jeni Spears
Melanie Tilbury
Michelle Chown

John Paul II Senior High School—Ms Anne Byrne, Deputy Principal
Daniel Booth
Garth Quinn
Jennifer Bautista
Lisa Rizzo
Amanda Quinn

Quakers Hill High School—Mr Graham Hodgkins, Deputy Principal
Krystin Balchin
Rachel Turner
Jodie Passmore
Brent Ramsay
Andrew Marshall
Rajineel Prasaad
Cynthie Kwok
Rebecca Sione

**CHAIR**—I declare open this school forum on the inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people. The purpose of the inquiry is to consult widely and produce recommendations for government action that will help promote the employment prospects of young people. The committee conducted a similar school forum in Caboolture, Queensland earlier this month. Students and members of the committee agreed that it was a valuable opportunity to share concerns and express views about this important issue.

The committee considers forums such as this to be an important part of the inquiry process. So far, the committee has received over 80 submissions and conducted public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane. For the most part, the evidence collected has come from employers, government and non-government agencies. Through this school forum all of you will have the opportunity to voice your views and opinions on this very important matter. The agenda and issues for discussions have been sent to you and you have had prior opportunity to study the issues.

Some of the issues we wish to discuss today include: the effectiveness and appropriateness of the secondary education system; vocational education in schools; employer perceptions of young people; apprenticeships and traineeships; youth wages; income assistance and any other issues which you may wish to raise.

To help structure the debate I will introduce each section with a few comments based on evidence that has already been provided to the committee. I will then seek your comments and views on the matters under discussion. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand. When you have been given a microphone, please state your name, your age and the school that you are from, each time that you wish to speak.

I welcome to the inquiry Blacktown Boys High School, Blacktown Girls High School, Evans Hill High School, John Paul II Senior High School and Quakers Hill High School.

Thank you very much for coming today. We appreciate that you have gone to some trouble. We understand that you are very forthright young people and that you will have a good deal to say and that is good.

The first topic we will discuss is the secondary education system. Can someone, or several of you, tell me if you think the kinds of subjects that you are studying in school will equip you for real jobs in the workplace?

**Ms Chown**—I am Michelle Chown, I am 15 years of age and I go to Evans Hill High School. I don't think they do. They don't equip you because what you learn in class is to sit there and do what you are told, but in the work force, if you finish a job, of course, you have got to go and help other people. But a lot of people don't know that; they do not know what to do when they get out in the work force. They feel practically lost because they are not used to those circumstances.

**CHAIR**—What do you think you should be studying that you are not?

**Ms Chown**—I am not sure. But I believe that in some areas you could—I am stuck.

**CHAIR**—That's all right.

**Ms Chown**—The young people I have spoken to who have left for the work force get stuck because a lot of them do not know what they want to do when they leave school. They have done their HSC, but they still do not know what they want to do. Others didn't know what to do when they got into the work force. They didn't know how to handle it. They didn't know how to handle their money and stuff like that.

**Mr BARRESI**—You say that they do not equip you for work—do you have a particular career goal in mind and are you relating it to that?

**Ms Chown**—I would like to get an apprenticeship in hairdressing or as a beautician. There is not much you can do at school for that, but I know with other people—

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—Could I just have an indication, when you speak, of the actual subjects you are studying—so not only your comments, but the subjects you are actually studying at the moment.

**Ms Chown**—I am studying dance, English, maths, science, history, and careers.

**Ms Isbester**—I am Jemima Isbester, I am 17 years old and I go to Blacktown Girls High School. I study ancient history, drama, life management studies, maths in practice, English and media studies. I think the school pretty much does try to equip you for life. For example, I do a unit called maths in practice, which is a very skills based subject. It is really practical. People say you do not use maths in your life, but you would use that. It is really excellent.

Life management studies also is a great course for your life. Before I did that I was a bit of a disorganised person and this year I have been getting better marks and been more organised and more together, and life management teaches you about management and personal growth and things like that. I think everyone needs to know that to prosper in their careers after they finish school.

Also, to not know when you finish school—probably because we do not have enough careers guidance because they are really busy and they do not really have enough time to come and talk to us separately—but we do have subjects such as careers and work studies which help us with that kind of thing.

**Mr Quinn**—I am Garth Quinn, I am 17 and I am from John Paul II Senior High School. I study physics, chemistry, maths, English and geography. The HSC in New South Wales just seems like a piece of paper that you get to get into uni. The TER in New South Wales is seen as a number, so you get into uni and after about a year or so it does not really matter. I think there is no emphasis on it; you get this piece of paper and straightaway it does not mean anything to you because you have got to the next stage.

For those people that are not going to uni or are not going to TAFE or anything like that, the HSC does not mean anything to them because all it is is just a piece of paper they get at the end of the year which says that they have been to year 12. It does not give them any skills in secretarial areas or stuff like that. They do not get any experience in the work force. The people that are not going to uni should get more experience in the work force so they can go out there and employees employ them because they have had some sort of

on-the-job training.

In their first year of working they have to be trained to do the job. If they have that training while they are at school then they are one step ahead and they are ready to work as soon as they leave school, not having to go through training, TAFE et cetera after they leave school. It should be part of the school curriculum, so as soon as they leave school they are ready to get into the work force, they are employable, they are not just like people that have to be trained et cetera.

**CHAIR**—Are most of your friends and colleagues going to university?

**Mr Quinn**—Most of the people that I know go to uni and they say the subjects they do they need some of them at uni but most of them they just do it because they get good numbers at the end of the year so they can get into the uni course that they want to do. It is all about the numbers that they get at the end of the year so they can get into the uni course they want to do. It is not about what they are actually learning, because that subject is easy for them to do so they can get the good numbers to get into the TAFE course or the uni course.

**CHAIR**—Do your parents or your teachers tell you there are other careers available that you do not need a university degree for?

**Mr Quinn—**There are other jobs that they say you could do, but the ones that you do not need tech or university for, all you really should be doing is having some job training while you are at school. This girl down the front who wants to be a hairdresser should be able to go to tech during her last year of school so that she is already half trained to be a hairdresser when she leaves school, instead of wasting a year getting trained on the job while she is in the work force.

**Ms Wilson**—My name is Camille Wilson, I am 23, I go to Evans High. I am a mature age student. I am doing my HSC over two years. I do English, mathematics in society, 2-3 unit legal, 2-3 society and culture and 2-3 unit food tech. When I leave I would like to do something in food microbiology or criminal psychology or criminology, or something along those lines. I left school in 1988. Everyone then thought of the HSC as a real achievement. But these days I have noticed with the other students around me and at school, all it shows is just that you can do year 12, you can get a mark, that is about it, and it just shows determination to the employers.

Perhaps one period, or half a period, a week or a fortnight could be devoted to employment skills like typing and customer service. When I was working, my jobs were in catering and there is a lot of customer service involved there. Just about every job you have these days—unless you are stuck in a pokey little office and you do not talk to anyone—involves customer service. And there is such a big emphasis on that, and business survives on customer service.

Subjects along those lines—telephone techniques and just how to write letters properly on a typewriter or a computer—will help the students a lot more, whether they decide to go to university or not or whether they decide to get into a traineeship or an apprenticeship. And even if they go to university, they can still use these skills to get part-time work, or when they are finished university, it will give them a bit of a head start.

They can turn around and say, 'Yes, I have a typing certificate, I can type 30 words a minute,'—whatever the case may be. Most government departments now require you to type 30 or 35 words a minute before you can get into a clerical job with any government department. Those sorts of skills would help a great deal when students leave school.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Somebody has already mentioned career advisers here. I would like to hear from as many schools as possible on whether you feel as though you are getting the right career advice and, if not, what additional information do you require? Are the career advisers the suitable people to give you that information? Have they had experience in outside industry? Would somebody like to comment on that idea?

**Ms Quinn**—I am Amanda Quinn from John Paul II Senior High School. I study economics, physics, maths 2 unit, religion, English and modern history. Our careers adviser is really good. She knows a lot about what she is on about and she is a good help, she is always there for you. We offer vocational studies at our school, and it is a great opportunity, but I also want a TER, and to get a TER, I cannot do a vocational subject. And because it is such a good way to learn, if you could get a TER and do a vocational subject, that would be a really good opportunity. I just thought it would be a good idea.

**Mr Gendle**—I am Neil Gendle, I am 16 and I go to Evans High School. I agree a lot with what the young lady here was saying, as it does fairly well equip you to go in the work force, so long as a person knows what courses they can do, what courses are available to them and what they want to do. That is where, as you said, your careers advisers do come in, because a lot of the time students going into the senior school, into years 11 and 12, do not really know what they want to do. So a lot of the time, I think you need to start earlier with the careers advising; finding out what people can do, what they think they should be doing, or could be doing, and just building on top of that as they go into the senior school. I say that because a lot of people are just wasting two years to get a piece of paper because they really do not know what they want to do.

**Mr SAWFORD**—When would you start the careers advice?

**Mr Gendle**—Probably as you are going into year 9 and 10 because at our school we did start it in year 10. It was a lesson a week for all of year 10 classes, but no-one really took it seriously. It may have something to do with our careers adviser. She is really good if you individually go and see her, it is really good, but in a class-type atmosphere, no-one really takes that subject at all seriously. It is just a matter of people. If they get the right guidance from their careers adviser, and they know what they want to do, and they stick with that, then you are getting equipped with all the skills you need to go out and do what you want to do.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I will come back to Ms Chown who started off. Are you saying to us that secondary education as you know it is too passive in that you do not have enough hands on and that the balance between what is regarded as academic subjects and hands-on vocational subjects is out of kilter?

**Ms Chown**—I probably will not go on to Year 12 because I do not need my HSC to do what I am going to do. I could leave now and get an apprenticeship and go to tech. The girl over there was saying how they do equip you with all that stuff but that is in Year 11 and Year 12, not in Year 10, all you have is careers

and commerce to help you along with that matter. In Year 10 there is practically nothing you do, you cannot do maths in practice and stuff like that. In maths you learn all the hard stuff using letters and all the stuff that really has no relevance when you leave school. It is hard to explain it.

I know a fair few people who do not want to go on, they want to leave and get into some kind of apprenticeship but they really do not have much information on that. I am in the top English class so we do careers in the same class. My careers adviser focuses more on going to uni and stuff like that because it is the top English class and a lot of them are going on to it. But there are also some of us who are not.

**Mr SAWFORD**—When I asked that question there were a few people down the back there nodding their heads about the balance between vocational and academic subjects in secondary school. Does anyone else have any views on that?

**Ms Chapman**—My name is Amie Chapman, I am 17 years of age and I study at Blacktown Girls High School. Just to answer Mr Mossfield's question on careers advice, there is only one individual to supply all the information for 1,000 students. I do not think it is enough because so many people are inquiring about their employment after they leave school and there is just too much work for one person to have to answer everyone's questions.

Just for the benefit of the person over there from Evans who answered the other question, I do not agree with that because most people in Year 12 or Year 11 do have a second job outside of school and they learn customer skills down there. I also think that TAFE gives these skills as well when you are studying at school as well. Thanks.

**CHAIR**—How many of you plan to go to university? From the show of hands I see the number is about 80 per cent. And just to follow up on that, would most of your friends and colleagues or classmates in Year 11 and Year 12 be planning to go to university? I see that it is roughly equal.

**Mr BARRESI**—If you had the opportunity or the ability was provided to you, how many would go on and do an apprenticeship or a traineeship? I see there are some of you who would basically look at both options if they were there.

**CHAIR**—There were nine hands up.

**Mr BARRESI**—Okay.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Have you looked at the employment opportunities down the track as to whether in going to university it is going to provide a career opportunity for you? Alternatively, have you looked at what would happen if you started an apprenticeship, what the career opportunities are like there?

**Mr GRIFFIN—**Of those who indicated they wanted to go to university, do you have a firm view of what it is you want to do at university and what you want to then become? Who wants to be a lawyer? Doctor? Accountant? Can people just yell out some of the other things that they want to be? Okay, I hear journalist, crazy scientist and psychologist.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—Could I have an indication of how many people here are doing part-time casual work at the moment? I see it is about three-quarters. Also, with respect to going to university, how many would be looking at going to, say, the University of Western Sydney as against Macquarie, Sydney or the University of New South Wales? How many would be going to the University of Western Sydney? Four. So the others would be going to Sydney, University of New South Wales or Macquarie.

**Ms Isbester**—What will you be doing about HECS? A lot of us live in western Sydney, in particular, and with the rise in HECS I think it is rather an elitist system—making us pay more to go to university when we have worked our way so hard. I do not think it is really fair to cut back on that when there are so many other areas you could cut back on. It is upsetting and I just had to say something.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—I think Bob should answer that.

**CHAIR**—We are asking the questions, not answering them. Can I change the topic just a little? We have heard from a lot of employers that young people who apply for jobs have very poor literacy skills, their grammar is terrible, they cannot spell, they do not know where to put in punctuation and, in the way they describe things, they do not use words that are appropriate to the task at hand. Can some of you tell us what you think about how you have been taught reading, writing and maths, too—we are interested in numeracy. Do you think the employers' perceptions are right, based on your knowledge of your colleagues, or do you think they are wrong? If there is a problem, what do you think we ought to do about it?

**Mr Quinn**—Like the girl at the front said, maths is just one level, basically. Even in the lowest English level, you still study texts and plays. I think there should be an emphasis on grammar and stuff like that instead of the more theory based stuff that you do in the higher English classes. There should be more letter writing and stuff like that—skills that people need in the jobs. Studying Shakespeare and that sort of stuff will not be needed when you go out into the work force. It will only be letter writing and stuff like that. That is the sort of thing that employers want and they are things that people are not being taught. So if you could teach them how to write letters or take down shorthand and stuff like that, that would be more helpful than learning about some stupid English text.

There are different levels of maths but the lowest level is supposed to be practical but it is not really relevant. Our classes play Bingo and stuff like that. I have talked to some students that do maths in practice and they come out complaining because it is too easy. It is not aimed at what they want to do. In maths in society they learn how to do all the carpentry and stuff like that which is good for them because they want to be carpenters, but the people who do not want to be carpenters do not learn the maths they need. They should be learning how to do the books, accountancy and stuff like that—skills that they will need when they go out and find a job.

**Mr Ahmed**—My name is Mostafa Ahmed and I am from Blacktown Boys High. I basically think that these skills are actually more concentrated on in the junior school. They are quite important skills to have if you are going to enter the work force, so they should be more concentrated on in the high school for the senior students who are preparing to go out into the work force. These skills are being ignored. That is why most students do not actually have the skills and the literacy and all that stuff.

**Ms Quinn**—You do get students that slip through without being taught properly. I find that once you get to year 11 and 12—because I am in year 11 now—they do not target spelling, they just check that you have done your essay the way it is meant to be done. If you have made a few spelling mistakes, it is, 'Oh, well, as long as you've written the essay.' It is not a big deal to make a spelling mistake any more, so people get lazy because they are not getting into as much trouble and that is when you tend to get your problem.

**CHAIR**—Do they correct your papers?

**Ms Quinn**—Yes, they do correct our papers; but when they correct them, if there are spelling mistakes, they might circle them, but it is not a big thing. You just go, 'Oh, I made a spelling mistake; oh, well, as long as I did the essay.' They do not really target spelling mistakes as much as they used to.

**Ms Sosa**—My name is Janette Sosa. I am 17 and I am at Blacktown Girls High School. At our school they do check the spelling, essays and everything, especially Miss Barat, who is our head teacher. Also, I think the punctuation and all that stuff starts at primary school. The primary schools should be the ones that teach the spelling and the ones that should be hard on that, because you should learn when you are younger. When you are older, it is harder to learn. Also, about the work, the typing and all of that, there is TAFE to do that kind of stuff.

**Ms Wilson**—With regard to grammar, I am still getting picked up on my incorrect grammar and my incorrect spelling all the time. When I was in years 7, 8 and 9, we never had any grammar classes. I was really good at spelling when I was in primary school. When I got to high school, spelling did not matter. If you got it wrong, it was just circled, yet half the time you did not know which actually was the correct way to spell it. I think that grammar should be concentrated on more. As the guy behind me said, we are not going to need Shakespeare when we leave school. Shakespeare is good to learn so that you can get an insight into it and stuff like that, and maybe understand things a bit better and how they were centuries ago. But it does not always help with the grammar. I think the grammar is more important. Once you get the grammar and the spelling right, you can then talk right. You can say the right things at the right time, et cetera. I think that would be a lot better than learning Shakespeare and stuff like that.

**Ms Chapman**—I think that it is personally up to the individual to correct their grammar and their literacy skills because we do learn in primary school what we are supposed to know. If you are writing essays and making punctuation mistakes in year 11, then I think it is up to yourself to get something done about it.

**Ms Chown**—I think a lot of the problem is that right from day one you have got 30 people in kindergarten and year 1 classes. At that age, there are a lot of people that need one-on-one help to learn those skills, and they are not getting that. It follows through to high school, where you have got a whole heap of students in a class. If classes were smaller, they could get more help and you would find that there would be less people that had spelling, reading and numeracy problems in that area. So, you would find that there would be less people that were illiterate.

**Mr Griffiths**—My name is David Griffiths. I am from Blacktown Boys High School. I am 16 years old. I do English, maths in society, computer studies, modern history, people and events, ancient history and also economics. Basically, what I want to talk about is that I believe between two-unit maths and maths in

society and maths in practice there is a wide gap. I was doing two-unit maths at the beginning of this year, but I found the course was way too hard for me to do, so I dropped down to maths in society after I found out I did not need it for my university degree as a prerequisite. I believe the difference between two-unit maths and maths in society is very wide. I believe that two-unit maths teaches probably impractical things which you are never going to use in real life, while maths in society and maths in practice teach more practical things which you can use in the real world. Two-unit maths is basically out of the textbook—such things as trigonometry and things like that, which we are never going to use. I believe that maths in society and maths in practice are a lot more practical.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I want to find out from those who indicated that they are doing part-time or casual work what sorts of places we are talking about. Is it McDonald's or a takeaway food joint?

Mr Chairman, I hear that one person works as a receptionist in retail; another one works in sales at the Athletes Foot.How many in sales? How many in hospitality, takeaway food, restaurants, cafes? Anywhere else?

**Ms Quinn**—Children's rides.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—This question is for those who do not want to go to university. What prospects are there at the moment in this western Sydney region for an apprenticeship or a non-apprenticeship job? Those who want to leave at years 10 or 11, have you had much success in trying to get a job so far?

**Mr Pye**—I am Adrian Pye, I am 15 years of age and I go to Evans High School. This year I decided that I would leave school. I decided to look for an apprenticeship now. Within the last couple of weeks I have looked hard and I have found—

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—Which trade?

**Mr Pye**—In the computer trade. I have really got into it now. I found something, applied for it and had an interview, and I am waiting for a response. I believe that, if you really want to do something, the work is out there. You just need to stand up and be counted and say, 'I'm here and I want to do something in an apprenticeship trade, or anything else.' This is the first time I have looked and I have achieved what I have wanted to do. It is right up my alley—computers—and once I get this apprenticeship it can help me later on in life, if I do get it.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—So what is the actual job?

**Mr Pye**—It is a scientific instrument maker—electronics—which would offer much for the career I want.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—And you have had an interview for it. Do you have any idea how many kids applied for it?

**Mr Pye**—No, I was not told how many were interviewed. The application was put in and I was

successful with that. The interview went quite well.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Who else has gone looking for an apprenticeship or a job so they can leave school at, say, year 10 or year 11?

**Ms Chown**—I have just put my name down in a couple of different places for people to ring me if they are looking for an apprentice or something. I am still going to finish year 10. At one place they wanted me to start straightaway but I wanted to finish year 10 first. That is a bad thing, I guess.

**Ms Isbester**—I would just like to say something about apprenticeships. One of my friends, who is about 15, did an apprenticeship in boilermaking. As soon as his employer got the government funding, they fired him. That has happened to a few people I have known. I think you should be more tough on the employers and check up on that kind of thing because a lot of people in the community are being abused. They are being used so that they can get government funding and they can take advantage of people.

**Mr BARRESI**—Could I follow up on that. Those of you who have chosen not to do an apprenticeship, can you give me some of the reasons why you have actually decided against that particular career path? Is it simply because university was more attractive or was there something about the apprenticeship system itself which was a disincentive?

**Ms Isbester**—You get really poor wages with apprenticeships and it is really unstable, like what happened to that guy who did his apprenticeship and got fired as soon as they got government funding. There are no promises of getting work. My sister did a traineeship in retail and came second in her course, yet they did not hire her. There is no work promise. It is just not a good field to go into.

**Ms Sosa**—I do industry studies in hospitality, which is a TER course and a TAFE accredited course. It is also a start towards an apprenticeship. I think it is a really good subject because, after I finish year 12 and year 11, I can go straight into TAFE and finish my course. If I want to go into university, I can, or I can go straight into an apprenticeship. It is a good course to take and there should be more like that.

**Ms Wilson**—If I did not go to university I would not be able to get a decent job that paid good wages. So my reason for going to university is that, okay, it is only another piece of paper along with my HSC, but the fact is that I have studied criminology or food microbiology, whatever the case may be, and I have also studied other subjects, therefore I can branch out in my career. I do not have to stick to criminology. I can go into other fields. A uni course in criminology can help me. I can join any of the police forces or armed forces. If I did not go to uni I would have to fight for a position, whereas if I were to go to uni and finish a course, I could then say, 'Yes, I have been to uni,' and I could be put in an upper level, so to speak, so that I can have a better chance of getting some sort of a career off the ground. That is my reason for going to uni, rather than going out and just getting a job.

**Mr BARRESI**—So you see apprenticeships as being too limiting in terms of potential earnings and other avenues that may arise after you finish your apprenticeship?

**Ms Wilson**—I know a few people who have apprenticeships, mainly in catering, and it is not until their

fourth year in the apprenticeship that they can actually get enough money to live on. At my age I cannot really get an apprenticeship now. But 16-, 17- and 18-year-olds basically cannot live out of home, they cannot get their own independence at 18 or 19 because they are just not earning enough money. They have to stay home and live with their parents and stuff like that. They want to get out and do things, but they cannot because they just do not have the money because they are in an apprenticeship.

Personally, if I was 17 or 18 years old I would not go for an apprenticeship. I would just finish school, take a year off and go and work, whether it be in McDonald's or whatever, and then go to uni, so that when I did go to uni I would be better within myself. At the end of an apprenticeship, you get a trade. You can say, 'Yes, I have a trade,' but you have a trade in one field, whereas with uni you can major in different fields. It just widens your horizon a bit.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Can I say something on apprentices, as I am an ex-apprentice. I am a fitter and turner by trade. I understand some of your concerns about low wages, but I have got to say that a skilled tradesperson will always get employment. There is always a shortage of skilled people, so whenever you are going into a trade, just keep that in mind. But you have got to be good; if you are just average, you may have difficulty. Also, trades are quite often a stepping stone to other careers. Don't see trades as a dead end. You can go to many other fields via a trade. It is a good base training for anybody. Just keep that in mind. And also bear in mind that most of you will change your career several times during your working life. I think you should look very seriously at trades.

I would like to ask if any of you have sought work experience in local industry, with a view to finding out what a trade is about. Has anyone sought that—not paid work, just work experience—and in what industries? One person has said teaching. Someone else has said journalism. How did you find that? That was not very good work experience if you found it boring.

**Ms Georgiou**—My name is Andria Georgiou, I go to Blacktown Girls High School and I am 16 years old. I went to work experience at Featherdale Wildlife Park and that was really a good experience because it was hands-on and I fed all the animals. That is what I want to do in the future, so it was really a good experience.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Did anyone do work experience in a manufacturing environment? Where did you do it, mate?

**Mr Quinn**—Berridale Fruit Juices.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—And what are they actually doing there?

**Mr Quinn**—They had their production line going and they showed me the steps involved in the production line. They had their simulators going and they showed me the steps for how they set up their production line and the different ways they can alter it to do different things, like if they wanted a different flavour and stuff like that. They showed how, if a customer wants a different product, they can change their manufacturing techniques.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—One last question from me on this issue. How many of you, after having done that work experience, were interested in going into that field, whatever it may have been, as a career? I imagine that is what attracted you to it in the first place. Were you in a situation where you thought you might like to do a particular type of job, so you went there and, having done so, you still wanted to do that as a final career option? How many of you were basically turned off by it, once you actually had a look at it?

**CHAIR**—Half-a-dozen hands went up, but your question is too complex for us to be sure of what we are getting a response to.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—The impression I got, from the way the hands went up in the first place, is that most people who did work experience did it in a field that they were interested in possibly going into as a career; and that quite a few of them, after having done so, found it was not of interest to them. What I am getting at is this: often, with work experience—and this was so when I did work experience back in the dim, dark seventies—the circumstances were such that it was often something that you did because you thought it might be interesting as a personal preference, rather than from any practical consideration of whether in fact it was a good career option for you, and that sort of stuff.

**Ms Chown**—There is too much emphasis on being a doctor and stuff like that. There are people that need to work in the factories because, if you did not have the factories, you would not have the equipment to be a doctor, a secretary or anything. There is a very big importance to be put on the people that work in factories. I bet that, if you went to factories, you would find a lot of the people that were there were older in age, in their forties and fifties, and that there are not as many young people there. Young people think it is not good enough for them, because all their friends are out going to uni, where they could be better off.

On traineeships, this year my auntie became top hairdresser for New South Wales and she came third in Australia, and that is a very big accomplishment. In some areas, you can accomplish lot and earn a lot of money in traineeships and apprenticeships when you get further on.

**Ms Isbester**—I would like to talk about work experience and university. People get exploited on work experience. You go there, you want to find out about the field and you want to find out what is going on, but what happens is that they say, 'Hey, make me a coffee. Sit here, watch me work, maybe answer my phone.' I did work experience at Dymocks because I was thinking about owning a book store—I like books; I am very enthusiastic about them—but all they got me to do was basically put books on shelves and do dusting, and get them coffee. I felt I was exploited and I extremely disliked work experience; and similar circumstances have happened to some of my friends.

University is not the only way to get a good job. For example, I want to go into radio broadcasting, and if I do not get the TER score I want, I could go to a college, do a course or something, and do community radio. If you really want something and you really want that career enough, you can get it, no matter how low your marks are or how badly you stuffed up your HSC: you can still get what you want if you are prepared to work for it. Thank you.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How many people here are interested in perhaps going into business on their own at some stage in the future? It was interesting when we asked before what you wanted to do and you all said you

wanted to be lawyers, accountants, doctors and this, that and the other. None of those people create any wealth in the country. That is a big value judgment, but they actually only take wealth. In talking to another group of secondary kids, one girl got up and actually said she was going to design the best cutlery system in the world. In other words, there are hugh global markets and huge opportunities for doing new things, and often it is young people who are the ones coming up with the lateral thinking to create those ideas. In terms of business, what sort of businesses are people interested in? I hear various answers: being a computer salesman; owning your own hairdressing salon; selling sporting goods. Good. Do any of you want to get into business where you actually make something? Writing computer programs for music: there is a big market for that—a huge one. You might be the billionaire of the future!

**CHAIR**—Have any of you ever had a teacher who said to you, 'You are not studying hard enough. You had better study harder because if you don't you won't get to university and you are condemned to a career getting your hands dirty or working in an abattoir, or in a factory, or something like that?' If so, would you tell us about that experience?

**Ms Aleksic**—I am Lidija Aleksic, I am from Blacktown Girls High School and I do life management studies, English, ancient history, maths and drama. In life management studies my teacher expected me to do really well and, unfortunately, I did not get the marks that she expected me to. She had a bit of a discussion with my mother over the phone and it rather upset me because I thought that I did well enough in the marks that I got. She said that I could do way better. But I have so much pressure on me from other subjects that I am doing that I just could not handle it any more. These marks are enough to get me good HSC and TER marks to get me into university. And I am getting such pressure from the teachers and my mother. It is just not good enough.

**Mr Booth**—My name is Daniel Booth and I am from John Paul II Senior High. I think that it is very true. There is a lot of pressure on students about the university with TERs and all that. A lot of people think that if I do not get this mark I will not be able to do anything. I think that it really comes down to the careers advice. A lot of people are just placing all their eggs in one basket and you have got to realise and take into account the reality that you might not get the marks. I think people's expectations are a bit too high these days.

My dad works for Blacktown Hospital and the Community Health Centre—he actually deals with psychiatric stuff—and he has met a lot of students that have not made the marks and they have gone into depression and things like that. They do not know what they are going to do with life. A lot of them have actually committed suicide which is growing amongst young people in Australia nowadays. So, I reckon that there should be a lot more advice on what other options there are, especially in years 11 and 12 where people are actually looking for a TER. If you do not get the marks, there should be advice on what you can do to get into the course, or what you can do to have a path to actually get into what you want to do. There are ways. There are loopholes in the system and you can get what you really want.

**CHAIR**—Before you sit down, if you were interested in an apprenticeship, would your school tell you what the wages were in years 1, 2, 3 and 4?

**Mr Booth**—I cannot really answer that question because I am not interested in an apprenticeship.

**Mr Quinn**—Our careers adviser has all those sorts of statistics. She has got all the university and TAFE books and all those sorts of things. If you ask her, she will look it up for you in five minutes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How many students are there at your school and how many careers advisers do you have?

**Mr Quinn**—There are 900 in our school. We are only years 11 and 12 and we all need advice. There is only one teacher to manage the whole 900 of us.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is that a similar situation in the other schools—one per thousand? What is your response to that? I would have thought that that is a pretty impossible task.

**Mr Quinn**—At our school, although she is the career adviser, most of our other teachers have had experience, so they can advise us. My geography teacher gives me advice about what uni courses and stuff I could do if I wanted to get into those sorts of things. Our teachers give us advice from the subjects. If you are excelling in chemistry, they will say to you, 'I suggest that you do this uni course. This uni course is open to you because you are getting such good marks in chemistry.' Although there is one career adviser, all the other teachers do give you career advice along the way.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Following up Mr Griffin's question, how many careers advisers in your schools have had experience in manufacturing, industry, or business? Where do you get the advice from someone who actually knows how the manufacturing industry works?

**Mr Quinn**—Most of our teachers have had other experience, for example, our business studies teacher and our maths teacher. Our physics teacher just retired. He has been all over Europe, he has seen all the different conditions around the world. He taught for 45 years and he gave us not only career advice but life advice as well.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—What about your parents? Are any of you following the same careers as your parents? They are not influencing you? Who is following the same career as their parents? No one.

**Mr Gendle**—My mum had children when she was fairly young. She was about 19 or 20 when she had me and my brother. My parents are actually influencing me to do the opposite of what they did.

My mum has not done all that much in her life. My dad has been working in a factory. He worked for a bed manufacturing company and stuff like that. I was always being told, 'No, don't do that, don't do that,' so it is pretty hard. I actually worked there in the holidays one time and I liked it. It was good. The money is not all that bad either. But if I wanted to do that, if that was my goal, my parents would not condone it. They would just put it off.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—On the question of parents, what is the background of the parents of you guys? How many of you would have parents who have been to university or teachers college, who have had a tertiary education? How many of your parents run their own businesses? How many work in manufacturing? About half of the hands went up.

**Ms Chown**—Do you mean working in offices or just working for themselves?

**Mr GRIFFIN**—In their own business, yes.

**Ms Chown**—My dad just works for himself. Some people give him jobs.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—What does he do?

**Ms Chown**—My dad is a plasterer.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—He works in a trade. In effect, that is his own business, but I understand what you mean.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—Following up the questions that Alan has raised, how many households have got both parents working, full-time, part-time or casually? Three-quarters of the hands went up. Can I also ask, how many of you have got brothers or sisters who have left school or done courses but are still unemployed? About seven hands went up.

Is there a fear of leaving school, because of the sluggish job market in this area? Unemployment in this area is higher than the national average. Is that one of the reasons why you very much want to complete years 11 and 12 and go to university? I grew up in western Sydney, not far from here. Fifteen or 20 years ago, this was an area of high manufacturing employment, apprenticeships and alternative job opportunities. Is one of the real pressures on you at the moment that it is better to finish year 12 and go through university, because, in the end, that is something? I have not got any problems with that. How much of an issue is not being sure if you will get a job out there at the moment?

**Ms Isbester**—I do not think we stay on because we think we are not going to get a job. I think we stay on because of the media pressure on us. They keep saying, 'Stay on, go to university or you are going to die, it is a be-all and end-all HSC,' when really it is not that bad. They put a lot more pressure on us than any of our teachers or parents ever could. My teachers do not put that much pressure on me about my HSC.

**Mr BARRESI**—What about parents?

**Ms Isbester**—My parents say, 'Try as hard as you can, but if you don't get the marks then don't worry about it. It's not the end of the world.' I am one of those people who would cry about my exams and would get worried about it, but they have just got to say, 'Relax, it's not the end of life. There is more to it.'

**Mr GRIFFIN**—What about the informal pressure? My recollection of when I was growing up back in the old days—

**Mr BARRESI**—The old days!

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Well, it feels like that now. I am 36, and I look a lot older. My old man was seaman and he would say, 'I do not want you going to bloody sea. I want to make sure that you get a decent job.'

Those are the sorts of comments that are made. He would say, 'You do not want to go working down the wharf because it really is not a good career. You want to do something with your hands because that is all you are good at, because you are useless when you do anything else.' That is what he used to say to me and that was true.

They do not sit you down and belt you around the head and say, 'If you do not pass, I am going to ground you and take away your firstborn.' It was that subliminal sort of pressure, which is more a matter of them stating their hopes and dreams and aspirations for you rather than actually nailing you. What about that sort of view?

**Ms Isbester**—My parents are older generation parents. They have had to go through the changes with computer and had to retrain themselves. My father only got his basic school certificate. He has worked his way up through the railway. He is one of those payroll clerk people. He started off pretty low and now he has gone up and he is on a special program called bestrail. They are fixing everything up. He was not really that good but he decided that he wanted to do that so he went to the training programs. They do not pressure you because they know from their own personal experience, that it is not the be-all and end-all of everything. They do not want you to think that.

**Ms Aleksic**—Every parent wants the best for their child. There is a lot of pressure from school friends, teachers, parents, everyone coming around. I know all of us here from Blacktown Girls High work hard. We all do our best to achieve what we want. But there is pressure from some teachers. My mother wants what is the best for me; she wants me to be better than her. She is in the computing field.

I know of people who have gone through the HSC, got a top TER mark and then threw it away. They are now just working with their parents. There are other people out there who are working, who feel pressured and who are getting stressed. They did not get the best, as they thought they would, and they are depressed. It is just not fair for someone who does not really care about getting a top mark, who could have gone to university, but yet does not go. Others are sitting out there, being pressured, working hard but do not end up getting what they want.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—That is life, mate. It is not fair that I am in opposition, but I bloody well am!

**Ms Wilson**—When I was growing up, my dad always said, 'What do you want to do with yourself?' I would say, 'I do not know.' He was a motor mechanic, and I got the idea that I would be a motor mechanic—girls can be motor mechanics. He was all for it. My parents divorced some 15 years ago or so. My mum said, 'What are you going to do when you grow up?' I said, 'I do not know, Mum. I might become a motor mechanic.' She said, 'No, you are not getting your hands dirty; you are going to do this, this and this.'

I think parents tend to have a pretty biased view about careers for their children. I am a mother myself; I have a five-year-old son. One of the main reasons that I came back to school was so that I could say to my son that he needs to stay at school so that he can learn, and so that in 13 years he can get a certificate or whatever it will be when he finishes school. Parents say, 'You are not going to do the same as me. You are going to do better than me.' They tend to have a pretty biased view. Although they always want the best for their children, they do not seem to really understand how it is for the kids.

As I said, one reason that I have come back to school is so that I can get that piece of paper, so that I can go on and get myself a career. My dad says, 'Great, that is good. You are out to achieve something.' I am out to prove something to myself and to my family. My mother says, 'So you have had another day at school, so what.' It is not really an issue to her. My career was never really an issue to her. She laid down the law, but I never abided by the law—no way. She is more pushy because she left school at the leaving certificate. She did some TAFE courses to be an accountant but she didn't finish them. She is now working for herself in a slightly successful accounting business. Parents really do tend to have a very biased view on what is best for their children. They always think what is best for their children is something better than they had themselves, not what is really good for the child.

**CHAIR**—Those of you that were going to answer that question, remember what you were going to say. We are going to take a five minute break.

**Short adjournment**

**CHAIR**—Two people, as I recall, had their hands up. Do you remember what you were going to say?

**Mr Pye**—On the topic of pressure from your parents, my mum does not pressure me very much. She is very cooperative and helps me in every single way but my dad was successful at pretty much everything he tried. He went to university and got his degree and he is well qualified. I feel whatever I seem to do is just not good enough for him in a way. I try my hardest at school. He looks at my report and if it is just a little bit down, it is not what he says, it is how he looks at you. It just disappoints me in a way. I still try hard. He wanted me to follow his career path and I have not. I have gone totally against it but I love the idea now of what I am doing. Now that he has accepted I am doing it, he is like my mum in helping me every single way. He helped me with the apprenticeship application and all that kind of stuff. Your parents pressuring you in some ways can be good and in some ways it can be bad.

**Mr McKay**—My name is Brendon McKay and I am from Blacktown Boys High School. I am 16. On the subject of pressure, my mum feels that I am old enough to make my own choices. If I want to do homework, that is my choice. If I want to study, that is my choice. She has her job. It is up to me what I want to do. It is my responsibility.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How do you respond to that?

**Mr McKay**—I think it is great. I am 16; if I want to do something, it is my life and if I do not do it then I am going to be stuffing it up, so it is up to me.

There are a few other things. With our school, I do not know what is going on. We have not been told much, but we are getting a lot of teachers that are leaving now. By next year about a quarter of them are getting transfers and about 30 per cent of them are trying to put in for transfers. How is it going to affect my education next year? All the good teachers that are there are now going to better schools. How can politicians let them do it? They just all go at once.

Another thing with our school—our subject choices are very limited. We find that we have only got

certain subjects that we can choose. We had economics and it had to be done by correspondence. There were 12 students to run that but they ran 19 one unit non-board subjects. They run heaps of non-unit board subjects.

Also with our school, we have got a lot of emphasis on the guys who are not as smart, so the brighter kids are not getting the attention. They are not putting the emphasis on the brighter guys who are trying to do well. They are just not getting the same attention.

We also have got to do a lot of correspondence. Next year we have got to do a lot of our three-unit subjects over in the girls school. They are not running them at our school. If we have to do it over in the girls school that means we are going to lose other classes. I am going to have to catch up on that. I cannot see why we have got to do that—why we have such a limited choice. We go to other schools and they have got quite a wide range of choice.

**Mr Prasaad**—My name is Rajineel Prasaad, I am from Quakers Hill High School and I am 16. My case is that my parents do not push me, but I like a lot of motivation in doing things. When they keep insisting that I do something I find that is helpful; it motivates me to actually go ahead and take action on things. Sometimes what you think is pressure from your parents is more like motivation. I am sure all parents want the best for their children and that is what they are trying to do. I believe there is a lot of glamour about university and that business, apprenticeships and trade positions should be promoted a bit more so they get a bit of glamour. It is thought that when you go to university, you jump to a higher level of respect and if you work in trade or business, you do not get that respect.

**Ms Passmore**—I am Jodie Passmore from Quakers Hill High School, I am in year 10 and I am 16. We get a lot of support from our parents. I have talked with a lot of the people I sit with at lunchtimes. Our parents give us a lot of support. In our classrooms we have years 8, 9 and 10 all mixed into one classroom. We are all split but we all learn together. I know from the classes I am with—years 8 and 9—that we give them support in helping them guide what they want to do, how they want to do it, and we give them more of an indication as to what we are going through, so they are more up-to-date and they know how to choose their subjects.

**CHAIR**—We have been talking about your parents' attitudes; we talked about your teachers' attitudes. Let us talk about your attitudes. Lots of employers and employer bodies have appeared before this committee. They have told us that when they go to select someone for a job, the first thing they look for is the applicant's attitude. Many of them have told us that young people's attitudes seem to be poor; that they seem to have a poor attitude to work and do not particularly want to work, just feel like they have to; do not want to get up in the morning; want to leave work early; do not want to do what the boss says the boss wants done. Do you have any comments about that? Many of you said that you have part-time jobs and we would like to hear your comments about what you think about your own and your peers' attitudes to work.

**Ms Quinn**—I have two jobs outside school. I think this generation is very lazy because our parents have all worked really hard to get where they are and so they tend to give it to us on a platter. I know a lot of my friends would rather not work because their mums and dads are giving them everything, so why bother going to work when you have everything you need? I used to work at McDonald's and it is a hard job; it is not difficult but there is a lot of intense work. Then I went to Hoyts and lot of people who went over to Hoyts

had left McDonald's. They did not like McDonald's because it was too hard and there was too much commitment, whereas at Hoyts it is a good job but it is easy and there is not as much pressure on you. You find a lot of people prefer it because it is a lazy job. I think a lot of young people have that attitude nowadays.

**Ms Georgiou**—The attitude of a person on the job depends on the person themselves and the job they are doing. If they do not like the job and if they are just there for the money, of course, they are going to have a bad attitude towards it. Therefore, it is up to the person. If they want a job, they have to get a job that suits their personality. The employer also has to have a positive attitude towards the employee instead of telling them what to do and being hard on them. I know a lot of people whose employers are very strict; they have no sense of humour. They are so strict that the employees go bad on them and do not listen to what they say.

**Ms Quinn**—I just want to say something really quickly. Before, one of the girls said that, at work experience, she had to go around and pick up stuff and everything. You have to realise that you have got to start at the bottom some time. You do not go straight to the top. You have to change bins and you have to clean toilets to get where you want to go. That is just how I feel anyway.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—That is true, of course. The thing about work experience that worries me from what I have heard today is that part of it is about giving people a bit of a taste for what the job actually is and what it could be. I once did work experience in a law firm for two weeks and, essentially, I spent most of that time sitting on my backside having a look at files, which was sometimes entertaining. But they really did not have any work for me to do and they really were not prepared to involve me in the sort of work that they did, so I could get a taste of what it was. Part of work experience should be to give you a feel for what you may be able to achieve in a job. You are right. You have got to start at the bottom. But anyone who is looking to make a career in any particular area has to also have a feel for what they will be able to achieve in time, so they have got something to aim for.

**Mr Kebbie**—I am Bilal Kebbie from Evans High School and I am 15. I find that the attitudes of young children depend on how their parents treat them. If I have a project and I have not done it, my parents do not say to me, 'Here's a note. Go off and just hand this in. You can do it anytime.' I have had to work to be where I am now. I am in the top maths class, the top English class and I am coming up in the top areas of all my subjects. I am only there because my parents have made me work. If your parents do not make you work, you are not going to get anywhere. You will not get anywhere if it is handed to you on a silver platter, as one of us said before. I have got a friend whose parents do his projects. They do his research and he is just lazy. He does not do anything himself. So it all depends on you and how you are treated by your parents.

**Mr McKay**—Following on from what you have just said, it is really up to you. If you want to work hard, that is just your choice. Your parents should not do it for you. You have got to work. I live with my mum and she does not push me, but I still do well. I am doing three-unit maths and I am still doing all right. I work myself. It is not my mum's duty to do my job for me. It is going to be my life. If I want to bludge, that is my choice. If I want to do well and earn good money, it is up to me to work hard.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—But, surely, people would say that your family and its environment has some impact. He is saying, for example, that, in his case, his parents give him that motivation and put the pressure on to keep him on the straight and narrow in terms of doing that work. Some kids need that; some kids do not. He

is also saying that he knows some kids whose the parents have done what you are saying they should not do and that is, do it all for them. So it does happen in some cases.

It is up to the individual as to what they achieve and what they do. But, at the same time, if you are in a situation in a family environment where your parents are, say, fighting all the time, it is very hard to concentrate. If you are in a situation where your parents basically pick up after you and do the things that you should be doing yourself, some kids will allow them to do that. So it does vary, does it not?

**Mr McKay**—I agree with that. But I find that it is up to the individual. That is my opinion. It is up to the individual to work. My dad is a bit like that. I see my dad only a few times a year and if I am ever down there and I have got homework to do, he always tells me that I have got to do it. It is my choice. I want to do it when I feel like it. I do not want to do it when there is a good movie on television or something. I would prefer to watch that and do it later.

**Ms Polczynski**—My name is Gabrielle Polczynski, 16, Evans High School. I agree with Kim. My parents do not push me but I am in the top English class, the top maths class and I am doing very well in my subjects and it is my work. My parents are not standing over me and saying, 'Go do it right now!' I am actually working at my own pace and getting it all done. You do not really need your parents. If your parents support you in what you do, that is how you do well.

**CHAIR**—But do you think most young people have positive attitudes towards work? Do they want jobs and want to work and get there on time and do what they are asked to do?

**Ms Polczynski**—Some people do want to work. There are some people that you will need to kick in the butt and say, 'Get up and do it.' But most people should be able to motivate themselves.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Does the lack of job opportunities, which quite clearly there is out here, affect your confidence? Does that affect your attitude when you go to a job? Do you go thinking, 'I'm not going to get it anyhow'? Does this have an impact? Could you expand on that attitude? Would anyone like to comment?

**Mr Quinn**—Most young people think, 'I'm not going to get the job anyway, so why should I have a positive attitude?' They walk into the interview and say, 'Oh well, he's probably going to get some bloke that has got a uni degree. I haven't got one, so I'm not going to get the job.' They are just sick of getting rejected, so they do not do the work. They feel like their work is not valued. If you work in McDonald's, you are just like a number there; you are not a valued member of staff. You do your bit of work and you go home. You do not have to worry about anything. You are not made welcome. There is no friendship. You are there to do a job and then you leave. There is no community atmosphere.

**Ms Sosa**—I think a lot that influences the people's attitude is the dole, because the dole pays a lot more. They say, 'I don't have to work. I can stay home and watch TV and get the dole. I will get paid for doing nothing.' People think like that, if they do not need to have a job to get money because they can get paid more by just sitting at home.

**Ms Tilbury**—I am Melanie Tilbury, from Evans High. I am 16. I think the lack of jobs in an area does not really affect the confidence. Everyone wants more money and you can only get a certain amount on the dole or on the away-from-home allowance. If you want the money, you have got to go and get it. If you cannot get the job, then you go to TAFE and you do a course. You cannot just give up. You can say, 'Well, I've done my Higher School Certificate. I suppose that's all I'm ever going to do. I'll just sit at home and wait until a job knocks at my door.' But you should not say that. You should go to uni and do the courses and get the apprenticeships and the traineeships; and, at the end of the day, if you have done everything and you still do not get a job, then you know that you just cannot get a job. So you just sit there on the dole and watch Oprah!

**Ms Isbester**—With regards to the workplace environment and also the unemployment rate around here, it makes you more appreciative of the fact that you do have a job. Personally, it took me a long time to find a part-time job. I was looking for one basically from the age I could work until now, and I got one in about March this year. They do not offer you friendship when you go to work. They do not treat you nicely and they did not train me properly. I work at Pizza Hut at Kings Park, and they expect you to know already what to do.

They say, 'Well, you're in charge of works, okay? Here's your tool.' That is all. They expect me to do a good job, do an efficient job, and they think that I have a bad attitude for saying, 'Well, I don't know how to do this. Please show me.' I think a lot of employers have higher expectations than they should of people. You just do not know how to do things you have not been trained to do. You do not get taught how to run a works bar in school.

**Ms Chown**—I am not academically prone. I have a short attention span, because I am just not interested in school. But I like to work. I like to work with my hands. If it comes to dance or art and those areas, I feel I am confident in it, and I will get in there and do my work because that is what I am interested in. I have a job. I am a very opinionated person, but I get there. I do whatever the boss tells me to do. I do it to the best of my ability.

I find that people just think, 'Well, I don't have to do it. I'll sit here and they won't fire me because I'm me.' But the truth of the matter is, you have got to work hard for your money. Everyone has to start off at the bottom at some time. They work their way up. You start sweeping floors in hairdressing, but sooner or later, you could be a manager or something higher. Someone said something earlier about that.

People just do not realise how important it is to work hard for what you do, and not just to sit at home and get the dole. I know there is a 'looking for a job' allowance from the dole or whatever it is. They have got to have some proof that you are looking for a job, but half of them are not really looking for a job. They can screw around with the system a bit and they would never know.

They should get something in that area that makes it more substantial, so they have definite proof that people are going for a job. With people on the dole, they should make them have some kind of course that makes them ready for work. Of course, if they have got something wrong with them, they cannot work. They have got to try somehow to help people to get motivated. Some things are just too easy in life. Some people do not get work but they are still paid money. They get the single mother's pension but they are not single mothers. People do stuff like that and they also sit on their butt, which is not right because there are the other

people who are more underprivileged, especially in schools. At my school, we are having to get rid of some teachers due to some government thing; that will scar everyone in our school because there will be fewer teachers to take care of the students and to help them. There are a fair few students in our school who cannot read well and have difficulties like that. They need special attention.

**Mr Robertson**—Greg Robertson, Blacktown Boys High. I am 17. With regard to work experience, I think it was Jemima who was saying about having to make coffee and things like that, and the girl over there said you had to start somewhere. That should not be the focus of work experience. You are supposed to be there to see how the job goes, not to do the menial tasks that the other people do not want to do. When you start a job, you have to work your way up and doing menial tasks is okay. Otherwise, you should not have to do them. Part-time jobs, outside school, are good because they can teach you team work and communication skills.

The other guy said that at McDonald's you are just another number. I work there and everyone is valued. Some people there are not good at what they do, but they are still valued. The managers all congratulate you when you do well. If you are doing something wrongly, they will explain what you are doing wrongly and help you to rectify it. Also, I have to do economics by correspondence because the school would not run that course, even though we had, I think, nine people who wanted to do it. What worries me is that the school—as Brendon was saying—focuses more on the students who are not as smart and tries to bring them up, but it does not worry about encouraging the other students who are high up to go further.

We had only a very limited supply of two-unit courses or just board courses that were available for us to do. The school thinks that if there are not enough people, it will not run the course but, the way I see it, if just one student wants to do the course, the school should be made to offer that course, no matter how much inconvenience is going to be caused or how much it is going to cost. With economics, the school will not—I will check that the principal is not here—even allocate us any time during the timetable to do it. If we want to see the teacher about economics, it has to be in our time and in his time when he does not have a class. Resources are not being made available to the students who want to do well. The emphasis is all on helping people rise up but, at the same time, the high students need to be pushed up as well.

**Mr BARRESI**—I will offer a comment and some questions on this whole issue of attitudes. Firstly, I do not know if this is a representative sample or not but let me say how impressed I am that most of you have spoken about persevering. You know that it is up to you to achieve what you want to achieve. You have shown a great, positive attitude and I am sure that is what employers would like to see. However, going back to Bob's original question, a lot of employers have told us about kids going to them with an attitude which, perhaps, is not appropriate to their needs. I would like to know if your school system—whether it be through your teacher, through your careers guidance person, or whomever it might be—pays any attention to the attitude that an employer requires. I am not referring solely to acquiring skills. Is any emphasis at all placed on what attitude is required out there?

**Ms Tilbury**—At school, the teachers are the highest powers of authority. They are the ones whom you have to defer to and whom you have to look up to. I suppose that, in a way, they are the employers that we have now; they are the ones telling us what we have to do. Yet they take anything. By that, I mean that you can say anything to a teacher and you will not get into trouble for it. You can talk back to a teacher and you

can swear at a teacher. I am not saying that I do, but a lot of people swear at teachers. They tell them where to go and they tell them what to do, and they take it. You do not get into trouble and you are not taught the proper respect and attitude that you have towards the people who are in positions of power. That may be why a lot of students who are coming out of school and looking for a job think, 'Well, the teachers took it, why can't they, I am only joking.'

**Mr Griffiths**—About attitude, I have to admit there are many people I know who have the crappiest attitudes in the world. They think everything is going to be handed to them and that they do not have to do any work at all whether it be part-time work or at school or whatever. But the majority of youth our age would have to have good attitude because if it was not for that we would all be failing all the time. Everyone says youth has a bad attitude and things like that but the majority of us young people do have a good attitude.

Regarding what the guy in the hat over there said about McDonald's people regarding you as a number, it is just a job and that is all it is. We are getting paid for it and it is better than not having a job at all. Thanks.

**CHAIR**—Can I just make one comment about McDonald's. This committee has been told over and over again by employer after employer and employer representative bodies that if, for example, three young people presented for a job and one of the three had had long-term experience at McDonald's, the chances are that person would get the job.

**Mr BRADFORD**—In quite a few countries of the world, when you leave school and turn 18 they put you into the army for a couple of years. What do you think about that idea?

**Mr Robertson**—It is not a bad idea. It puts discipline into people, their self-esteem may rise and they use more initiative. Maybe it is not for all people and maybe they could tone it down a little bit. With people on the dole, maybe you do not have to give them army training but maybe give them work so that they are actually doing something. If they are doing work for a small company and the company sees that they are good workers, they might employ them or something like that. It is a good idea, it instils discipline. There are pros and cons to it but discipline is one of the things that a lot of people are lacking. They go through school getting away with everything and there is no discipline so it is not a bad idea.

**Mr Booth**—On the subject of attitude, I do not think that in schools with careers teachers that the teachers should pay attention to attitude. I suppose for their own consciences that they will pay a little bit of attention to attitude but then again you have got to think about it. Look at us right here, we are all focusing on the negativity of life and all that.

There are some good things and there are people with good attitudes. I am not trying to be rude or anything but I do not know why you had to bring that up about employers seeing a lot of people with bad attitudes because obviously those people are not going to get the job. But there has to be some people with good attitudes and they are the people who are going to get the jobs.

The people with the bad attitudes are going to have to learn that there is something wrong with them. They will have to take a look at themselves because it really comes down to the person's attitude. It is their

choice if they want to change it because when they change it that is when they have a better chance of getting a job.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Following on from Mr Bradford's question, how many of you have considered going into the armed forces as a career? There are six people. Are you are still considering it? To summarise, people think that the armed forces might be a good idea in some respects but not for them. Okay.

**Mr BARRESI**—Just on the point that we are focusing on—negativity. It is important to realise that the comment is from employers and it is up to us to test that comment against reality, with the people they are accusing. That is why we have asked the question of you today. It is a way of testing whether or not what they are saying has any truth to it.

**Ms Balchin**—I am Krystin Balchin and I am in Year 10 at Quakers Hill High School. On careers advisers, I think we have had four in four years, and they do not teach us anything on attitude. I remember that once they have come into my classroom in health and they gave us a book and said, 'If you want to do something, look it up'. The other teachers have more input on what we do. They make sure we have always got our shirts tucked in and they make sure we are always to class on time. They are very strict on uniform and they are pretty strict on attitude. If you are smart to a teacher you are on a level straightaway. That is good because it gets us ready for when we go into the work force and have to be nice to our bosses and respect them and stuff.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How many students in your school?

**Ms Balchin**—About 600, and it goes up to—

**Mr SAWFORD**—How many careers advisers?

**Ms Balchin**—We have only got one.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And does that teacher have other responsibilities? Does that teacher teach classes as well?

**Ms Balchin**—At the moment, I am not really sure who is our careers adviser because we have had four and they have all come and gone. We had a relief one and he sort of teaches and he sort of is the careers adviser. I think our careers adviser has come back but no-one knows. So we do not know whether we can go and see him. We do not know anything about it.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—For example, with that before that had 900 kids, the odds are that teachers got maybe an hour per year for any of those kids on average. That is how much time they have.

**Ms Bautista**—My name is Jennifer Bautista. I come from John Paul II High School. The question that was put to us was whether in school we are properly prepared for the work force in attitudes, in options and that sort of thing. I think that we are not. Even though school does provide us with the fundamentals like how to write an essay and all that sort of stuff, it does not provide us with getting a job, although we might have a

few courses. We should be given some compulsory things to do. Work experience was compulsory in year 10, but that is not compulsory any more. There should be a smoother transition between school and work.

About attitude, people probably have a negative attitude because they do not know what to do. A few suggestions from work experience: people need greater awareness of traineeships, apprenticeships, that sort of thing. It is just that people do not know. University used to be the thing to do, but people are just trying to break away from that and we just need more emphasis on the other things.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Do you have any careers days, such as where industry comes in and explains to you what employment is available in a particular industry?

**Ms Bautista**—Yes.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—So who organises that?

**Mr McKay**—In year 10 you go to a careers day. It is a careers market over at the basketball courts in Parklea somewhere. We all go there and there is a whole heap of companies set up and telling us what their companies do.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—So is that on every year?

**Mr McKay**—Only year 10 and year 12 students get to go to that. I do not know if every school goes to it.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—We probably should look at that.

**Ms Quinn**—Maybe there is not enough about careers at school, but our school is only year 11 and 12 and I find that is a big advantage because from year 7 and 10, they tend to treat you like they are above you. At our school we are all equal. The students and the teachers get along like in an employment situation. It is a lot like when you are working outside school. I work at McDonald's and our bosses get along with us, the same way our teachers get along with us as students at school. You find that is a big advantage because when you go to look for a job, your whole attitude is the same as your attitude at school. That sounds really confusing, but it is an advantage and it is good that we are only year 11 and 12 and there is that sort of relationship there.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can I just raise a question about primary schools. How many people would say they had a very successful primary school career? Almost everybody, it would appear. In that sort of context, one of the first statements that was made in this inquiry this morning—I think by Michelle at the front—was that learning styles in secondary school can be very passive and the balance between hands-on and more passive work is wrong. In the transition from primary to secondary, what were some of the reactions that people had? Some people in this inquiry have said that much of the careers advice should start a lot earlier. Many of the employers are saying the same thing; that attitudes like confidence, self-esteem—even in terms of options for future goals—are developed around the age of puberty, around the end of primary school. Are you getting advice too late? Would you like to make some comments on that?

**Mr Quinn**—I feel that your career is a personal thing. I went to an all-boys school from years 7 to 10 and, if you talked of your career, it was put to the side. It was as though it was not relevant because it was something personal connected with your deep feelings. If you said that you wanted to be a fireman, everyone would laugh at you, or stuff like that, and then you felt discouraged. If you really wanted to be a fireman and people laughed at you, you would be discouraged. As you have said, at puberty, you want to be liked by everybody. You feel you need to have friends. If they are laughing at you, you feel hurt.

So you have to get around to the idea that your career is your career, and everyone is different. You can change it along the way, but you have to set a goal and try to achieve it. While you are in years 7 to 10, you are being shaped by everyone around you. You are getting pressured into being accountants and doctors, and things like that, because that is 'the normal thing'. People do not want to go for adventurous jobs because they will be seen as being weird and different from everybody else. When you are pubescent you want to be liked by everybody. You do not want to be different from everybody else. You want to be part of the group. You want to be in the in-crowd.

If you start careers advice in years 7 to 10, people will say, 'Yes, I can do that because that's what I want to do'. They will not be shaped into becoming doctors and lawyers. By the time they get to years 11 and 12 when everybody is okay with what goals they want to achieve, it is too late. It should have been done in years 7 to 10 when it is early and you are formative, and you work hard all the way up to year 12 and you have set your goals then. If you want to be a carpenter, you should do woodwork all the way through so that you get the basis—not just take it up in year 11. If the basis is not set in years 7 to 10, it is too late in year 12 to start deciding what your career will be. Your career should be chosen in year 7 and, by the time you get to year 12, it should be concrete; you have picked out your career and you should just start going for it straightaway.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do any of you have any advice that you would give, say, to a secondary school administrator in terms of the transition from primary to secondary school? Do you think it is good? Do you think it should change?

**Ms Chown**—I think from about year 10 to year 12, a lot of students could be treated not just as kinds of puppets. I know that in the work force you have to do what you are told. But there could be some kind of relationship between the teachers and the students, other than just 'Do this, do that.' Half the time the teachers just do not really care. Half the time you think, 'What's the difference? They don't care what I do when I leave school, or anything.'

**Mr SAWFORD**—Did you have that kind of relationship in primary school?

**Ms Chown**—In primary school I got along with my year 6 teacher; all the rest I did not get along with.

**Mr McKay**—Getting back to this transition between primary school and high school, it is just a change. You go from primary school where you are trying to be the in-guy. When I was in primary school—and I will tell you the truth—I was not an in-person, no-one really liked me that much. I can be honest. You go to high school and you are still trying to fit in there, just like you were in primary school, and slowly you

do.

You go through change throughout your entire life. You went from primary school to high school. You are going to go to university, apprenticeships, whatever. You are going to go into a job, starting off low and going through to being a boss one day maybe, if you are lucky. You are going to have changes throughout all your life, and you just have to go through them. Whether or not you like it, it is there and has to be gone through.

I see high school and those sorts of things as things you have to do. It is not that you want to do them; it is that you have to do them. What you are learning there, you have to remember. The way I see the point of the HSC—and I do not know if this is right or not—is that you have a memory; it is just seeing how good your memory is. The only thing they want to see is how good you can memorise things to get you into university. If you can memorise things, you are smart. That is the way they think. You are smart, then you get into a university course and, once you have a university degree, you can get your job.

My mum's boyfriend is a big manager and he employs people. He sees people with university degrees, and they are miles ahead of anyone else because they have that little piece of paper that says they studied at university. That is why a lot of kids are going to university these days.

**Ms Tilbury**—I would just go back to what you said about careers advice starting earlier in high school. You are saying that it should start in about years 8 and 9. Year 8 is the second year of high school when you are 13. All your life you have been told what to do, when to eat lunch, what to wear to school, what shoes to have on. Then all of a sudden they are asking you to make a career decision for a career that is going to be yours for the rest of your life. I do not think you can do that.

I am 16. I cannot drive, I cannot drink, I cannot smoke, I cannot elect my prime minister, but I am making a decision about my career that I cannot go back on. I think it is really strange that we are being treated like adults on this aspect, but on the other, we are children. It should really be looked at, because if we are going to be treated like adults then we should be treated like adults all the time with everything, not with just one thing.

**Ms Passmore**—I will be the first to admit I have a really bad attitude. It stinks. But I go to work. I have three jobs—they are from here to Rydalmere. I get there and I know what I have to do, so my attitude changes. I am happy. I am a waitress at two of them. I am happy, I run around, hand out the food and whatever.

At Big W, my attitude changes again. There the managers don't give two hoots about who you are or what you do. I do my job—I am a floor assistant. I make sure my area is cleaned, I help the customers and I do exactly what I have to do. The managers sit back and say 'Yes, whatever!'- there is no guarantee and nothing about you being a good person. The money is fine, but you feel like you are still not working for whatever you want.

I go to school and my attitude changes again. I have four different attitudes—I am multi-talented in things like this. I go to my careers lesson—I am almost about to miss out on it now again—every second

week. We sit in the classroom and we do nothing. I am not bagging anyone, but our careers adviser is hopeless. He gives us little books and he says, 'Match the occupation to the person that does it.' Fair enough! We sit there and draw little lines.

The only time that my attitude gets corrected at school is by my English teacher. She drags me outside and says, 'You have a very bad attitude, change it.' I change it—I go to school and I change it. I think everything that we say and do now reflects on our attitude, how we look at school, how we look at life and how we look at employment.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—What are your marks like?

**Ms Passmore**—My marks are fine. I come in the top 10 per cent of each class.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—The feeling I get, and it follows on from the primary school as well, is that practically every kid here is probably in the top percentage of their school—overwhelmingly so. How typical are you guys of the kids at your school?

**CHAIR**—Unfortunately, we have to wrap it up, but we can have two more. Be quick because we are going to talk to people who will provide the jobs that you may have in the future.

**Ms Wilson**—I have noticed, compared with when I was back at school—and I will probably make a few enemies here—that the attitude of kids these days really is quite poor. I think that comes from a lack of self-discipline. I think to get through your life you need a lot of self-discipline. But the kids these days do not seem to have any self-discipline whatsoever.

I think asking someone who is 14, 15, 16 years old, 'What are you going to do for a career?' is a bit much, because as one of you guys on the panel said earlier, we are going to change our career a few times throughout our life. I think it is a bit unfair to ask someone in years 9, 10 or 11, 'What are you going to do for a career?' because it is such a big decision.

**CHAIR**—Lucky last.

**Ms Isbester**—I know it sounds it a bit irrelevant after those issues, but in regard to what Mr Bradford said earlier about army training for people that come out of school—isn't it a bit unreasonable to think that? Why would we be aiming towards war and towards violence when you look at the war-torn countries overseas? I don't mean to be offensive, but it is a bit of a narrow-minded thing to think. I think we should be thinking more about peace and more conflict resolution rather than warfare, and being taught about that kind of thing. Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Let me thank all of you. It has been a terrific session. We have learned a lot. May I assure you that we will take account of your views in producing our report. Certainly, we will send a copy of the report to each of your schools and you can see what kind of recommendations we make to government about what we ought to do to try and help make you more employable, and what we could do to encourage employers to find more jobs for young people.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Barresi):

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

**Short adjournment**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people. The purpose of the inquiry is to consult widely and produce recommendations for government action that will help promote the employment prospects of young people. The committee has received over 80 submissions and has conducted public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane. Last Thursday in Queensland and this morning at the Blacktown Boys High School, the committee conducted school forums in which young people discussed their views and opinions with the committee. The school forums have proved a valuable opportunity to gain the views of young people, who are central to this inquiry.

I am keen to hear the views of all sections of the community about how we can better equip young people for employment. I am particularly keen to hear the views of people who are active in commerce and industry, for they are the potential employers and the creators of jobs for the future.

This is a very broad-ranging inquiry. Matters raised in submissions so far include the attitudes of young people, the work ethic of young people and their familiarity with the requirements of the workplace, the adequacy and relevance of the education and training systems, the importance of developing better linkages between schools and the business sector, the need for a more flexible industrial relations system, and the effectiveness and efficiency of government programs to assist young people to find employment. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of issues which the committee will consider or which might be raised. We are entirely open to the views of everyone who wishes to make an input to the inquiry. We are here to listen, to learn and to help improve the prospects of young Australians.

Today, the committee will hear from representatives of Northside TRAC, the Central Western Sydney Area Consultative Committee, the Restaurant and Catering Association of New South Wales, the National Mining Industry Training Advisory Body, the Youth Action and Policy Association of New South Wales, the Fairfield Youth Workers Network, the Central West Area Consultative Committee, the Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board and the Hills District Youth Services.

[11.55 a.m.]

**BARRETT, Mr Robert Keith, Chairperson, Junee Vocational Education Management Committee, c/- 81 Lorne Street, Junee, New South Wales 2663**

**DOBSON, Miss Amanda, Student, Northside TRAC, 176A Rowe Street, Eastwood, New South Wales**

**KENNEDY, Mr Frank, Chairman, Northside TRAC, 176A Rowe Street, Eastwood, New South Wales 2122**

**TURNBULL, Ms Judy, Program Coordinator, Dusseldorp Skills Forum Inc., 210 Clarence Street, Sydney, New South Wales**

**WILSON, Mrs Sandra, Coordinator, Central Coast TRAC, Shop T92A, Erina Fair, Terrigal Drive, Erina, New South Wales 2250**

**CHAIR**—Thank you for your submission to the committee and thank you for coming along today. We are running behind time. I have heaps of colleagues here who have lots of questions. Your submission was comprehensive, and we would really like to ask you questions. So, would you like to make a brief statement.

**Mrs Wilson**—Will you question us at the end of each statement or at the end of all the statements?

**CHAIR**—Just make a statement, and we will ask you questions. Remember that the committee learns most by responses to its questions.

**Mrs Wilson**—I would like to begin by telling you what the TRAC program is. The TRAC program is a workplace learning program that exists for years 11 and 12 students. I understand that you have spoken to senior school students earlier today. I guess what I am going to tell you is going to enrich what you have heard this morning.

The vocational education opportunity that exists through the TRAC program allows students to make the transition from school to work very effectively. Students in our program receive dual accreditation through the board of studies with the higher school certificate credential, and also the industry bodies recognise the credentials that are received in training. They have certainly had significant input into the curriculum. So, the curriculum has been developed in partnership between the relevant ITABs as well as the board of studies, and it is an extremely rigorous curriculum. We have bought along some curriculum booklets that will outline the specific skills that are being addressed.

The way in which the TRAC program operates, which is quite different from other school based programs, is that it is a true partnership between industry and Department of School Education. My bosses, if you would like to use that term, I consider to be our local management committee. I am the only education representative on that committee. All of the other representatives are local business people, and they have significant input into the learning programs of the students in central coast schools.

The TRAC program offers curriculum in four main industry areas—hospitality, office, retail and automotive. Students who are in the TRAC program will find that their learning is quite different from the learning that occurs in a school based vocational education program. The reason that it is different is that 70 per cent of their learning actually occurs in the workplace. School based vocational education programs have a token 80-hour work placement. Students do not really learn about the culture of work in 80 hours. Much of what is learnt in a vocational program in school is learnt in a classroom climate, not in the real world of work.

In TRAC, students would spend work placements with a minimum of four employers during the course of their training, and a maximum of seven employers. So, the work placement component is highly valued and highly structured, and it forms a very significant bridge between school and work. I guess that bridge, that link, between school and work is really what makes our program so successful. If I give you some nationwide outcomes of TRAC students and also some local central coast outcomes, I think you will perhaps listen very carefully to what is being said by our business representatives and our student.

If we look at the general school population in New South Wales, 30 per cent of our students leave school and go to university. Seventy per cent of students up until now have not been catered for very well in the school system. What has happened to them has been accidental rather than planned. In the TRAC program, we have been able to turn around the statistics of unemployment for these young people. Largely, you will find that youth unemployment is looking at around about 30 per cent in New South Wales. In the area that I come from, the 15 to 20 age group, 35 per cent are unemployed. TRAC graduates have halved that statistic in moving from school to work. So, if we look at the figures that have been accumulated in the 1990s, you will find that, at the end of 1993 and 1994, 14 per cent and 16 per cent of TRAC graduates were unemployed at the completion of their training. That is really quite remarkable. The reason that has happened is because of the amount of time they have been able to spend learning in the workplace during their schooling.

The other notable statistic that has come out of the TRAC experience is that TRAC students identify lifelong learning as part and parcel of joining the work force. Many students see the high school certificate as the end of their formal training. Fifty-three per cent of TRAC students—and remember we are not talking about university bound students—go on to further formal training, whether it is Australian traineeships, TAFE or formal training that is provided by their employers. I challenge you to find another program that has been able to produce those sorts of outcomes.

TRAC has been recognised internationally. This year we were very proud to win the international partnerships award for skills and work in the global economy. Australia competed against 42 other developed nations, and that is something that we are extremely proud of. You, as our political representatives, should be looking very carefully at a program that gets that sort of international recognition and the kind of outcomes that I am talking about for our local school leavers. I really encourage you to think very carefully about the TRAC option when you are making your deliberations.

**CHAIR**—Amanda, could you tell the committee at what point in the school system you entered the TRAC program, what you are doing and why you decided to do it?

**Miss Dobson**—I have written a speech and I will just read that to you, if that is that all right.

Good morning, I am Amanda Dobson, one of stage 2 TRAC trainees. I have recently completed my studies at Asquith Girls High School and I am proud to say I have elected TRAC as a two-unit course for the HSC. I first heard about TRAC through my schoolteacher at one of my elective subject nights. At this stage I did not intend to participate in the TRAC program until I heard from one of my friends how enjoyable and worthwhile the traineeship was. Without any further delay, I applied for TRAC in the second term of year 11. It seemed to be a very challenging, interesting and fun experience. This soon proved to be very true and I am now glad I chose to include TRAC in my curriculum.

Starting stage 2 of my traineeship in term 2, I commenced working with Reed Business Publishing in Chatswood, which was a great placement to start my two years with TRAC. In term 3, I worked with BOC Gases in Chatswood. Then I joined the NRMA team at Hornsby for my fourth term. In all placements I soon built up confidence in the workplace. I was included in their work doing typing, filing, mail, working with computers, reception work, working with money, handling customers and customers' complaints in the correct manner—in fact, all facets of the businesses. I found all placements to be very informative and I have now built an understanding of the working lifestyle.

As well as working in placements allocated to us, all trainees gathered twice a term at the TRAC office in Eastwood, where we undertook even more training. Our TRAC coordinator set exams and assessments on subjects relating to work. These included mathematics, handling customer complaints, working manners and also team effort in which we completed an assessment on designing a comfortable working environment. This year many of the stage one TRAC students chose to complete their training with TRAC, including myself. We have now become stage 2 TRAC students.

This year, every Tuesday, commercial trainees join together to further their knowledge of business at the Australian Academy of Business in Wynyard. Here we did classes with a range of teachers. In these lessons we studied several business topics such as bookkeeping, accounts receivable and payable, cash control, client service skills, financial source documents, records handling, records maintenance, records processing and workplace team effectiveness. As well as going to the academy, each student is allocated three business placements in which they complete one week of work experience each term. This year I joined the NRMA at Eastwood in claims and radioactive 2UE.

The businesses willing to offer their services, time and effort towards the TRAC program are very much appreciated, for without these businesses the students of TRAC would not be able to get enough work experience to give them an understanding of full-time work. They would not be one step ahead of other HSC students and probably would not have the type of confidence in the workplace I feel I have gained. All students are very grateful for businesses willing to participate in the TRAC program.

TRAC has assisted me to gain great confidence in the workplace. I am now able to work in teams well, work with strangers easily, handle customers and tackle problems. Clerical work now comes easily, and I have more work options that I had not considered earlier. As well as this, I have a certificate in my resume saying TRAC is a prior studied course.

I feel that, had it not been for TRAC, my future aspirations would be less defined and my future direction unclear. TRAC has removed the veils of uncertainty and mysticism for work in either the private or

public sector. I feel confident that, with my TRAC experience behind me, I will be able to enter the work force and I am able to perform many tasks that before TRAC had been a mystery to me. Hopefully my future employment will be in marketing, sales or public relations of some kind.

The value of TRAC has and will be indicated by the numerous students who will confidently and competently succeed in achieving positions in the competitive work force. TRAC has turned out to be one of the best personal choices I have made. It is a very worthwhile traineeship with great potential for our future workers, and I would gladly recommend it to either students or businesses interested in participating.

**Mr BARRESI**—Thank you, Amanda. Just a couple of questions. How were you able to balance your commitment to TRAC and to your normal school studies? Has that affected your studies at all?

**Miss Dobson**—Not at all. There may have been a couple of things that I have had to catch up on, but we have been given spare time, different periods of the day, where we can catch up on our work. The teachers were very helpful in holding work for you as well as other students. As long as you are committed to both, you can do it.

**Mr BARRESI**—Secondly, have you started applying for jobs yet? If so, what level of success have you had?

**Miss Dobson**—Not as yet. I completed my HSC just last week, so I have not had much time at all. Basically I hope to once I get my feet on the ground. I have a part-time job now with Lowes-Manhattan. I am staying there for the moment and hopefully will find something in public relations. A lot of students have had job offers, traineeships, through TRAC. NRMA has offered me to go back there at the end of my HSC. It has given me a great direction. I know exactly where I want to go, and it is all through TRAC.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Sandra, I know a bit about TRAC, and I have nothing but praise for it. I have seen it in operation. But it seems to me that it is not widely accepted at this stage. How do schools get involved in the TRAC program?

**Mrs Wilson**—A lot depends on the decision of principals and the power that they have in schools. On the Central Coast all but our selective high school is participating—that is, public and private schools. Once the principal makes the decision, students are then able to make a subject selection of TRAC as one of their course options for years 11 and 12. I basically provide the services of coordinating those placements for the students at all the schools on the Central Coast, but largely we are relying on the principal's decision and his wisdom in identifying that this is a real option for the students in his school.

**CHAIR**—What percentage of schools in New South Wales have the TRAC program?

**Mrs Wilson**—I guess Judy might be better able to answer that. On the Central Coast, it is all bar one—14 out of 15.

**Ms Turnbull**—There are 29 programs throughout New South Wales, and they would vary between one school in a country area and 10 in the metropolitan areas.

**CHAIR**—You do not know how many schools?

**Ms Turnbull—**Not precisely, no.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—How is it funded?

**Mrs Wilson**—I am a Department of School Education employee. My wages are paid by the Department of School Education. The running costs of the program are met by employers. The employers who are TRAC employers pay for a student placement. Those fees help to allow us to make frequent visits to work sites and to do the telephone and written communication that is required with students, and they help with all of the other operational costs. I think we are the only program in Australia where employers are paying a fee for that workplace learning experience. I think it is not an issue with employers because they really identify the quality outcomes that are occurring.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Sandra, do you think TRAC is just filling a void that was filled years ago. The very good technical schools in South Australia in their heyday, before they got decimated, deliberately planned 20 per cent of the curriculum week with non-curricula activities—in other words, links with the community, links with industry. That was part of the program. You seem to have the same formula.

**Mrs Wilson**—My background is home economics, and I very much appreciate what you are saying. I believe the industrial arts and home economic type areas always have geared their curriculum towards vocational employment after school. However, I believe TRAC has done it in a much better way. My involvement in TRAC grew out of a year's exchange in Canada in 1990. When I saw what was happening in Canada with vocational education, I came back hell-bent on making a better provision for students in our system. I think the TRAC program worldwide is an outstanding model. Because of the time that our students are spending in work, they are all linked to a workplace mentor who has undergone a training program that allows them to improve their training skills as well as their assessment skills, and get formal recognition for that. So it really is a partnership in a very true sense. Our traditional curriculum, I think, gave piecemeal service to what vocational education was about. I am not demeaning my contribution in the past or that of my colleagues, but certainly we are now really about the world of work.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you support the concept of a vocational secondary school?

**Mrs Wilson**—I do. I think the issue of vocational education—I perhaps touched on this in what I said before—is that school teachers know about teaching curriculum; they do not know about teaching work skills. My background is not an industrial background. I do not have the anecdotal stories that occur in the workplace to deliver that. I really think the only way we can truly prepare students for the world of work is to allow them to spend some very controlled time at work, a significant amount of controlled time at work where they have got real skills to learn, and have a very structured curriculum that needs to be addressed.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—This is perhaps addressed to both Amanda and Sandra: TRAC is being developed successfully in a mainstream high school and preferred to the old tech schools. We would have more success in this day and age by incorporating these schemes into the local high school, rather than going back to specific tech courses, on the basis that you are there with your mates, some want to go to university

and you have decided to pursue an alternative vocational path, so you are all in the same class but you are starting to work out early what you want to do. Is that a fair assessment?

**Mrs Wilson**—I think it is a fair assessment. However, probably the guts of the issue—this is a message you probably got from students earlier today—is you do not learn about work at school, you do not learn about being an employee at school.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—We incorporate into the local high school the school-to-work transition. As part and parcel of our normal activities, we do not separate students when they are in year 8 or whatever into groups whereby some who want to go into the university stream go to a local high school and, alternatively, others who wish to go into the tech school stream go to a school down the road. It is an issue of making it all relevant in the one high school.

**Mrs Wilson**—The critical issues, I believe, would have to be a significant amount of time spent in structured workplace learning—and I do not mean the old work experience. I think that was a mindless waste of time. Kids just went and watched what other people did. If you could build into that school program structured time in the workplace where students were learning things rather than watching what other people did, you could make it a very attractive option.

One of the key issues in building that into the school curriculum is to provide for paid coordination so that the support is given between the business community and the school community. It seems to be that, Australia wide, our school education systems are ignoring the need for a coordinator who can spend time with the students at work and at school, and make those valuable links between school and work.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—Rob and Judy are nodding. Junee is country based, is it not?

**Mr Barrett**—I was nodding my head in a sense that I would hate to see the students separated at an early age. We are finding with a number of the students starting off, not necessarily in the TRAC program but even the work studies program, that their level of commitment and application changes so much in the first couple of work placements that they do that they often been taken out and put into the TRAC program.

Time and time again, we are finding that students are taking the blinkers off, and Amanda referred to this. Students are given a much broader list of options than they have ever had before. We are finding students half-way through year 10 or year 11 who have no inclination at all to go to university. Whilst they may not go to university, they are certainly going through the TRAC program, and they are looking for further education options at the end of year 12. They are changing direction for the better, as they work through the program.

**Mr BARRESI**—Sandra, you referred to some statistics in terms of the success of TRAC. Can you explain the selection procedure that you go through in selecting students such as Amanda?

**Mrs Wilson**—My job during term 3 of the school year is to visit all of the schools and offer TRAC as a curriculum option, just like history, maths or anything else that might be offered. Students then complete an expression of interest form and they are called to an interview. We have just completed our interviews for 1997 enrolments and, largely speaking, the students who present themselves for interview are in the program.

The interview experience is highly valued because we involve our employer.

Our interview panel consists of an employer, who often is also a member of our management committee, a workplace mentor, who is in the industry area that the students are applying for, and me. One of the skills in the skills booklet is interviewing technique. The student comes with a resume, as if they were applying for a job. Being a department of school education employee, we are not about excluding students from options. We are about saying, 'This is a daunting experience for you; however, it is a very critical experience as you move from school to work.' We recently notified the students who went through that interview process of the placements.

I acknowledge that there are probably some students in the school who would very much benefit from that process. It requires some initiative on the part of the student to go through that process. However, as students in schools hear about what is happening to people such as Amanda, the interest in the program and the motivation to become involved is increasing.

**Mr BARRESI**—I accept the process you go through tries to assimilate as much as possible the real life employment situation. But, from the point of view of trying to determine the likely success or effectiveness of TRAC, do you accept into the system those students who are perhaps not the cream of the crop?

**Mrs Wilson**—Certainly.

**Mr BARRESI**—What level of success do you have with them?

**Mrs Wilson**—Our students are not university bound. Last year, Central Coast TRAC has 100 students, only one of our graduates went on to university. We certainly are not targeting the program to university students, because students chasing university entrance often do not cope with the day a week away from school. We are looking at the middle range of students. In terms of exclusion, our program currently has two hearing impaired students enrolled in the program. Certainly, a number of students would have been unemployable without the TRAC program.

One boy who graduated from our program last year was third generation Australian unemployed. That boy is now in full-time work. He had no work ethic. He did not know what it was like to get up in the morning. He did not know what it was like to present yourself for work. I think those case studies of specific kids is really what the committee is on about and trying to identify what you can do for them.

**Mr BRADFORD**—I do not quite understand the philosophy behind what you are doing. I can understand the need for some sort of school-to-work transition when kids are ready to leave school but in the context of this inquiry where we are looking at impediments to employing young people, do you think you are making a contribution in that area? There is a limit at the moment—and that is the point of the inquiry—on the number of jobs that are available to young people. What contribution are you making in that area?

What we seem to be doing is bringing forward this work experience in a new guise, as you said, but in the end kids have got to spend time at school and then do work. There is more of a crossover here that you

are fostering. I just do not see quite what the benefits are.

**Mr Kennedy**—I can answer that from both a committee member's point of view and also from an employer's point of view. The organisation that I work for recruits regularly and we get applications from trainees and juniors, et cetera. I have come across many organisations that view the TRAC program favourably, and certainly we do as well. We get applications from students straight out of school who have done maybe one week's work experience in Year 10 or Year 11. They have some understanding of the work environment but fundamentally they do not have the skills to be able to assimilate very quickly.

As an employer I like the idea of choosing a student who has gone through a practical program and can physically demonstrate through what we call a 'passport' that they have attained some basic job skills and that they understand the philosophy of business and concepts like customer service, communication within an office, and even basic skills like using the telephone. Given that our people—the people who will be supervising them—are flat out doing the work that they are doing at the moment, we then have someone who is valuable to us on day one if we select a person who can demonstrate that knowledge. Our job as an employer is to then provide them with the skills to learn our business, not just the basic competencies of operating within enterprise, whether that is an office, hospitality or some trade.

**Mr BRADFORD**—But almost all of the kids we interviewed this morning had part-time jobs. They were working at McDonald's or wherever in their own time. They were studying and they were doing a part-time job. I think that was desirable.

**Mr Kennedy**—Absolutely.

**Mr BRADFORD**—Surely that was fulfilling the same needs. McDonald's told us that kids that had worked for McDonald's are very desirable as future employees because they have worked in a disciplined environment.

**Mrs Wilson**—Can I make the point that the students who come into the TRAC program are not those students. They do not have casual jobs. They do not have part-time employment. What our program does is ensure that they are employable. We are targeting the kind of people that you are really looking at, people who are at risk.

**CHAIR**—Do not tell us who we are looking at. With respect, we are looking at all youth. We have said nothing about anybody who is disadvantaged; we have said nothing about unemployment. This is an inquiry into the factors influencing the employment of all youth.

**Mrs Wilson**—Okay, my apologies. I thought it was an attempt to reduce unemployment.

**CHAIR**—No.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I disagree slightly with the Chair on this. I think that you have actually hit the nail on the head. Certainly, our terms of reference are wider than that but when cut below the surface and get down to it, that is what we are talking about in reality.

The other point I would say is that of the kids we spoke to today, you are right, the overwhelming majority of them were heading towards university or wishing to head towards university. They were a different type of crop, if you like, in those circumstances. Can I just change the subject slightly. On the question of the employers, how much are the fees for employers? Do they vary? What is the sort of range we are talking about? And also how many employers are involved in TRAC? Do you have problems getting employers in particular areas? Do you have problems in terms of getting a range of employers to meet the skills areas that would be needed?

**Mrs Wilson**—We have three programs represented here.

**Mr Kennedy**—The Northside TRAC program has around 60 employers actively on its books. We have just introduced a new stream which is hospitality, and we have gone through a recruitment phase for that. We have got, basically, enough students and a good match of organisations. In commercial and in retail, we have more industry representatives who are willing to take on students than we have students.

It is not difficult to recruit an employer, particularly when the employer obtains some value from that as well. For instance, a lot of smaller companies do not have training departments or are unable to spend the sort of money that large companies can for training. The TRAC program provides a work trainer certificate. We provide basic skills in supervising and also in coaching and mentoring for employers as well. That is some value added to them. Most TRAC programs offer that at no cost. So it is not only the student who gains; it is the employer who gains. So we have not had difficulties in recruiting employers.

**Mrs Wilson**—What is your employer fee, Frank?

**Mr Kennedy**—We charge $170 per student per term.

**Mrs Wilson**—Ours is $180 on the central coast, with $100 for a second year student.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—I think what TRAC is about is giving students more options. What did come through this morning was that, while the majority of them are looking at going to university, certainly a number of them were only going there because they did not have any other option; they did not see any other employment options available. So, clearly, TRAC will open up more options in those areas.

**Mr Barrett**—And that is where the options vary just in geographic location as well. To go back to a point that John made, in our case at Junee, we do not have the major departmental stores, we do not have the franchise stores, we do not have a McDonald's. Most local business houses are basically husband and wife and one or two staff. They all close at lunchtime Saturday. It is a typical small country town.

As a result of that, we have 96 students in our senior years—11 and 12—and 75 of them are taking part in some form of workplace education. The bottom line is that, without workplace education in Junee's situation and the typical small town situation, they would not be able to go and get the workplace experiences and consequently the workplace references and automatically then, when they line up for full-time employment they cannot produce the workplace records, they cannot produce the references and they are really behind the eight ball before they start.

**Mr BRADFORD**—If there are jobs there for them, who is going to take the jobs?

**Mr Barrett**—You are talking full-time jobs?

**Mr BRADFORD**—Yes.

**Mr Barrett**—The full-time jobs in Junee in the past have been quite slight, and there are two advantages here. One advantage by having the kids out in the workplace is that the employers in a lot of cases have actually created jobs in their own industry and taken on employees that they would normally not have taken on. So they have become so attached and they have been so happy with the ability of a student that has come in that they have created a position.

The other thing is that the student that has gone out—whilst there may not be a lot of employment opportunity in the typical small country town—because the blinkers have been removed, they have been able to look further afield. We have students who have left the Junee situation and are working as far away as Hobart, Perth and Darwin. So the blinkers go and it has given them the opportunity to really broaden their horizons.

**CHAIR**—Sorry, I am going to have to call an end to it because we have well and truly run out of time and we will not do right by the other people who are coming to talk to us today and there is a huge lot of people who are coming. On behalf of the committee, can I thank you for your input, your impressive program. Could you let us know how many secondary schools in the total New South Wales secondary school population—public and private—and how many students are in a TRAC program? Could you also provide the total number of students in years 11 and 12 in the state—both public and private? We would appreciate that information.

**Mr Barrett**—Mr Chairman, I have prepared some comments on the Junee situation. Do I have permission to table that document for your use?

**CHAIR**—Give them to the committee secretary and we will move that they be incorporated later. Thank you for that.

[12.33 p.m.]

**ALAMEDINE, Mrs Monique, Youth Task Force Member, Central Western Sydney Area Consultative Committee, PO Box 151, Quakers Hill, New South Wales 2673**

**BARGWANNA, Mr Graham David, Community Sector Member, Central Western Sydney Area Consultative Committee, Locked Bag CC12, Parramatta, New South Wales 2123**

**HEATH, Ms Moira, Deputy Chairperson, Central Western Sydney Area Consultative Committee, Locked Bag CC12, Parramatta, New South Wales 2123**

**JONES, Mr Ross, Chairman, Central Western Sydney Area Consultative Committee, Locked Bag CC12, Parramatta, New South Wales 2123**

**MORGAN, Ms Glenda, Member, Central Western Sydney Area Consultative Committee, Locked Bag CC12, Parramatta, New South Wales 2123**

**CHAIR**—I welcome the Central Western Sydney Area Consultative Committee. Without going through a long preamble, I just remind you that largely the inquiry is about the employment of young people. It is not an inquiry into unemployment. We really are trying to come to grips with two things: firstly, how we might help young people to become more employable; and secondly, how we might encourage employers to make more jobs available for our youth. Would you like to make a very brief statement? We did receive your very comprehensive submission.

**Mr Jones**—I will make a very brief statement. They will be general comments and then we expect to be questioned intensively. I was going to give you some statistics that would have demonstrated, in a bare way, what the magnitude of the problem is. Unfortunately, getting the statistics is one of the problems because ABS, DEET and DSS all count things differently. So I am not going to do that because all it will do is lead to confusion.

The Central Western Sydney Area Consultative Committee has been established two years. It has long recognised the problems of youth unemployment and has appointed a youth representative who has introduced herself here today. Monique was herself a long-term unemployed person whose experience goes right through the whole of the system. She is well qualified to answer some of the questions we expect.

I will make a few brief points. Willing away the problems of youth finding jobs will not work. We have to look for active, targeted processes. They are absolutely necessary in our experience. Going back some years—and I mean some years—to my youth, there was no real unemployment. Role models were aplenty. Nearly everybody who wanted a job had a job. People grew up in families where people worked. Another thing that is essentially missing in today's modern environment are what we would call the junior transition jobs. There are no more mass intakes of young people into banks, financial institutions and the like. Also gone are the large apprentice intakes that were essentially done by a large government institution such as railways and power generation and power transmission companies, those sorts of things. They are all gone. The market no longer needs nor caters for these people. What was taken as a normal transition to work can no longer be

so readily assumed.

Going to small business, I would like to make a couple of quick comments. Small business basically has low skill needs. Little if any training can be provided in truly small businesses. When you get down to the family type of business, there is not the capacity nor the will nor the time to actually undertake targeted training for people. We particularly mention here the building industry in this respect, which is built on the use of subcontractors. Very few, if any, have the financial capacity or the time to take on apprentices. The market operating in that industry sector alone precludes, in many instances, the taking on of young people. We would make some suggestions about that, given the opportunity.

The other factor that I would like to mention before I get onto some suggested solutions is the factor of transport in the urban spread in large areas like Sydney. People basically worked where they lived many years ago. In regard to the spread of Sydney now, if we look at my own family situation of cousins and nephews and so on, one nephew needs to rise at 5.30—he works in the building industry. His first year as an apprentice, when he was 16, required him to travel all around Sydney by public transport. It was extraordinarily difficult. In the end, being on his own, meant that he could not do it any more, because a 16-year-old cannot drive a car. Public transport does not follow the building industry. There are lots of examples such as that.

In respect of solutions, we believe that group apprenticeship and traineeships should be further developed, expanded and unsupported. The role of careers advisers should be enhanced. We need to provide opportunities for people to experience what the work situation is, particularly when you get to situations where there are multiple family unemployment problems that cross-generations where there are no role models and no experience.

A role for models or mentors should be explored. There is a definite case for improvement in literacy and numeracy. Particularly in the high non-English speaking background areas in western Sydney, and dare I say, other large cities in Australia, where we have cross-generational unemployment. Again, there are no role models. In some jobtrain courses, which Monique can speak to, we have had up to 75 per cent of the participants with low or significant problems in literacy and numeracy.

There are barriers to employers engaging young people. These should be clearly defined and strategies put in place that will address these particular issues. Government must take a role, we believe, where the market simply fails to address wider societal needs. If the market will not allow for it, we cannot let an underclass of young unemployed to become perpetuated.

Much more work needs to go into the transition from school to work—in particular, vocational work while still at school. This will assist in reducing the time needed once a person is in employment until they become productive for that employer.We need to have better recognition of skills or more clearly defined recognition of skills at the end of a person's schooling. TERs which are commonly used by employers are not necessarily a guide to what a person's capacity is when they are going to work. They are not designed for that.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—What is a TER?

**Mr Jones**—A tertiary entry requirement. They are designed for admission to university but are widely used by employers as a ranking when people are being interviewed for employment. There are too many messages going out about what is available, and too many programs. We need to do this in a much more clearly defined role. There is too much noise in the market, and people turn off. They do not want to hear some of the messages when they have heard them time and time again. I would like to stop my comments there and invite you to ask questions of us.

**CHAIR**—In the attachments to your submission, you talked about the youth forums that you held. You talked about the aims of the forum, and then you said 'from this'—that is, the forums—'to make recommendations regarding action taken to meet these needs'. Did you learn and recommend anything and, if you did, can you tell us what it was that you learnt and recommended?

**Ms Morgan**—I can talk on one part. I am actually in the building and construction industry. One of the things that come out is that young people, on the whole, do not understand the broadness of the building and construction industry. So, one area that I have been involved in personally is having career days. These have been for women up until now—for young girls in high school—but we have also been asked to start running one for boys in high school.

One of the things that came through very clearly in the youth forums was the lack of information these people have, and that means that they cannot make any decisions about where they are going to. That came out with the career days. We had 60 girls that were from years 7 to 10. Obviously, not all of them are going on to the building industry, but the comments from the evaluation sheets came back very clearly: 'We did not know anything about this industry. We just thought it was men who walked down in the street in stubbies and a T-shirt. We did not know the range of opportunities.'

The other thing was that we had both TAFE representatives and people from the University of Western Sydney so that they could understand there was a clear career transition. You could go from high school, you could go through TAFE and you could go into university. From the feedback from the careers advisers, we now will be holding one for young men, because they have exactly the same problems as young girls. They do not have information on the industries.We talk about the industries. They do not know what we are talking about. That was one clear message that came out, and we are following it through.

**CHAIR**—You have talked about the building and construction industry. I noticed in yesterday's press that there have been gigantic pay rises in the building and construction industry in New South Wales. Some of the press that I read indicated that that was because of a shortage in the marketplace of skilled tradesmen.

**Ms Morgan**—There is a huge shortage.

**CHAIR**—I should have said 'tradespeople'. I will be politically correct. If there is a huge shortage, can you tell us why it is that employers are not making apprenticeships available?

**Ms Morgan**—The nature of the industry, with the boom and bust, means that they just cannot afford to take them on for that length of time. One of the most effective schemes in New South Wales is the Housing Industry Association group training scheme. The advantage is that the employer does not to take on an

apprentice for four years. Apprentices, in effect, for the first year, are not productive. So, with a group apprenticeship scheme, that actually brings them up to something that is marketable for small subcontractors. With the group apprenticeship scheme, they can be moved around. So, if a subcontractor only has a major project for six months, then that is fine.

The group apprenticeship scheme also does all the paperwork, because subcontractors on the whole—I would say 90 per cent—are absolutely useless at administration. It tends to be their wives. It tends to be the case that they got married at 18 or 20. The woman is about 20 or 22. She has a baby and then becomes the administrator. So, these people do not have the capacity to understand the documentation required to take on apprentices. It is very complex, and it is getting more so.

So, what is happening with the HIA scheme—the MBA also has this scheme—is that that allows subcontractors to take work on. It is one of the most effective ways. It also means that apprentices get a very broad spectrum of training. The problem with a subcontractor in the past taking one person on has been that, if they only hang doors, that is the only experience that apprentice gets, which means that when they enter the marketplace they are really unemployable.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—We did an inquiry into group training schemes during the last term of the parliament and came down with those sorts of conclusions.

**CHAIR**—You have just made the statement that first-year apprentices are unproductive. Maybe I hired exceptional people, but I never had an unproductive first-year apprentice. If I had, I think I would have been rid of them.

**Ms Morgan**—I think you have had exceptional people.

**CHAIR**—I do not think so.

**Ms Morgan**—I work with subcontractors across the board, and their comments are—it could be the change in the times—that they are not productive; that the skill level to bring them up to working on a major construction site or even in the housing industry is quite exceptional, particularly with the Workcover requirements in New South Wales. They have to drum it into them. They do not understand what is going on. There are new EPA regulations in New South Wales. Again, apprentices have to get up to speed with them. It is quite complex. It is complex enough for subcontractors. But, on the whole, it tends to be that they are not working at a level that is productive for these employers.

**Mr Jones**—To amplify that, I have worked in a number of industries over my life, including at Mount Isa, where I was industrial relations superintendent for five years. We employed some 500 apprentices there on a rotating basis. There were always 500. I do not know what the situation is now. I have not worked there for some time. But the first-year apprentice was always regarded as an investment. They did not do anything in the way of being productive. They were basically used to sweep the floors.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—I would slightly disagree, but it is probably hypothetical.

**CHAIR**—Mine worked.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—In the manufacturing industry, I served my apprenticeship as a fitter and turner, and I would think that within a reasonably short period of time I was able to do productive work in the first year. What are employers looking for in young people? If you were an employer and someone went for a job with you, what would you be looking for and where would the weaknesses be?

**Mr Jones**—I have just been through a recruitment exercise for a young person, actually. What I am looking for is someone who is bright, in terms of just their outlook.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Do you want them to have skills now, or are you prepared to teach them skills?

**Mr Jones**—No; I do not have the capacity. I am actually in charge of a three-person business.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—So, you want them to come to you with certain skills.

**Mr Jones**—I want them to come me with a base level of skills. If they do not have those skills—but I was taking on a graduate as a cadet—

**Ms Heath**—I am an employer in a medium sized business in Australia. I work in that business as one of the managers. I would say that, although we have 270 people, we would never recruit anybody that did not have base skills. We are tight on the ground; that is all there is to it. Years ago, you had the slack in an organisation to be able to train people. You do not any more. Business is tough. So, for everybody that walks through your door, you have to have them at a productive level to start off with. You do not have the people there to train them. They are doing something else.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What do you mean by 'base skills'?

**Ms Heath**—If I was recruiting for an office position—it depends on the position—if it was in the accounts area, I would expect them to already know how to balance books and how to do receiverships. It depends on the position, but I would not employ anybody directly—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are there any personal qualities that you would take into account as well as that?

**Ms Heath**—Certainly, the discrimination laws come into play, and so you cannot take all personal qualities into consideration, but—

**Mr SAWFORD**—I was talking about things like confidence—

**Ms Heath**—You have to.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And personality.

**Ms Heath**—You cannot take personality into consideration. It is against the law to do that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I am not talking about distinguishing features.

**Ms Heath**—You want somebody who is confident, who is open, who is an initiator, who wants to get on. In the industry I work in, we promote from within, and we try to do that all the time. So, we want somebody who will take the next step, who will learn, who is keen, who is eager and who looks outside the square.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you employ young people?

**Ms Heath**—Yes, we do employ young people. It depends on what you call young. We just employed a secretary who has just turned 21.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—We get complaints that young people have a bad work ethic. What Glenda and Moira have virtually raised today is that, if anything, business is so competitive now that the time to train young people is seen more as a cost than an investment, because the nature of business is so tough that you cannot afford to set aside the time and the effort to train young people. Is that the bottom line?

**Ms Morgan**—I do have junior staff in but I get them through an employment agency. I have had someone on now for about nine months because my work fluctuates. I have found that excellent because the employment agency has actually pre-trained them, so when they walk through the door, they know the dress requirements that I have, they know what time to turn up at work and they understand they ring in if they are sick, they don't just not turn up. I know other people that are in positions like mine and they are more and more using agencies to bring junior staff in. That means that the agency has invested their money and a lot of agencies, particularly in the Parramatta area, are actually running training schemes for young people and then marketing them out.

**Ms Heath**—I think one of the issues as well is you have the time to train them in your own business systems-

**Ms Morgan**—But not the other.

**Ms Heath**—But not the other, because business systems are different.

**Mrs Alamedine**—If I could just add something, this is where skillshare plays a really big part. I was long-term unemployed for over a year and I was in that age bracket where I was not a junior but I was not a senior either. I did not have enough experience behind me and what happened there was they looked at me and thought that she is long-term unemployed, therefore she must be useless. What came into that was there was a jobskills program where you were trained on the job and also you went to skillshare as well. That played a big part in boosting my confidence and regaining any skills that I had lost. I also met Glenda Morgan there because they invited all the business people to come in for an open day and see what skillshare was all about. I met Glen who referred me to David and that is how I got the job where I am now. Ironically, I am helping long-term unemployed people now too. Skillshare plays a really big part in this.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—Because it is seen as a cost rather than an investment, business is now

therefore pointing the finger at government to do more through the school system and the skillshare et cetera that was historically done by employers. Really, the finger is pointed at us to pick up what employers used to do 10 to 20 years ago.

**Ms Morgan**—It is a shift.

**Mr Bargwanna**—There has been a lot of talk about boosting the economy to create employment. I would not hang on that as seeing young people gain employment simply through the growth of the economy and the removal of barriers. I agree they must happen but the sorts of assistance programs that we are seeing either wholly cut or severely cut are essential to provide that bridge between the people who are looking for employment and obviously not moving into it through any existing programs and the employers that are obviously facing their own situations at the moment.

**Mr BARRESI**—Could you explain that? On one hand you are saying that programs are being cut but on the other hand in your submission you also make the comment that there is quite a range of labour market programs that have been seen to be too restrictive and not satisfying the requirements. Can you be a little bit more specific in terms of which ones you are referring to in both categories?

**Mr Bargwanna**—Sure. I certainly welcome the increased flexibility. I was not quite prepared for the wholesale slashing. I am the manager of a mission employment centre and basically we have been downsizing since June this year, quite incredibly so. The sorts of programs that we had in the past can be run with greater flexibility in terms of who can enter them and in terms of the bureaucratic processes from, say, the end of the CES through to actually joining these programs. For example, it was quite common for some of these labour market programs to be running without full numbers. The unemployed people were out there, but the bureaucratic processes had problems getting them in.

Secondly, I welcome the simplification of the labour market program structure but the resources still need to be there for them to be delivered successfully to gain outcomes.

Skillshare has been mentioned. It is a program with flexibility that, in comparison to what is going on, is cost-effective. The sorts of programs that were labelled as a waste of money were expensive—I think of new work opportunities, jobskills and LEAP. However, I think it has been overlooked that they did provide valuable experience for people for people who had not worked for a long time, just by gaining confidence and re-entering the whole work force situation. Mind you, there was the development of a number of great community schemes that were good for the local community, quite apart from employment. I think that has been overlooked.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Mr Chairman, it might be useful if we could have a bit of a run-down on the Westjobs campaign recently. I think that created quite a number of jobs at a local level.

**Mr Jones**—Westjobs was an initiative of both the central western Sydney area consultative committee and outer western Sydney area consultative committee. It was a major promotional campaign to attract, or to open up, job vacancies across virtually all western Sydney. We set a job goal of creating 4,000 jobs and reached nearly 9,000. It took a lot of community effort. We had to involve the community widely. Some parts

of that are in our submission.

One of the things that was created specifically for that—and it was unique, I do not believe it has been replicated anywhere else—was the combination of a new work opportunity program leading into a traineeship. That was designed specifically for the Westjobs program and that has been very successful. In fact my office assistant came out of that program. We would like to think that that was quite a large success story for us. I think that answers your question, without going into the absolute debt side.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How many of those 8,000 jobs are still there?

**Mr Jones**—It is very hard to count because what you have to do then is a long-term follow-up, for which we do not have the resources. At the last count, nearly all of those job vacancies had been filled in one way or another. But to go back now and count is something that we simply do not have the resources to do, as a committee.

**Mr Bargwanna**—As a provider of the Westjobs traineeship program, there was nothing better received by small business employers than that program. We found it was a success in terms of everyone drawing together—sector employers and the unemployed clients—to make it a real success.

**Mr Jones**—We would also like to draw your attention to the last paragraph on page 3 of our original submission which talks about a combined program with Rotary and students that we are just starting to initiate now. We do not have any experience of how it is going to work, but it is something that is an initiative out of this group in this area that we are trying to use as a bit of a bridge to handle some of the things that have been talked about here.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You made some comments about careers advice counselling that is available. How important is it? Perhaps Mrs Alamedine might add a quick comment here too. It seems to me that many young people in secondary schools are not exposed to certain industries that may in fact be quite desirable; for example, abattoirs where they earn $100,000 a year. Oh, yes!

**Mr Jones**—I use to manage two abattoirs. I am a slaughterman.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Okay, but there are many occupations, such as road building maintenance where the average age is 45 to 52, the building construction industry where the average age is 55 or some damn thing, where they have to replace people at some stage. There are local semi-trailer drivers who work for, say Mobil or BP or whatever, who earn over $100,000 a year.

Some kids are blown out of their brains when they are exposed to some of those industries. When they are asked beforehand, 'Would you ever think of working in an abattoir?', these are not industries that they would even have thought about. Mrs Alamedine, when you are in secondary school, is the careers advice you get important or is it exposure to the possibilities that are in the workplace that is important?

**Mrs Alamedine**—They are both extremely important, but the careers adviser is more important because that is the first person you go to for a sense of direction. Now the careers adviser I had knew nothing. I think I

probably know more than they do. They are just there. They have got no answers for you. All they can make is suggestions. I could suggest things, but that does not mean that I know everything about every occupation there is. They do not know about what courses there are. They are not as knowledgeable as they should be. That is my feeling.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The schools reported this morning—900 kids in the school and one careers adviser.

**Ms Heath**—That is right. But the other point is that careers advisers have not been in other employment. They do not know what is out there: they are schoolteachers.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—That is true. The other point I would make is that it works out, in a school that size, at about an hour per student.

**Mrs Wilson**—Exactly.

**Mr Bargwanna**—There is a wealth of experienced people in the community sector just waiting to help out the careers advisers.

**Mrs Wilson**—There used to be programs in which schools would link with industries and particular areas, and those programs do not exist any more. Those industries really enjoyed those programs.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—TRAC are a group that do sort of thing. We have had experience in Victoria—out Bob's way and Phillip's way—of similar sorts of programs, so there are some of those programs around. How widespread they are is another question.

**Mrs Wilson**—This was a local school mixing with a local business. They developed a network, so the school would come down to the local business, tour through it and understand it. The people from the local business would go up to the school, interview people and talk to them about what the real world was like. There was a real community emphasis.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—There are some like that. As to how widespread they are, that is another question. But we have actually seen some that are like that now.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for coming and talking to the committee and thank you for your submission. We expect to complete our deliberations by next May or June and to bring down a report, and we will certainly send you a copy of that.

**Luncheon adjournment**

[1.18 p.m.]

**HOUGH, Mr Warwick Paul, Industrial Relations Manager, Restaurant and Catering Association of New South Wales, Level 3, 551 Pacific Highway, St Leonards, New South Wales 2065**

**CHAIR**—I welcome the Restaurant and Catering Association of New South Wales. Briefly, I will repeat what I have said to almost everyone who has appeared before us: this inquiry is largely about employment, not unemployment. We hope to achieve two outcomes. Firstly, we hope to determine the mechanisms which might help young people to become more employable. Secondly, we hope to find how to encourage employers to make more opportunities available for our youth.

We have received your submission, Mr Hough, for which we thank you. Before we begin our questioning, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

**Mr Hough**—Firstly, the association would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. We have prepared a reasonably comprehensive submission on our views. I do not particularly wish to rehash that, other than to say that junior employment is a very important issue for our industry. The industry has a long history of junior employment. Currently, about 20 per cent of the labour force in restaurants and cafes would be 15 to 19 years of age.

I emphasise that our submission comes from the particular perspective of small business. Of the association's membership—or at least of the restaurant industry in New South Wales—93 per cent of the industry would employ fewer than 20 employees. The average number of employees per establishment would be about eight. So we come from a particular slant of representing small business.

From the association's perspective, it must be recognised that junior employees enter the work force at a significant disadvantage in terms of experience, skills, qualifications and, in particular, maturity. Maturity is a very important thing in the hospitality sector; that applies not just to restaurants and cafes. We are a service industry. We are dealing with the general public and the way in which a staff member relates to customers is very important. It is probably not true in all cases but, as a general rule, people do acquire maturity over their years of life experience and you will find that someone who is 25 relates a lot better to a customer than, say, someone who is 16.

A number of developments on the horizon concern us. These are particularly important for the future of junior employment; they may have either a negative or a positive impact, depending on which way they go. One particular area of interest involves the review of junior rates going on at the federal and the state levels. From the association's perspective, whilst we appreciate the good intentions behind some of these things, they are seen at times to be driven by an almost ideological desire to try to get away from the system of junior rates of pay. In theory, that may be something that is fine but, in practical terms, it does not recognise the reality that employers need some incentive to employ people under the age of 20 in a junior capacity. Junior rates of pay have been a very successful method of doing that. To date, despite some years of deliberation, no-one has come up with an alternative that would prove superior to the system of junior rates of pay.

The introduction of MAATS is also an important issue for us. We are very pleased that the government

has given a commitment to rejigging the traineeship and apprenticeship system, so that there is an expanded number of places, and so that the delivery of training is on a much more flexible basis. In addition to that, we are pleased that the training provided is industry-driven. We would emphasise, though, that in implementing that type of system, it is very important to ensure that the training is relevant to the industry, through that training being industry-driven, in terms of not only the subjects taught but also the people who deliver that training.

One of the common complaints from members in terms of the training that their employees receive at say, TAFE or at schools, is that they are really being taught on occasions by someone who left the industry 20 or 25 years ago. For example, with cooking, the cuisine styles in Australia nowadays are completely different from what they were 25 years ago, yet the apprentices, in particular, are being taught by these people who really, to an extent, have lost touch with the industry.

Certainly, groups like TAFE—there is a chap up at Newcastle, for example, by the name of Harry Rainbow—have been trying long and hard to get a much greater relevance in terms of the training that is provided. So that is a very important issue for us. Similarly with the vocational training, another one of our common complaints from members is that, for example, through the school system where people are being taught basic skills for the hospitality industry, it is often left to the home science teacher, who in trying to teach basic skills cannot even carry two plates themselves. So it is very important that not only is the content of the course relevant, but also the people who are delivering it are pretty up to speed with what is going on in the industry.

It is very important that any industrial arrangements that need to be introduced in conjunction with MAATS are done. We found in the past that we might have a fantastic training system, but if you do not have an industrial instrument in place to complement that training system, it is not much good whatsoever. There is a lot of confusion out there at present about MAATS and a confusion about how it will operate. The classic example is that we received an update from Tourism Training Australia, one of the peak industry training bodies for the hospitality industry. As part of that, they were explaining that under the MAATS system, you will be able to use the national training wage to employ an apprentice which, having an industrial relations background at the time, I knew was quite incorrect. So it is very important that the industrial instruments are devised to keep pace with the introduction of this type of thing.

I make the point in the submission that the association has a DEETYA outplaced officer whose sole responsibility has been for the last nine or 12 months to recruit trainees in the industry. The association is exceedingly pleased with how well that has gone. On the latest figures, during that period we have managed to place somewhere in the vicinity of 350 trainees. Our original commitment to the government was to place 200 trainees over 12 months. As I said, we are exceedingly pleased with how that has gone. But we are also disappointed in the fact that, at this stage, that seems to be coming to an end. Unless we can find further funding, the outplaced officer's position will cease on 12 December.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. In your submission you say that the number of entry levels for vocational training places for young people should continue to be increased. How could we go about that?

**Mr Hough**—It is very important that there is an ongoing commitment from governments to fund such

places, whether through the TAFE system or not. I understand that between about 1991 and 1994, in terms of the tourism industry, of which the restaurant industry is obviously a part, there was a 34 per cent expansion in the number of places devoted to jobs related to tourism. This industry is experiencing a dramatic shortage of chefs. It is something that has been recently examined by the Industry Commission as part of its report on the tourism accommodation and training sector.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—It is not a new one, is it?

**Mr Hough**—No, it has been around for some time and that is one of the key issues for us, as to how those are expanded, but clearly we would see that there must be an ongoing commitment from the government to providing those extra training places through TAFE and also an ongoing commitment to, I suppose, expand the places that are available through registered training providers, such as the hospitality training network, or groups such as that, where a private provider can also provide the training and act in competition with the TAFE system.

**CHAIR**—Talking about the need for the government to do their stuff, what responsibility does the industry have to train people?

**Mr Hough**—The industry is very committed to training. We have suffered for some time in the restaurant industry from an unrestructured award, which has detracted from attempts to increase training. The restaurant award, which received some recent publicity, has not been properly updated in terms of wage increases since 1987, and has not incorporated the minimum rates adjustment process and so on. The industry has not had an award that has been linked to training, so members have not had as great an incentive to invest in it. But certainly the associations have a significant role to play in providing training. It is a matter of funding for us. In general terms, I suppose that the expectation of many employers is for the government to step in and provide the training.

We, as an association, normally approach government a number of times putting in submissions for training. We have recently trained about 50 people in the access system. That is a program of training people so that they can train people on the job and evaluate their performance. The industry as a whole really believes that it has to invest in the training in the on-the-job sense, and is quite prepared to do that, but in terms of a lot of off-the-job training, there is a focus on government to provide that.

**CHAIR**—Why? Are the hospitality and restaurant and catering employees going to work for the government?

**Mr Hough**—No, not at the end of the day, they are not. But if you even get people trained and working in the industry, it does reduce the burden on the government in the sense of the social security system and the like. It adds to a more skilled work force and that, hopefully, over time, expands the output of the economy. So the government benefits through that and so does industry. With industry, as I said, the normal expectation is for government to provide the training in a lot of areas or, at least, incentives to provide some training.

**CHAIR**—But is that realistic? We are talking about trying to expand jobs. This committee is trying to

figure out how we can get more young people employed, and you are telling us that is all government's responsibility.

**Mr Hough**—In terms of the provision of training, I think there is a very significant role for government.

**CHAIR**—Who said that was a fact?

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Is it not the actions of industry itself showing it is a fact?

**CHAIR**—Do we perhaps need to change industry's attitude?

**Mr Hough**—There are two separate issues. In terms of employing people, I think that lies with the industry in the sense that, if they have an incentive to employ people—through junior rates of pay mechanisms or through subsidies such as that under the old craft allowance system—then industry will take people on.

In terms of providing the actual training, industry already bears a significant responsibility for paying for the training in the on-the-job sense. You have got a situation where the employer will be devoting significant resources to the employee as part of that, in terms of lost productivity, additional supervision and those types of issues. So they are bearing some cost of the training at the present time.

In terms of the off-the-job training, there is still a significant role in expanding the number of places at TAFE. The industry, of itself, cannot increase the number of training places at TAFE or accredited training providers. That money has to come from somewhere. If you were, for example, to put a levy on the industry—such as the old training guarantee levy—to pay for those types of training places, then I think that would be highly counterproductive. But I think industry already pays a great deal for the training in the on-the-job sense, with the lost productivity and those types of issues, so it certainly is not completely with government.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—But are we not also talking about a situation these days where we are asking particularly smallish employers to put that extra person on? In effect that is what we are asking. So essentially we are talking about the marginal end of the business where it is very cost-sensitive. As training is a cost, it therefore becomes one of the factors under consideration.

**Mr Hough**—That is correct.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—So the circumstance, as I see it, is that often a business is in a situation where they would like to put someone on and they might be able to afford it, just; but they might not. But the government's role can be, and probably should be in the circumstances in order to effectively create those jobs, to provide that kick-start to allow it to occur. The thing is, businesses will make their own decisions on the basis of what the bottom line is for them. If you are talking about a situation where there is an additional cost, they will not do it. So who misses out? The overall economy in terms of the number of jobs created, because in a range of these areas jobs will not be created.

You mentioned the question of the DEETYA employee who was working to assist with the placement

of trainees. I have two questions on that. Firstly, you mentioned that 350 had been established versus the commitment to 200. Can you explain what has been the nature of that DEETYA employee's role in terms of making that happen? Secondly, what are the job prospects for those trainees when they get out of the traineeship?

**Mr Hough**—In terms of the role of the DEETYA person, the outposted officer came on board with the association between nine and 12 months ago. Her role essentially was to coordinate the placement of trainees in the industry. We advertised to members the existence of a new traineeship. The traineeship was first introduced to the restaurant industry—and it remains a career start traineeship, not the national training wage—in September 1994.

Her role was to promote that traineeship and make employers aware of what is going on. That is very important, because a lot of employers are not aware of the training opportunities that exist. She became involved once any expression of interest came in from a member. I give the example of Blueline cruises, to give a name. In the first year of operation of the traineeship they would have employed about 15 trainees. After that, when Cathy came on, in the second year of operation they employed an additional 30 trainees because they were so pleased with what had gone on.

Cathy's role was to coordinate the placement; she does all of the paperwork involved with the traineeship. Essentially she moves the mountain of paperwork that employees have to deal with. Currently they deal with two departments: you have got the Department of Training and Education Coordination, which is the New South Wales department in terms of registering a training agreement, and then you have got the industry training branch of the Commonwealth Employment Service which looks after the subsidies and so on.

Cathy's role really was to do all of that for the employer, become a one-stop-shop with very little paperwork, which is one of the things that always puts small business people off, and to do all of that in order to get the most they could out of the traineeship in terms of subsidies. To give you an example, one of our members recently employed someone and they were expecting the fairly basic subsidy for the trainee, just for starting off and what have you. Once Cathy got involved in that process as the outpost officer, she found out that, because of the degree of disadvantage of the person, the subsidy was closer to $7,000. So her role is really to coordinate and get rid of all of the paperwork, which makes it a lot easier for the small business person.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—How many of those traineeships would have actually been filled, do you think, if there had not been a DEETYA officer there to actually provide that sort of support? It is a hard question to answer.

**Mr Hough**—It is a very hard question. There is no doubt that many of them have been filled through the Commonwealth employment system but not nearly as many—I would estimate, say, one half of that.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—So you would expect roughly 50 per cent—and that is very ballparkish—are actually a result of DEETYA's hands-on involvement in terms of assisting in the facilitation of the creation of the job in the first place?

**Mr Hough**—I think that is a fair assessment.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—The other question was just that matter of what are the job prospects for those 350 trainees after they complete their training.

**Mr Hough**—The experience of the association has been that, in the majority of circumstances, people are remaining with the employer. What you find is that the industry does suffer from a high turnover of labour—it is somewhere about 41 per cent. In reality, it is no different with trainees, so you find that people who are staying on for the full 12 months traineeship are committed to the industry; the employer recognises that and they are normally kept on. Certainly, with Blueline cruises, with which I have been associated, all of the trainees who completed their traineeships were kept on and moved on to food and beverage staff.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Why do you think that is?

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—Why the high turnover?

**Mr Hough**—Why the high turnover? There are a number of reasons. There are a large number of low skill jobs in the industry which essentially means that people, if they want to get anywhere in the industry, have to move on. You start in a cafe serving focaccia and coffee, and then you get a job somewhere else in a slightly more sophisticated restaurant. There are a lot of students in the industry. I think about 10 per cent of the tourism labour force is made up of students who really have no interest in the industry. The industry does not always meet people's expectations. Quite frankly, it is hard work working in the hospitality industry, particularly on the kitchen side of things.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—But as an industry goes, it is one of those industries where you often have to jump from employer to employer to develop a career path. There is not an established career path generally within a company because of the size.

**Mr Hough**—That is right. Being small business dominated, there is not that structure that enables people to move up in many restaurants. We have to recognise that so that people do move round to different places to better their chances.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—On the question of that DEETYA employee, when the subsidy finishes, do you still think there are applications for that person to be able to follow through on? Do you expect that, if that person was kept on, there would still be scope to establish a similar range of jobs over the next 12 months?

**Mr Hough**—I certainly believe that is the case.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—There is that scope there?

**Mr Hough**—Indeed, anecdotally, the DEETYA outpost officer in the last month has never been as busy in placing trainees during her period there.

**Mr BARRESI**—As someone who has not come from New South Wales, I am having trouble coming to grips with this New South Wales Industrial and Commercial Training Act that you spoke about not allowing you to employ young kids in waitering positions. I find it hard to believe that everybody out there at the

moment who is a waiter is actually an apprentice or trainee. First of all, why is that act there, and is it really complied with?

**Mr Hough**—Most members greet that advice with the same surprise as you have just indicated. I think the act is there to encourage traineeships and apprenticeships. There were many provisions in awards before my time at the association in 1992 where it was actually a provision of an apprenticeship award that you could not employ anyone under the age of 21 as a waiter or a cook unless they were an apprentice or a trainee. I think that, when they introduced the Industrial and Commercial Training Act in 1989, they picked up that as part of the act. In terms of compliance, I would have to say that most members would not comply with that.

**Mr BARRESI**—I am not surprised.

**Mr Hough**—It is an anachronism. The silliest thing about it, for example, is that for many years the act said you could not employ a waiter under the age of 21 unless they were an apprentice—this is before the traineeship—and indeed there was no such apprenticeship in existence.

**Mr BARRESI**—Therefore, is it an inhibitor or not?

**Mr Hough**—It is not an inhibitor; it is just an anachronism. People go out and do it anyway, they run the risk of breaching the act, although I am not aware of anyone who has ever been up for breaching the act. Or there is a possibility, there is also an argument that someone could lodge an underpayment claim, if they paid them the junior rate and they were doing waiting, and say that they should be paid the adult rate. It is not something that—

**Mr BRADFORD**—The restaurant and catering industry, or the tourism industry, has been punished in a number of ways by changes to the tax system over a number of years. Fringe benefits tax has impacted, although there have been some refinements to that. There was a claim by your association that non-deductibility of entertainment expenses had cost a lot of jobs—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Free lunches.

**Mr BRADFORD**—Yes, free lunches. Do you still maintain that?

**Mr Hough**—The position of the association is that we are still recovering from the impact of fringe benefits tax. It was some time ago but I believe the estimation was that, in terms of an economic impact, there was about a 20 per cent impact on the industry. I think it is fair to say, though, that restaurateurs since then have attempted to adjust to their business conditions in the same way as any other business does to try to get around that. But the general opinion of members is that it has had an impact on the industry. The association has never had the view that we should encourage tax rorts. But, where it was a legitimate business expense of taking a client to lunch to try to win a contract or whatever, that deductibility should be retained.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You made mention about the lack of balance between academic and vocational courses that are offered to young people. What sort of contact have you or your association had with the state education department in New South Wales?

**Mr Hough**—This issue largely came up at a recent national meeting of the association and it was passed on by South Australia. I would have to get back to you with a firm answer on this but I believe there is a pilot program which is ongoing at the moment. One of the complaints was that the people who were training these people were not that competent in what they were training in. We have not, in New South Wales, had as much to do with that as we might otherwise have had but I would be happy to get back to the committee with some response.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is your general view about your association needing to make links with the administrators of the state education department?

**Mr Hough**—It is very important.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Why do you think it has not been made? It is a two-way street, of course.

**Mr Hough**—I know. We are, I believe, represented through the TRAC program and have had input into that in-school vocational training program. Indeed, I have spoken at one or two of their presentations to students—for example, on award rights. We have had an input through that. I would have to come back to provide further details of the specific contact that we have had with the department on those sorts of issues.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—You are right about the turnover. For a lot of young people, it is while they are at school or university, et cetera.

**Mr Hough**—Yes.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—For the purposes of trying to keep people, what has your association done with respect to supporting group training? What else should be done to try to create the impression and the view that working in this industry is a real lifetime career opportunity?

**Mr Hough**—In terms of what we have done with group training, some years ago the association established the Hospitality Trainee Network, which operates in New South Wales. From very small beginnings, I believe that that is now employing about 1,000 apprentices in New South Wales. Following its formation, I believe the Australian hotels association and registered clubs also became involved. We still retain an active role on its board and provide active feedback on what is going on. We are currently having some discussion with the Hospitality Trainee Network because employers are finding that it is becoming so big that it is not keeping track of what is going on. Certainly, we do play an active role in promotions through that aspect.

In terms of making the industry more appealing, we would love to get in place a restructured award, which had a definite career path structure. We have attempted to do that. It has recently been subjected to arbitration and unfortunately it is now going to appeal. Whereas it should have been operating in January next year, we now have to wait until June or July next year. The association recognised that and attempted to take that on board.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—What career structure are you talking about? To be hones, you cannot bring up a family working Monday to Friday, day shift, in the hospitality industry. You are talking about a

gross wage of $385 to $390 per week, are you not?

**Mr Hough**—I would have to say that you have overestimated that. As I said, the association believes it is a shame that the award has fallen behind other awards. It was the association that made application for the wage rises not the union.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—For the record, there was also a fight about penalty rates.

**Mr Hough**—There is no doubt about that, and that will continue. The award rates at the present time are low. What we find is that in the unskilled positions many people are still on the award rates, particularly in country areas, for work such as kitchenhand work and what have you. We are starting to find in metropolitan regions that shortages are emerging in those areas, and members have normally recognised that in giving above award payments. For example, say the waiter is on about $7.17 an hour under the award, they are getting $9 or $10 an hour in recognition of that. Offering increased wages is not always the answer, though. The classic situation is cooks and chefs in the industry. They command quite literally massive wage rates at the moment.

**Mr BARRESI**—Over awards?

**Mr Hough**—Yes, in over award payments. Yet we are still experiencing an enormous shortage of those types of people. It is important also that there is some sort of promotion of the hospitality industry as being somewhere where there is a career, though I am not sure what the mechanism to do that would be. People do not see it like that. All too often it is just a job while they are going through university, which is a shame. There are tremendous opportunities out there for people if they are prepared to commit themselves.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—If I can go back to the TAFE system and something Rod touched on, you are fairly critical of the TAFE system, yet I know of a couple of fairly outstanding facilities locally—East Sydney TAFE and Ryde Catering Service. What communications are you having with the appropriate authorities to bring those organisations up to the standard that you think it should be?

**Mr Hough**—Whilst we may have come across as a little critical, I think TAFE is certainly picking up its game. For example, Harry Rainbow up at Newcastle is introducing far better facilities and a far more relevant curriculum. We are entirely pleased with that. We have a training department, with an established training manager, represented on the various boards which pursue all this. I think the situation through TAFE will continue to be corrected, but I do know that early on there was some resistance to these types of initiatives.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—I am pleased to see that it is improving. That is good.

**CHAIR**—Warwick, a lot of young people, and some employers and employer organisations, have told us that young people have too little idea of what the world of work is all about, what careers might be available, what sort of pay rates and conditions there are, and that sort of thing. What is your industry doing in New South Wales to help ameliorate that? What are you doing to help teach young people what careers they might have available in your industry?

**Mr Hough**—We have presently established a cooks in employment program. There are a number of key industry leaders on that. It is designed to look at the question of how we can get more people into the industry to undertake these types of courses. At times we can be a little reactive, in that we might get an invitation from a school or under the TRAC program to come out and talk to people. So in the sense of going out to the schools and saying, 'This is what the industry involves, and what have you,' there has not been a huge amount of that except through the TRAC program. But we would be delighted to do those types of things. Our focus has traditionally been on the employer, trying to encourage them to expand opportunities. We have not done a huge amount of education of employees at this stage. We are not a hugely resourced association that has been able to undertake those types of things.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In employing students there is the short-term attractiveness in that they are bright and want to work, but in the long-term you lose them—and you are always going to lose them. Why employ them in the first place? Why not go for a different young person?

**Mr Hough**—It is often the case that they want the position.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So do other young people.

**Mr Hough**—The hospitality industry, largely, can often fit in with what they require. It is often the case that the student is going to university from Monday to Friday, and they might want to work Friday and Saturday night. That is something which this industry, for obvious reasons, can readily accommodate, because those are the times when we most demand labour. I would have to say that, if it was not for students, we would probably have a fair degree of positions available in the industry. But I would be reluctant to say that people would readily go out and take those up; and that relates to a problem of perception about what the industry involves. Many people see it, all too often, as a dead-end job. It needs some promotion as being a real career.

**Mr SAWFORD**—If you continue employing students like that, that will continue. Your industry could take greater responsibility for giving greater opportunities for young people who may stick to that industry. In fact, the likelihood that they will stick is probably far greater than that of a student sticking to it. You might have to do a little bit of work, and maybe that goes back to the chairman's question before. What is your association's responsibility for training, and particularly for that transitional period at the beginning of work, which is a challenge for all young people?

**Mr Hough**—The view that you could have far more permanent positions available for people who were not students and you could take solely those people on is a fairly simplistic way of looking at it. Coming back to the situation of chefs, there is a wonderful career path for chefs in the industry to earn significant wages and so on. They do their four-year apprenticeship but I believe that, after 10 years in the industry, only 52 per cent of chefs who have completed their apprenticeship remain in the industry. Yet they have a definite career path and you would expect them to be the most permanent type of people.

Anecdotally, during our award arbitration, one of the questions the judge asked us was this: 'There are large numbers of long-term unemployed out in the western suburbs; could you give me an estimation of how many positions you think you could offer those people and how many people would be prepared to take them

up?' We did a little exercise, which might be a bit simplistic, but we put an ad in the CES which said, 'Waiting position, $9 or $10 an hour; must be committed to the industry.' We did not put down any age. We found there were two applications throughout the whole of Sydney for that position. Students do make up a very important part of the labour force: often, the case is that it suits the restaurateur and it also suits the student to work along the lines of the work that is offered in the industry.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for your submission and thank you for coming to talk to us today. We intend to finish the inquiry by next May or June, and we will certainly send you a copy of our report.

**Mr Hough**—Thank you very much, Mr Chair.

[1.56 p.m.]

**CAULFIELD, Mr Desmond Michael, Executive Officer, National Mining Industry Training Body Ltd, 8 Arilla Road, Pymble, New South Wales 2073**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. I make the comment briefly that our inquiry is all about employment of young people. It not about unemployment. We are really trying to come to grips with two questions. The first is how we might assist young people to become more employable, and the second is how we might encourage industry to make more jobs available for our youth. Would you like to make a brief opening statement to the committee?

**Mr Caulfield**—The brief opening statement is that my comments will not necessarily be the comments made by the board of the National Mining ITB. They will be reflections on my experiences within industry, since arriving in Australia in 1980. You will gather that I do have a slightly different accent from many people.

**CHAIR**—So do I. Many young people—and I have got to say lots of employers—have criticised young people's current perceptions of the world of work and their lack of understanding of careers as to what might be available for them in terms of work. Has the National Mining Industry Training Advisory Body taken any action to try and help advertise itself within schools or some other way so that young people can become aware of careers that might be available in your industry?

**Mr Caulfield**—That aspect of careers within the mining industry is mainly given over to the associations, particularly the employer associations, although the major employee organisations also do a lot of representation on that score. The National Mining Industry Training Advisory Body has only been in existence since September of last year, so it is a relatively new organisation. From the point of view of careers, since my joining the mining industry through the coal sector about four years ago, there have been changes within the industry in that the old-style career paths—or what people regarded as career paths—are ever changing. Work organisation is changing day by day and so from the point of view of careers, it is up to the various organisations who are changing their processes. Therefore, the aspect of particular occupational categories and that sort of thing is no longer there. They are just changing.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is the age profile of the 100,000 people in the mining industry?

**Mr Caulfield**—They are in the more mature. From my experience, the industry has a history of employing people who are in excess of 20 years of age and they usually come with skills from another industry. Where apprentices are concerned, obviously, they are taken on. But as I indicated in the paper to you, the number of apprenticeships are going down year after year, just as in any other industry.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The mining industry over the last 10 years has had an 11.1 per cent fall in employment and manufacturing employment in that particular time has only dropped three per cent. In terms of opportunities for young people, and taking into account the maturity of your work force, there is going to be some stage in the future—because it seems that mining is a bit like road building, the construction industry and the housing industry, you have a post-50 average age group—when eventually the penny is going to drop.

Will your industry have the skilled work force available if you do not start picking up the young ones?

**Mr Caulfield**—I have indicated that the drop-off in employment through organisations in the industry is not necessarily a true picture in that the number of people employed in the industry is quite stable. The number of people employed through contractors is not taken into consideration, as far as I know, during the census, so therefore you have to be very careful of that drop-off of 11.1 per cent.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I am not sure that is true.

**Mr Caulfield**—As I said, I would check it. I would like that checked because there is a concern. Also, capital investment within the mining and extractive industry is just leaping along and therefore people are responsible for a lot more than they ever were. Their tonnages are much higher and all that sort of thing. The right sizing of organisations is taking place. Organisations are saying, 'We no longer employ so many people ourselves'. However, the number of contractors is going up. Contractors, as I indicated in my paper, are by and large mature and trained. They are skilled and therefore do not need any training. Apprentices and trainees—of which there are very few in the industry—are going down. They are just not there.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—My reading is that really the employment of the people in the mining industry and the training of people are two distinct roles. Your role is clearly on the training side, so you are not involved with employing people and not particularly involved in the type of people who are employed. Rather, once they become employed, your role is then in the training area. Is that the way it—

**Mr Caulfield**—That is absolutely true. The National Mining Industry Advisory Body is responsible for vocational education and training.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Within the mining industry?

**Mr Caulfield**—Within the mining and construction industry.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—That happens after the people have been employed?

**Mr Caulfield**—Most definitely. The employment of people is the responsibility of the organisations.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—The type of people and the skill levels, and all that, are other people's—

**Mr Caulfield**—That is their prerogative.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is your view of the current secondary school system that you have come into contact with in Australia?

**Mr Caulfield**—Listening to the previous speaker, I have a tendency to call people who are in training employees, particularly where they are employed. They are not students. Again, I think people should take that into consideration. They are employees. If people can get some vocational education, and training or planned experiences, as opposed to unplanned experiences, they would be better capable of taking up jobs when they

do eventually leave school.

I have been involved in or party to a program in Dysart, where it is seen as something that is working in the last two years—a school to work situation. But, again, the number of jobs available to people, young people particularly, is relatively small in these areas. So, where mining is concerned, where one would expect to find younger people moving in, I do not think that the secondary school system has a great impact, frankly.

**Mr BARRESI**—Des, I do not fully understand the single linear apprenticeship training system. How does that differ from the current system? Then you talk about the dual system in Germany. Just run us through the single system.

**Mr Caulfield**—As I indicated in that paper—that was done very quickly—the notion that people should get a traineeship, or an apprenticeship, is stopping a lot of young people going into traineeships, in particular. The parents, and they themselves, have indicated over the years that they saw traineeships as a second-class type of training, or a second-class education, or a second-class credential. Instead of having the twin of a traineeship, or an apprenticeship, we could have a one-line apprenticeship—that is, an apprenticeship levels 1, 2, 3, or 4—similar to the German system. They do not have traineeships. So, I am suggesting that we get rid of the notion of traineeship and just have an apprenticeship. An apprenticeship still holds a great deal of creditability for many people.

**Mr BARRESI**—If you are struggling to have enough apprentices in the mining industry, are you cutting off a potential option for young kids to come into the industry?

**Mr Caulfield**—No. On the contrary.

**Mr BARRESI**—The traineeship is a possible option, isn't it?

**Mr Caulfield**—It is a possible option, but it is not one that people are taking up.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—So, you are saying that it is not the question of industry not considering it; it is a matter that the people who might be doing it are not considering it.

**Mr Caulfield**—Yes.

**Mr BARRESI**—Could it not very well be a marketing issue from your perspective, that you are not out there selling the benefits of a traineeship to the young kids?

**Mr Caulfield**—I sell the benefits of traineeships and training—vocational education and training—to employers. That is my job, so that they get the best possible return on the investment that they make in relation to training. Where an apprentice or a new employee is concerned, we are looking to establish a system whereby that person will get planned experience as training—vocational education training—and a credential that matches that, that has an industry credibility. I spoke to John Bradford earlier. John and I worked in the retail industry some years ago together. I will move from the mining industry back to retail, as I worked in that from 1983 to 1992. Where traineeships are concerned and their establishment, the number of organisations

picking up trainees was very low. From the employees' point of view, when we asked them why they were not taking them up, the answer was that they just did not regard them highly enough. And that is a big problem.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—It is a cultural thing really.

**Mr Caulfield**—Well, the whole notion of people's expectation in relation to vocational education training is cultural.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—So you mentioned the question of apprenticeships and whether that still has an element of respect, if you like, in the community. I would say that is true to an extent, but it also brings up a couple of negative connotations. Firstly, apprenticeships are seen by the people you are talking about as being a long-term qualification—a qualification that takes at least four years to get. Secondly, for young people, there is also the connotation of low wages in their perception of the circumstances of apprenticeships. So you have that problem as well with apprenticeships. I think it is an interesting idea to look at the question of collapsing them both into the same sort of operation.

**Mr Caulfield**—Why cannot we change the mind-set?

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I guess it a question of the mind-set of traineeships too. I think we can alter the minds-set on either of those issues. The question relates to the way you do that: what resources are required and what time line is needed to do it. For example, the previous witness was talking about the question of traineeships in the retail area and basically said that, by having a full-time employee out there selling them, they have been able to expand significantly the number of traineeships that were taken up on that level. If you can put the resources in, there is a capacity to do that with the mind-set, but it is a pretty resource intensive approach, I think.

**Mr Caulfield**—It is. As I said, I worked with Kirby and post-Kirby and developed a whole traineeship package for the retail industry. I do a lot of research in the development of a profile for the industry. Under a previous minister, I actually produced numbers just looking at the shopping complexes around Australia. Using the spare capacity of industry to develop those and with materials and so on, it was all ready to go. Now, the other issue in relation to traineeships is the red tape. At state level, particularly, that stops people doing it. You just cannot afford it.

I recently asked a couple of senior mining people in Australia in the states of New South Wales, Tasmania, WA and the Northern Territory: what would motivate you to take on one more trainee or one more apprentice? What would you need to assist you to do it—money, resources or whatever? The general answer was, 'Nothing, Des. We are just too lean and mean at this stage. We do not have the capacity to train the people. We want experienced people.'

**Mr GRIFFIN**—And at this moment because of the availability of trained and experienced people, they do not really need it, is that true?

**Mr Caulfield**—In some areas yes; in some areas no. The mining industry is second only to the information technology industry in expenditure on vocational education and training, at enterprise level, at site

level—and that is the way they want to keep it. They do not want the infusion, if I can use that word, of anything they regard as central, whether it is state or national. It is one of the issues in relation to any type of national credential, national recognition and things of that nature. That is the big question; that is the big promotional thing that I am looking at within the mining industry.

**CHAIR**—You said that you supported MAATS; what new apprenticeships, I said no traineeships, do you—

**Mr Caulfield**—Oh, sorry, that is my opinion.

**CHAIR**—From your comments, I assume you envisage no new traineeships. What new apprenticeships do you think you might get up under the new provisions?

**Mr Caulfield**—Under the new provisions, at this stage I do not think there will be any new apprenticeships. We may get some organisations taking on apprentices. I firmly believe in that single line. You would increase apprenticeships out of sight, if they were able to do that, and with a lot less. You have got two systems. You have got two heaps of paper on one side for traineeships; you have got a heap of paper and processes and procedures on the other. Lock them into one, give them a run at them and let them do that. In that way, you will have a much better way of doing it.

**CHAIR**—May I ask you another question? Once the Workplace Relations Bill has been proclaimed as an act, what will prevent you from doing that in your industry?

**Mr Caulfield**—I do not have sufficient knowledge of the bill. I have seen bits and scraps of it, and while—

**Mr GRIFFIN**—That is all there is.

**Mr BARRESI**—Just for the record, it is an excellent bill.

**CHAIR**—Nobody ever reads things anyway.

**Mr Caulfield**—Again, and frankly for what it is worth, the National Mining Industry Training Advisory Body does not involve itself in industrial issues.

**CHAIR**—In what?

**Mr Caulfield**—In industrial issues.

**CHAIR**—No, I am not talking about industrial issues.

**Mr Caulfield**—I know. It is where, for instance, organisations have to see the benefit of getting involved in vocational education training, and in the employment of people. Concerning apprentices, for instance, we are putting up a project to develop apprenticeships, involving a dual apprenticeship in the mining

industry here in New South Wales. A couple of hoops have to be gone through in order to get that up.

**Mr BARRESI**—Have you done any research, or do you have even anecdotal evidence, to indicate what the perception of young kids is towards working in the mining industry?

**Mr Caulfield**—We have not done anything of that nature. However, anecdotally, I would reckon there are people queuing up to get into the mining industry. The mining industry pays very well, particularly in the coal sector. They would queue up to get into it.

**Mr BARRESI**—So is it seen as a short-term career in terms of it simply getting some money together and then moving on?

**Mr Caulfield**—Well, according to information that I have, a lot of people do that—not only young people, but older people. They get in and work for five years. They become a mine rat, get their bundle and run. They run for other reasons.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—May I just cover a point there? I think along the same lines as you in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships generally. I think we are trying to reinvent the wheel to some extent. However, there could be some reasons for traineeships being appropriate in small business, where there is not the level of skill needed for a person to train for four or five years. In the new technology field, where there may not be current apprenticeships, maybe they are areas for traineeships.

**Mr Caulfield**—May I just hold you on that? As I mentioned in my paper, in Germany they are all apprenticeships. Germany does not have traineeships.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Yes, I know this.

**Mr Caulfield**—And, even in the retail field, there is a mind-set of apprenticeships being four years.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Everyone does apprenticeships.

**Mr Caulfield**—Four years long, yes. An apprenticeship is a system of training; that is all it is. So, therefore, all we are saying is that we are giving credibility to an apprenticeship and to a person who is going to go through a series of planned experiences over a period of time. Under the principles of competency-based training, time goes out the window. If the person can do the items, or whatever you have, that are determined by industry or by the employer, that person will get some sort of a credential for it. For instance, this competency-based training is also modular based.

Instead of looking at total occupational categories, as we tend to do again—that is the mind-set—look at modules of employable skill. With the modules of employable skill a person has, that person is employable. It does not matter about the occupational category. Again, the occupational category is going out the window.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—It is a question of just what you call them, I think, as to whether it is an apprenticeship, a traineeship or—

**Mr Caulfield**—Therefore, from a selling point of view or from a marketing point of view, if you have something there, it is a one-line. People say, 'Why should I get an apprenticeship? Why should I go into a traineeship? Why should I go on to a labour market program?' Focus. Bring it all back. It is easier if you want to market it, and you get numbers.

**CHAIR**—Des, thank you very much for both your submission and coming and talking to us today. We hope to complete our inquiries by next May or June and bring down a report. We will certainly make a copy of it available to you. Thank you very much.

**Mr Caulfield**—Thank you.

[2.19 p.m.]

**CHRYSSOCHOIDES, Ms Simone, Co-Chair, Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA) New South Wales Inc., Level 4, 8-24 Kippax Street, Surry Hills, New South Wales 2010**

**MARSDEN, Mr Andrew Gerard, Executive Officer, Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA) New South Wales Inc., Level 4, 8-24 Kippax Street, Surry Hills, New South Wales 2010**

**MOREY, Mr Mark, Co-Chair, Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA) New South Wales Inc., Level 4, 8-24 Kippax Street, Surry Hills, New South Wales 2010**

**CHAIR**—I welcome the representatives of the Youth Action and Policy Association of New South Wales. This is an inquiry about employment of young people, not unemployment. We are really trying to come to grips with two major issues—how we can help young people become more employable and how we can encourage employers to make more positions available for our youth.

Do you have a brief opening statement that you would like to make before we ask you questions? Unfortunately, I have to remind you that time is very short. We may have overbooked a bit today. But, because we have asked everyone to come, we have got to keep moving.

**Mr Marsden**—Just very briefly, the Youth Action and Policy Association is what they call a peak youth agency in New South Wales. That means that we represent young people and youth services across this state. That is the capacity, obviously, in which we are appearing today, based on previous policy positions that we have around the education, employment and training area. I think it is very difficult to divorce education, training and unemployment programs from employment factors because for the last 10 years or more we have been directed down the path for young people into education and training. It is very hard to divorce the notion of why people are employed from the notion of what we are doing in education and training. So, some of what we will say today obviously will connect back into that, because that is the nature of the policy that successive governments have pursued.

**CHAIR**—Do not get me wrong; I am not implying that unemployment is not a factor. It is just that inquiry after inquiry after inquiry around the country has dealt with the issue of unemployment. This inquiry is about employment.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—On the education point, you are right. A lot of what we have heard has been from talking to education groups.

**CHAIR**—Of course, but it is a difference in emphasis. If we want governments to take it seriously, then we have to look at how we get more jobs.

**Mr Marsden**—I was just putting it in that context. Obviously, some of our comments will cut across that area, because they are very closely entwined. We will leave that as our introduction for now. We have some points that we have prepared. We are quite happy to furnish written details afterwards.

**Mr BARRESI**—Could I clarify something right from the start, because we have had this problem before when dealing with representatives from youth groups. What do you define as youth?

**Mr Marsden**—From 12 to 24.

**Mr BARRESI**—So, you are dealing with that teenage school leaver group?

**Mr Marsden**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Do you actually work with youth?

**Mr Marsden**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—We have had some organisations appearing before us who call themselves youth organisations, and they have nothing to do with young people.

**Ms Chryssochoides**—I am a direct service worker. I operate a youth centre.

**Mr Morey**—I work for Penrith Council as a local youth development officer. I have been involved in resourcing youth services, developing youth services and seeking funding.

**Mr Marsden**—We have to bridge young people and youth workers so we also work directly with young people. My job is to resource the agency.

**CHAIR**—We have had two symposiums with groups of young people representing a number of secondary schools. They have all told us about the advice they get, either from the school or the community or wherever, about what the world of work is all about, what careers might be available, what sort of pay structures there are, what opportunities there are, what work there can be and what career paths there might be—outside of a university structured education—to an employment outcome path. Could you tell us your views on that very broad issue?

**Mr Marsden**—I think it is something that Simone is certainly going to talk a little bit more about. One of the problems with that, obviously, is that the whole school system, particularly years 11 and 12, but even from 9 to 10, is focused towards the HSC. In this state it is focused towards university. So you have that whole orientation towards choicer subjects which have an impact on actual university options. Now we know that all young people do not go to university, but the system is gearing itself that way.

Our recent HSC review was basically around the options of how we can reduce the number of courses that we have available for students so that we can make it cheaper—reducing it down to core subjects, like maths, science and those sorts of areas; not even looking at the issue of how do we do industry links in training. At the moment, the only industry links in training we do are from years 11 and 12. We do not think about it pre years 11 and 12, and I think 9 and 10 are very critical years for many people. They are the years a lot of people start to drop out of the system. Once you get beyond that—obviously, we can talk about it a bit later—there is very little in place that is actually about accredited training that gets people back into or focuses

on employment. This whole orientation, if you like, is around university and university has certainly hijacked the whole education system for a very long time.

**CHAIR**—You just mentioned years 9 and 10, or changed direction slightly, because as far as I am concerned it is a big issue. You talked about kids starting to drop out of schools now. Are you aware of any—for lack of a better word—programs, or any efforts by any schools, districts or areas to try to keep those young people within the envelope of the school system?

**Ms Chryssochoides**—I think the HSLO program, the home school liaison officer program, that runs through the Department of Education is an effort, in a sense, to do that; to maintain some kind of level of retention in school, particularly for those young people at risk, and that usually forms that group of years 9 and 10 students. In my previous experience as a worker in rural New South Wales, I worked very closely with the HSLO in, for example, operating young women's groups. We addressed issues like self-esteem and issues that were more relevant to schooling. But the main aim of the program was to ensure higher retention and a higher attendance rate at those schools.

**CHAIR**—Did it work?

**Ms Chryssochoides**—It is not highly successful. It very much depends on the particular home school liaison officer that is operating in each particular area. Ours was indeed quite successful, but I knew of other programs that were not always the same.

**Mr Morey**—A similar program that I am involved with at Penrith is called the helping early leavers program. That is a program that aims to teach numeracy and literacy to early school leavers. The group that we deal with is primarily 14- to 18-year-old young people who have difficulty reading and writing their own names. Our aim is basically to try and re-engage them in some form of formal education—be that back into school, TAFE or community colleges—at least to get that basic numeracy and literacy. But what we have found is that young people seem to drop out because there is a point within the school system where teachers say, 'We've got 35 kids in our class. We can't look after everyone. You're mucking up—you're out.' And usually the mucking up comes from things where kids cannot read or write. They do not understand what is going on, so they are dropping out from that.

**CHAIR**—How do we let that happen, Mark? How do we let the kids get that far? How do we do that?

**Mr Marsden**—If you look at New South Wales, for example, they have been doing compulsory testing of literacy levels in third and fifth grades for a number of years now.

**CHAIR**—Since 1990.

**Mr Marsden**—But that information, for instance, is not available to parents. Parents cannot do any redressing of the problem. Who knows what happens with that information in the Department of School Education? It certainly is not made publicly available, so we are not sure what programs we can do to address it. There are no targets that we are actually measuring, so we might do an assessment like that to measure it, but that is not actually then done to redress the system of actual education in terms of literacy training.

We really should not be letting anybody get out of first grade without being able to read and write. I think that it is the basic point. I can speak as a trained high school teacher. When you get to year 7 there might be some students who cannot read or write. You are actually expected to know, but you are not taught that when you are being trained. You actually base all your lessons and your whole preparation on the fact that everyone will be able to read and write, and then you build on the concepts from there. Of course, the reality is that that is just not the case.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And never has been.

**Mr Marsden**—No, but we do not have any—

**Ms Chryssochoides**—And do you have the time to administer any kind of literacy and numeracy program with those young people who have slipped through the loops? A number of the young people that I deal with on a day-to-day basis cannot write their own names and do not know how to write their home phone numbers, and things like that. So, you have to go through an extensive process with them to help them. They can say the number, so you write it for them and then they learn to write it from there, but it becomes a really big problem. A lot of the things have been about numbers in the schools—numbers of students in classes, and things like that. That is from a teaching point of view, I think.

**Mr BARRESI**—How are you identifying these kids at the moment, these school leavers that you are dealing with? Are they referred to you by the schools, or are they coming to you voluntarily?

**Mr Marsden**—In relation to the particular programs that are in place in this state, some are referred by the school but, more often than not, they are actually young people that you generate yourself, or you are in touch with other networks, or through word of mouth experience you get young people to your program, such as the one that Mark talked about—the helping early leavers program. That is certainly the way it works.

**Mr Morey**—We draw a lot from referrals from other agencies. A lot of referrals come from street work projects where they are picking up, basically, street kids. That is the main draw. We get a lot of referrals from home school liaison officers and the juvenile justice system. So, I guess that there is some link between where these young people actually end up and where this program picks them up, and the levels of numeracy and literacy they actually have.

Part of it is that education is not an end in itself. There are many aspects to young people's lives, and by just focussing narrowly on education within an education system, a lot of the other issues are not addressed. For example, there are family problems, basic reading and writing, developmental learning difficulties, and things like that. They are not being picked up within the system. By the time a young person gets to year 8 or 9, he or she cannot read and write, while everyone else can read and write, so the young person starts acting out and starts to become the bad egg. The school system is unable to deal with that; the young person is marginalised, and he or she just gets pushed further and further out.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Let me just try to clarify this literacy and numeracy problem because it interests me. Could we categorise literacy and numeracy problems amongst the poorly educated group, or can we categorise them amongst all groups? Do we find people going right through to the HSC who would have poor

literacy and numeracy?

**Mr Morey**—They did a survey of university students and found that 12 per cent of the university students had a literacy problem. They are students who have gone through and have obviously done maths and science, and have had to do English. English they have bombed out in and they have not counted that in their TER score, so they move on and just keep progressing with maths.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—So, it is progressing right through the system?

**Mr Morey**—Yes. So, it is not just confined to one group; I think that it is across the whole spectrum.

**Ms Chryssochoides**—Taking into account that their learning difficulties—

**Mr SAWFORD**—When you think that Australia spends the lowest in the OECD per capita from all sources on children aged five to 12, we are with the basket cases like Greece, Portugal and Luxembourg. So it is a pretty simple answer as to why we have got a problem: we do not spend any money and we get exactly the return that we expend on. We are the lowest in the OECD.Who funds your organisation? Do you get funds outside from other areas?

**Mr Marsden**—Primarily, our funding is through the state government, which acts as that resource and the link between government policy and community work policy. We receive a little bit of funding through the federal government from the department of immigration—it was ethnic affairs. The rest of it is basically membership driven money and whatever we can line up with the corporate world and outside sponsorship.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How successful are you in getting corporate money?

**Mr Marsden**—As an agency, our success is probably quite limited for YAPA because a lot of the time we are actually resourcing other agencies—which are working with young people directly on the ground—to do that job. We are obviously putting a lot of work into them, but we are about to set up something like a funding pact—a compact almost—with the Body Shop assisting us in a process to do that from the youth sector, with corporations. So we will soon know whether it works.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How many young people that have given time, like now, is your organisation having contact with?

**Mr Marsden**—It depends on which way you want to measure it. Directly, in terms of those internally in our decision making groups—because we have a policy forum of 60 people, so 30 of those places are for young people—actively about 20 fill those places. Externally, in relation to the youth services, depending on the services that we work with it can be anything up to several thousand. But, for instance, we did some work—as a campaign—on junior wages, particularly in New South Wales. We went out to a number of festivals and so, indirectly, in that way we have been able to collect up to 3,000 signatures to date.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is your relationship with the state school system?

**Mr Marsden**—Certainly we try to foster it. It is, I think, a little bit tenuous because our state school system is a rather large bureaucracy; it consumes 25 per cent of our state budget. There have been a number of agencies trying to work a lot closer with schools to actually get them to face some of the difficulties that are coming and to become more integrated with welfare services, given that welfare has a much lower budget level than education. So we are trying to collaborate and use resources.

**Mr Morey**—Well, the organisation is fostering links with groups such as the parents and citizens association. We have worked on a number of things such as school exclusion policies—which is what we are currently working on—and we are looking at numeracy and literacy issues and things that concern the parents and citizens association. Obviously there are some areas where we differ in our beliefs on how things should be done, but there are a number of areas where we actually have similar views and similar beliefs, and that is where we attempt to work collaboratively with groups such as them.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What about your relationship with employer organisations?

**Mr Marsden**—We have some links because we are involved in what is called the New South Wales Alliance, which comprises representatives from major consumer and other groups. They are participating groups in the Business Chamber of Australia, so we also have some links with them.

**Mr SAWFORD**—One last one and then I will hand over. In terms of the last couple of years, what sorts of activities, in your view, have been the most successful in working with young people? There is an open-ended one for you.

**Mr Marsden**—There are two things. One is those systems that try to communicate with young people and provide them with an input and a say in terms of ways of working and of skilling people so that they can actually direct and produce their own strategies for whatever their issue is. That can be done on a local level by organising entertainment and activities, and it can be done on a regional level by having an input into area consultative committees or something like that. But I think the biggest one—and the one that always comes up in nearly every survey or when you are dealing with young people—is when you provide employment. That has had the biggest impact and has been the most successful for young people: actual employment

**Mr SAWFORD**—What sorts of things are you doing in that area?

**Mr Marsden**—We are working with our state government, pushing them very hard to set up a youth employment task force. We are currently, in New South Wales obviously and particularly in Sydney, going through some infrastructure projects that have developed in relation to the Olympics. Now we have the Premier and other people on record as saying that this is a boom time for jobs and that that will flow down to young people. But there are no strategies in place for that to actually occur, so we are trying to set specific targets in relation to young people in terms of some of those infrastructure projects, particularly those that are given out by the government as tenders—those sorts of things.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How easy is it for an organisation like yours to influence policy? Are you batting from the outside to bash your way in?

**Mr Marsden**—I think it depends.

**Mr SAWFORD**—We have heard the issue often.

**Mr Marsden**—Yes, we have had some success in relation to that. Obviously you try to use whatever tools are available to you, such as media and other groups. But, always, the most success we have with any sort of campaign is when it has local support, particularly local community services and workers support. Then we get that to a point where you can apply that on a local MP level through to the relevant minister or to the Premier. So we are actually getting somewhere. We are about to get a youth employment task force. I think that is a big mark for the organisation because of what it has been able to do.

**Mr Morey**—I think one of the problems that we have is that often, when we advocate on behalf of something, it requires government to look at structures, restructuring things and providing a different focus. Often that is either, first, not financially attractive to governments or, second, not attractive publicly. It is often just a matter of chipping away at the edges and getting small reforms.

Because of the way things are funded and policies are developed to put out basically spot fires here and there, we see no coordinated, integrated approach across a variety of departments. So one department may be off doing one thing and another department is running another project. If they looked at something together and tried to integrate what they were doing, they could come up with one program, rather than having a couple of small little ones around the place.

**Mr SAWFORD**—They would have to share the glory!

**Mr Morey**—That is one of the big problems, isn't it?

**Mr BARRESI**—This morning we had a forum with students from the local schools. I do not believe they were representative of kids. I would like to consider them as more the cream of the crop. You are dealing more with high risk kids. To what extent is attitude a barrier to their getting a job? Can you describe that attitude, whether it be their attitude or the employers' attitude to them?

**Mr Marsden**—I think it is both. I think we are talking about both factors here. Firstly, obviously when you look at surveys of employer groups, one of the biggest reasons why they say they do not take on young people is attitude. I think we need to overlay that, though, at the same time with the perception and the portrayal of young people that generally occurs, such as in the media. We know that, if you commit a crime as a young person, you are much more likely to get into the media than you would if you create a product that you could sell or whatever, which is really quite adverse when you think about it in terms of why we are doing this. But that perception is obviously going to impact on employers as well as it impacts on young people.

But then you add to that other factors. The mean time a person under 20 is unemployed is 20 weeks. All the studies about self-esteem in relation to how long people are unemployed say that after four weeks its impact on lower self-esteem is really starting to hit home. So you are dealing with a young person who is starting to feel quite worthless, because we value the role of work. The perception broadly is that young

people are quite worthless, they are always involved in crime and the streets are unsafe because of them. Whether employers believe that wholeheartedly or not, I do not know. But that perception is there, and somebody believes it because it certainly gets a lot of ratings on *60 Minutes* and those sorts of programs. That is going to impact on the role that those young people have and perceive.

Their own attitude is going to develop partly from their notion of being unemployed and partly from the lack of training that they have received in school. First, whether they can read or write will obviously be a big stigma for a young person and will affect their attitude to lots of authorities because they have been failed by that system. Also, if they have got through that school system and they have not been prepared with any sort of industry links or any sort of real work experience placements, that is also going to be another development.

**Mr Morey**—The other thing is young people are smart and they do not buy a lot of the government rhetoric that comes out. I think that was apparent in the last election, where young people moved their vote from Labor to Liberal in droves.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—In some states. It is a more complex subject. It is complex. People are smart, and some people can be simplistic. If you want to be simplistic, we could be here all day. It is not that simple.

**Mr Morey**—Sure, but the feedback that we got from our organisation, be it anecdotal or whatever, is that young people changed their vote—

**Mr GRIFFIN**—In Victoria 50.3 per cent of the people voted Labor, so I mean it is—

**Mr Morey**—Sure, but the general point here is that young people are smart enough not to buy rhetoric. I think that is the bottom line.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—The other argument, mate, is that in the last election no-one bought the bloody rhetoric.

**Mr Morey**—That was fairly apparent, yes.

**Mr BARRESI**—He is giving us his experience, Alan.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I know he is giving us his opinion, and I do not mind opinions being given. All I am saying is that, if we get into a lot of cliches in that sort of stuff—and I have heard that cliche a lot around the traps, and it is cliche—

**Mr Morey**—It depends on where you are going to look. If you want to sit down and go through it—

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Could I just ask about labour market programs, because you are talking a lot about the people who are unemployed and the fact that they are really the people who have missed out, as Phil said. What part have labour market programs played in getting young people into employment?

**Mr Marsden**—There has been some success, but the success is mostly due to how long the labour market program operates for. That is what certainly comes through. It is the same with wage subsidy schemes: the longer they operate for, the more success they have, as compared with job creation programs. But most of the ones available for young people outside of LEAP, which is now not available, were actually short term. I think that is one of the big problems that we have. If you have left school at year 10 or even earlier, you have available to you a training program only because you are unemployed—not because you wanted to pursue further education and training. So it is an issue, and we would really support the notion of the national youth support scheme that AYPAC are putting forward in relation to people who have left year 10 doing, if you like, up to year 12 level of schooling and beyond that. They actually do not have to be unemployed to get training. It is the long-term training that has the most marked effect in terms of labour market programs.

Also, we need to localise and integrate pathways. We do not have that. You can go from a short-term New South Wales base course on literacy and that is the end of it. It is not accredited, you do not have any links necessarily to the TAFE system in this state, and you certainly do not have any accreditation to any federal training that would be going on either through skillshare or elsewhere. You might be picked up by that, but the start dates may not coincide at a local area level. You could be midstream through one when another course that you really want to do and could go on to starts, so you then have to wait, perhaps up to another six months or maybe only three months, for that course to start again. I think that in itself gives us this whole stop-start and, if you like, cut and paste nature of the existing training in labour market programs.

**Mr Morey**—It is also linking training programs with direct experience. If an employer is looking at two young people and one has done a whole lot of training programs but the other has done a whole lot of training programs and has worked in a number of jobs, be it in a fast food restaurant or something like that, the employer will go for the young person who has had some experience connected to an industry and not someone who has done eight or nine different training programs and can do all these things but has not actually done them.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—What about junior wage rates? There has been quite a bit of debate about that in terms of whether that is the way forward in finding jobs for young people.

**Mr Marsden**—We would clearly say no, simply based on the initial analysis done on junior wage rates, because they are relatively lower than adult rates. Those rates have been falling over the last five to 10 years but particularly teenage unemployment has been increasing. So I do not think lowering the wages is the answer at all.

In actual fact, we would say that some industries, particularly retail—I will pick up some of the points that the speaker before us talked about—rely on casual employment of people based on their age, and that distorts the labour market system. It stops the traineeships being put in place because you do not need to put in accredited training. You just base the wage on people's age rather than have a competency system, where you base it on their skill level.

Putting aside the earlier argument, take the apprenticeship system, which is a four-year system where you start at a lower level and build up skills. The same can apply with traineeships, and the same can apply with all rates of pay as a whole system, regardless of age. In that sense, I do not think lower wages is the

answer for two reasons. Firstly, I do not think it is going to make a difference at all. It will obviously be very difficult to get people to work for lower wages than they are now because some of them are already below poverty rate levels. Secondly, we believe it distorts the labour market system and keeps reliance on casual systems to the detriment of traineeships.

**CHAIR**—If we felt that this morning we talked to perhaps the cream of the crop—we definitely did three weeks ago in Caboolture in Queensland—and we wanted to talk to young people who have been alienated from the system, who have dropped out of school, do you think we could find, regardless of what the setting was—it was formal in the sense that we had Hansard recording and that sort of stuff—young people we could talk to and who would talk to us and be articulate enough to tell us what they really thought?

**Ms Chryssochoides**—Easily. I do not think they would have any difficulty telling you what they thought. I am sure they would not have any problem whatsoever. I guess I want to hark back—

**CHAIR**—How would we go about finding them?

**Ms Chryssochoides**—I guess I want to hark back to what Philip said about the cream of the crop issue. I really find that that is a pervasive aspect of any consultation that goes on with various government departments. The schools often want a good representation of their pupils, so they send the best kids.

Harking back to the young people who have been alienated from these employment programs and school and things like that, for me, with the experience I had leaving uni and trying to find work and the experience of the young people that I have worked with, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for yourself. You get to the point where everybody—the media, teachers, your peers, those whom you respect—is telling you that it is really so very difficult out there to get a job that you do not have any positive self-expectation whatsoever. It creates this really divisive thing where you are battling with your friends and your peers to get the one job that is going.

I have had the experience quite a few times at my centre with the young people where there will be a job coming up at McDonalds or a job coming up somewhere and they all go for it. Progressively, each of them will come into the office and discuss how they will get it over the next guy and stuff like that. It really creates this atmosphere that is not very positive at all.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—You either stay competitive or else you drop out.

**Ms Chryssochoides**—Yes, or you just get so worn out by it that it is so hard to participate in it any more. From my understanding, it is a very easy thing to get in contact with those alienated young people. YAPA and AYPAC and a lot of the other youth peaks have lists and lists of direct service youth agencies that work directly with young people, and YAPA does itself.

**CHAIR**—So, if we asked you to help us—

**Mr Marsden**—We could do it.

**CHAIR**—Fantastic!

**Ms Chryssochoides**—As Andrew and Mark can, I can provide you with anecdotal evidence of that.

**CHAIR**—Unfortunately, we are going to have to move on.

**Mr Marsden**—Just on that one point, the other thing is that DEET, before it was DEETYA, undertook a number of surveys inquiring about young people's experiences under the previous government. They interviewed up to 700 young people that were unemployed and going through the CES system. I think that information is really valuable for this inquiry.

**CHAIR**—In Victoria, there are a number of schools—this has nothing to do with any formal programs anywhere—that have themselves set up programs for so-called youth at risk in year 9 and year 10, where the parents and the kids, in agreement with the school, undertake a modified study scheme where they spend two days a week at work and three days at school and part of that time is on life skills. It has proved highly successful. Almost all the kids are still in school. Is there anything like that in New South Wales?

**Ms Chryssochoides**—Most certainly.

**CHAIR**—Is it working?

**Ms Chryssochoides**—For the young people that I have had experience with, it is a very mixed result. For example, some of the girls that I work with get sent into very traditional roles, like hairdressing. They get sent to hairdressers for two days a week. The opportunities that they have through those particular programs at those particular schools are very limited, and they get sent into very stereotypical roles. I find that can be a great problem, because there are quite a few girls out there who want to be doing a lot of other things than hairdressing.

**Mr Marsden**—I guess it is like labour market programs generally. We do not actually localise it or regionalise it. We do not say, 'What are the regional opportunities here?' rather than 'What are the skills of the teachers, what links do they have, what employers do they know, or what are the ongoing opportunities? Let us make our placements in those areas and start to make available what the reality is.' I think that is a really big issue as well that obviously needs to be addressed.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for coming. We hope to finish our inquiry by next May or June. We will certainly send you a copy of our report, and Stephen will get back to you about talking to some of your kids.

**Mr Marsden**—That would be great.

**Mr BARRESI**—Is the Western Sydney Youth Forum report part of what you are referring to that DEETYA is doing?

**Mr Marsden**—I was referring to the one that DEET did last year generally. Simon Crean actually

wanted to do it as part of the Young Australia Keating launch. They spoke with 700 young people about their aspirations, their experiences with labour market programs, et cetera.

**Mr BARRESI**—We have that submission as well. Thank you.

[2.54 p.m.]

**HART, Mr Dean, Convener, Fairfield Youth Workers Network, c/- Ettinger House, PO Box 47W, Fairfield West, New South Wales 2040**

**HRISTIAS, Ms Stella, Member, Fairfield Youth Workers Network, c/- Ettinger House, PO Box 47W, Fairfield West, New South Wales 2040**

**CHAIR**—I welcome the representatives of the Fairfield Youth Workers Network who are appearing before the committee today. Let me say briefly that this inquiry is about employment. Naturally, it touches on unemployment; but really we are trying to come to grips with two major factors—how we can help young people to become more employable and how we can encourage employers to make more positions available for our youth. If, at the end of the day, we can make recommendations to the government that help achieve both those aims, we will probably have done a pretty good job.

Would you state the capacity in which you are appearing before the committee today.

**Ms Hristias**—I am representing Fairfield Youth Workers Network. My position is that I am employed as a circuit breaker coordinator by Cabramatta Community Centre.

**Mr Hart**—I am representing the Fairfield Youth Workers Network and I am employed at Fairfield City Council.

**CHAIR**—We thank you for your submission. Do you have a very brief opening statement that you would like to make before we start asking questions? I should remind you that we have set the time schedule very tightly today.

**Mr Hart**—We have a brief introduction, just highlighting some of the points we have made in our submission. Firstly, I suppose, we should say who we are. We are from the Fairfield Youth Workers Network, which is a local youth workers network in Fairfield, representing up to 50 youth workers from a variety of different organisations. The local government area of Fairfield encompasses, or has within its boundaries, the Fairfield and Cabramatta CBDs. The population of the area is around 180,000 people. We have the highest unemployment, I think, in New South Wales, at around 14.8 per cent, which is about double the state average. The area is very culturally diverse, with just over 50 per cent of the population coming from countries other than Australia.

Our submission and the information we bring to this forum are very much locally based. Although we have raised some broader issues, our greatest interest is in talking about the local issues of Fairfield and how they impact on young people and the employment of young people.

Just to emphasise a couple of the points in our submission, we have talked about the changes in the labour market in the last 15 years. This is to do with more young people entering education and older and more experienced people taking jobs that young people in the past might have taken, and local manufacturing industry closing down largely in our area in particular but also across Australia, I think. We have also talked

about transport issues, which are quite significant in the local area and in terms of young people and people in general commuting from the Fairfield local government area to other parts of Sydney.

**Ms Hristias**—There are two other areas that we would like to highlight. One is youth unemployment not affecting all equally. What we are suggesting is that unemployment for young people is growing, but there are some young people within that group who have more difficulties in accessing employment. Some of those reasons are socioeconomic background and inability to communicate well. So, language is an issue. Coming from a non-English speaking background creates a lot of difficulties for young people. Literacy, as previously mentioned, is also an issue.

The other thing is that, because young people are disadvantaged by their experiences in their own lives, that impacts on how they can fit into society and how they can move on in society. Young people are prevented from accessing employment by their own personal experience and also by how we as a society look at that experience and by what we do with it. That is an important issue.

Work experience is also an issue. A number of programs with between one and two weeks work experience are available in high schools. Most young people I have worked with have gone through a program. When they come to see me they are in year 11 or 12 and they want to do a resume. The only experience they have is one week, two years ago. Even if that experience is relevant, they were quite young at the time, and their attitude towards it is different now they are older. The reality dawns on them that next week they are going to be out there looking for a job, full-time not part-time.

The other thing we would like to highlight is how the media manipulates the situation and how that can have a really destructive impact on young people's self-image, particularly in the Cabramatta and Fairfield areas, and more so in Cabramatta. There are a lot of drug issues in Cabramatta, but the majority of young people that we work with do not do drugs. They go to school and they want to get on with their lives. I think the media has a lot of responsibility in that respect. How they portray people from that area affects employers' impressions or prejudices. In my experience, when kids go to the CES and ring up for jobs, if an employer thinks they are coming from that particular area, they are not happy for that person to go on.

So prejudice is also an issue. I think it is an issue in Cabramatta specifically, because there are a lot of people from an Indochinese background. When they actually move out of that area to go and find employment, it is a cultural experience that is different from what they are used to. Out of ignorance or for reasons I do not understand, a lot of people still hold fears and do not give the young people a chance. The media has a lot to do with that. They do not highlight the positive things that the kids are doing.

**CHAIR**—Following on from that, in your submission you talked about prejudice:

> The media is full of images of young people as lazy, unkempt, thugs, gang members or drug takers . . . due to ageist attitudes, but also to racial prejudice. Some employers are concerned about how long it will take the young person to get to work.

That is all pretty negative stuff. What was the positive? I did not see your recommendation on how we address that.

**Ms Hristias**—One of the important things with the media is that we need to recognise what impact it has on people. What we are trying to say there, if it is not clear, is that in our area, in Fairfield, there are a lot of positive things happening. There are various arts programs. There are various direct services—circuit breaker, help programs—run for young people. Young people are trying to achieve something. They are working really hard. They are motivated to do something about their skills. They do not want to be unemployed. They do not want to be dependent on their parents or society. They are motivated to move on.

Whilst these young people are trying to move on, they not only have to fight the difficulties and go through the hurdles that society puts up, such as competition for getting a job or for getting into TAFE—that is also getting competitive—or for getting into university. They also, when they are applying for jobs and things, have to deal with the preconceived idea people have of what a person who comes from that area might be like.

A really strong recommendation is that the media needs to look at what impact they have on people. We need more positive images of young people. We need more positive images of how young people are our resource. They are the people that will be running the country in years to come. That needs to be brought up and utilised more. Instead of highlighting a minority—five to 10 per cent is a guess on my part—of young people, we need to be looking at the other 90 to 95 per cent and saying, 'These young people are capable of this.' They might need assistance with English. They might need assistance with travelling allowance to get them to employment, because cost is also an issue. My concern is with programs such as *Willesee* or that other one where they took a family up the coast and said, 'If you get your hair cut, we will give you a job.'

**CHAIR**—*A Current Affair, 60 Minutes.*

**Ms Hristias**—That is a real manipulation of the system. For weeks afterwards everyone was discussing it. A lot of people said, 'Yes, why shouldn't you be treated like that to get a job.' They had to move. They had to change their appearance. I think that is a real manipulation.

**CHAIR**—How do we fix that?

**Ms Hristias**—You could stop them.

**CHAIR**—What are you doing to change the image?

**Ms Hristias**—What we are doing is on a local level. As a network, we have developed a three-year plan. We are developing sub-committees and working on that level. On a local level, we are looking at working with the local media and highlighting the programs that we are running. For example, we had a writing competition called 'Stories from the West'. We got about 120 articles from young people in the area. We made a press release that went into the media. That is what we are doing on a local level. We use the local media to highlight the positive things that are happening.

We have tried to get the *Sydney Morning Herald* involved. They are not too keen to come out and talk to us, but we find that, if there is a heroin issue or if someone has been shot or something like that, they are more than happy to come down. That makes it difficult for us, because we are more than happy to do stories

with the media, on the assurance, I suppose, that we have some sort of control over the product.

The other part of the program I run with the circuit breaker program is industry visits with employers. We connect with different employers and we take young people to find out what an industry is like and to see what job opportunities there may be. On that level, individually, we are making links with employer groups. I think the young people I work with make a very good impression generally.

**Mr BARRESI**—On page two of your submission you make a comment which I think actually perpetuates the problem. You say that:

. . . the threatened funding cuts to the University of Western Sydney would decrease opportunities for young people in this area, increasing already high youth unemployment levels.

Isn't it a problem at the moment—this has been borne out by comments that students and other people have given us—that we are creating a perception in our young kids that, in terms of careers, it is either university or bust? Your statement perpetuates that. I am not sure whether you meant it to read that way.

**Mr Hart**—I understand the point you are making, but we are making a different point. As you may be aware, the University of Western Sydney is one of the newer universities in New South Wales. It is attempting to establish a university in what is the fastest growing area of Sydney, where most young people live. We are addressing the issue that this is where the growth in universities should be taking place, because this is where young people are living. Inner city universities service a different group. We understand your point, but we are addressing a different issue here.

**Mr BARRESI**—I think it is important, because teachers do it, parents do it, we have probably done it ourselves in the past. We are streaming these kids to believe that either they go to university or there is no other life for them. We do not talk up other career opportunities, such as traineeships, apprenticeships and skilled or semi-skilled work in small business, which can be well paid. We need to promote those opportunities, instead of commenting, negatively, 'If you don't go to university, bad luck'.

**Ms Hristias—**I think you have made a valid point. Different programs are looking at addressing those issues. Part of the program that I work with involves giving young people that option. University is not your only alternative. It is one way. TAFE is also a realistic opportunity for a lot of young people. If you do not get into TAFE, what do you do? Currently you can approach the CES about the traineeships.

The year before, we used to have the get skilled program—so there has been a change. I suppose the way we may have presented that is harsh. I agree that we sometimes get caught up and we develop a negative picture. That is the line that we, as workers, find really difficult because, on the one hand, we are seeing young people and we are trying to encourage them and motivate them and keep them going, regardless of what opportunity or pathway they choose to go down. So for us, there is not a right or wrong answer. The idea is to move young people on, so that they feel good about themselves and what they are achieving.

We have young people from non-English speaking background in our area. Their parents have really high expectations of them and that is where we sometimes get stuck in this picture. The parents feel that, if

their children do not get into university, the child and the family have failed. That is still a major issue with the young people that we are working with. That is one of the things that the circuit breaker program does—it looks at alternative ways to get on.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—On the subject of university, I do not think we want to get too tied down on this, however, there is a shortage of places for those people who live in western Sydney. We have only got eight places per thousand, I think, while the rest of Sydney can claim 30 places per thousand. So any cutback has a more drastic effect out here but—

**Mr Hart—**And, in fact, that is the point that I was making. That is the issue.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—But it is a broader question than just university education. I would think that you people are really looking at those young people who have probably missed out in the first group that left school and found themselves unemployed. Have you found labour market programs of assistance for those people, who have left school and who are unemployed, to either continue training or to find work. Have you found that labour market programs are of any assistance at all?

**Ms Hristias—**Previous to this job, I worked at Skillshare in another area for about six years. I found that labour market programs have changed over the last several years. It is becoming more difficult to actually access labour market programs. There were state funded labour market programs, specifically for 16- to 19-year-olds, that have been axed. Currently, we have the traineeships. There are a lot of vacancies in the office clerical traineeships. At this point, with employment at its current level, I do not think there are enough programs looking at addressing the needs of young people who need to move from the school system and the school mentality to an employer-employee mentality. I think that transition phase in our society has really changed, and I think we have that support.

**Mr Hart**—At Fairfield City Council, we have had a variety of programs over a number of years now and have found them quite successful at a number of different levels. Firstly, they can be used to bring young people—and other people who do not have very much training or who are moving from one industry to another industry—to a level where they are employable. The program gets them used to going to work, to the work culture and to the whole process of employment and following instructions and all those sorts of things. I think that is one of the things that is underrated in terms of labour market programs. We hear talk about outcomes and having to get people jobs at the end of the program—and that is the big emphasis. We forget that there is also a need to bring people's skill levels up to a point where they can actually be employable and be able to go about all the things that are required of someone who has a job. But within the programs, a lot of people do find work at the end of the program as well. It is also been successful on that level.

**CHAIR**—You made a some points about youth wages and they seem pretty strong statements. If I told you that the committee has been told—and you would have to make a judgment about whether you believed it or not—by employer representative bodies and a couple of employers that up to 240,000 current youth part-time jobs would disappear if youth wages disappear, would your attitude still remain the same?

**Mr Hart**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Given that information, would you like to state again that we ought to kill youth wages?

**Mr Hart**—It is a real red herring. Employer bodies would obviously encourage you to believe that, because that is really holding a bomb over your head almost, 'If you do this, this will happen.' Who is going to fill those positions? You take 140,000 people out of the work force, what happens? Does that mean they cannot buy McDonalds any more?

**Ms Hristias**—It is an issue, because it is one thing to have a minimal training wage and people can live on that. But what is happening with the wages or conditions we are offering young people is that we do not give them enough money to buy food for accommodation and transport. On that level, I would still uphold this decision. I would still disagree with giving them a minimum rate, if it does not support them. Because then it places more emphasis on the family structure and that is assuming that there is a healthy family structure that is functioning. A lot of the reasons why these young people that we work with who are not doing well at school is because they do not have that support at home. There is no quick fix-it.

**Mr BARRESI**—What if the youth wage was tied to competencies?

**CHAIR**—Why would it be called a youth wage, then?

**Mr BARRESI**—Yes, whatever, a training wage if you like. There has to be an incentive from both ends. There has to be an incentive for kids to want to get the job to begin with.

**Ms Hristias**—That is right.

**Mr BARRESI**—So I can understand your point, but there also has to be an incentive for the employer to say, 'Well on one hand I can have an adult or I can have a young kid. But at the end of the day though I want someone who has got the skills to do the job.'

**Mr Hart**—If it is based on skills, that is fine. I think what we object to is a wage based on age. As we have suggested in our submission, it costs just as much for a 16 year old or a 17 year old as a 25 year old to rent a house or buy the food that they need for the week or whatever is required. It needs to be based on people's competencies rather than people's ages.

**Mr BARRESI**—After travelling this morning from the airport to Blacktown, I can see why it will cost $70 a week in Sydney to travel.

**Ms Hristias**—It does and they pay full adult fare. That is the other thing and that is an issue. If there was a wage that made it possible for them to live and have some sort of spending money so maybe once a week they can go out, that is different. But to put all that stress on a young person to go to work full time—and that is exhausting in itself—and then not to have any benefit at the end is really an issue.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I think you made a key point before. Often when we are talking about young unemployed people they will be in a situation where it is not just a matter of lower education levels and lower self-esteem. It is part of that cycle which also relates to the question of it may well be—to put it politely—an

unsatisfactory family situation. So often their costs will in fact exceed those of a lot of other young people who are in a situation where they can maintain themselves with family support. In that way they can get a form of subsidisation through the family system. That is fine and that is what happened with me for part of the time. At the same time, the simplistic approach of just cutting wages or keeping wages down on that basis is not necessarily going to lead those people into employment because they are just not going to be able to afford to go into employment.

**Ms Hristias**—That is right.

**Mr Hart**—The other point I would just like to make on that whole issue is that the present government has talked a lot about real jobs and I would question how real the part-time, low paid positions that we are talking about are in terms of employment and whether they are real jobs in the long term for young people.

**Mr BARRESI**—That has been the case now for a number of years.

**Mr Hart**—Indeed.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Just on that question of real jobs, without getting political about it, it depends on the circumstances as to whether a part-time job is applicable to a person's circumstances. One thing that is happening is that the number of part-time jobs is probably leading expedientially to a lower number of full-time jobs. But it can also mean that a question of a family unit's viability is improved by the question of access to part-time employment and depends on the flexibility of the requirements of the individual in those circumstances.

**Ms Hristias**—Yes.

**Mr Hart**—Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much for appearing before the committee and supplying that submission. The committee expects to bring down a report some time in the middle of next year and we will ensure that your organisation gets a copy of that.

[3.20 p.m.]

**HUMPHREY, Professor Sandra Fay, Executive Chair, Central West Area Consultative Committee, PO Box 367, Bathurst, New South Wales**

**ACTING CHAIR**—I welcome Professor Humphrey. Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Prof. Humphrey**—I think that you asked me here because of a report of a forum that was held in Orange, New South Wales, in May this year.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I gather you are based at Bathurst?

**Prof. Humphrey**—Yes. The report was called *Our lives, our future* and it was about issues for rural youth. I am not sure whether you have the video that went with the report.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We have the video, though we have not viewed it.

**Prof. Humphrey**—I would suggest, if you do have time, that you view it because it was actually the young people presenting from their groups themselves. I think you will get a flavour of what they were saying by putting a face to the words.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That can be organised.

**Prof. Humphrey**—It is only about five minutes. It is a very short video for the simple reason that the people we wanted to view it won't view long videos.

I represent young rural youth. They did have the opportunity to be at this forum and were from a wide grouping of young people from among the unemployed, TAFE, universities, private schools, state high schools and isolated rural youth areas. They were divided into several groups and they had several topics. This has been explained in the report.

One of the very important issues that came out of it, and that has been reaffirmed by the work that the ACC has done, is the question of geographic isolation and the disadvantage experienced by youth outside of urban centres. The work does show that 34 per cent of young Australians aged 12 to 25 live outside major urban areas. Yet one of the biggest problems is that in some respects the rural areas are the breeding ground for the cities, because our rural youth migration does, in fact, mean that people go to city areas, even from isolated country areas outside of the cities and centres in their region.

This is having quite a negative effect on small communities. When you couple this with the withdrawal of services to rural communities—and I put my hat on as chair of the area health service—you find that living in country areas is becoming less attractive, and not only for young people. High unemployment is coupled with that. Because they do not have the job opportunities, they either have to move or remain permanently unemployed.

You do find in country areas, as I am sure you find in parts of western and south-western Sydney and bigger outer metropolitan areas, that you are going through multiple generations of unemployed. The young people did, in fact, point out this and also that they have no role models. They do not know what work is and they don't get it from school. I thought it was very pertinent that the top priority that they identified was to be able to be literate and numerate when they leave school. They felt the school system was, in fact, letting them down.

We had case studies of one young girl who left school. She had floated around and then, because she had just come in contact with a counsellor, she was going to TAFE to do her HSC. She wanted to go into the police force. But hers was a case study, I am sure, that people who have appeared before you have reiterated time and again.

I hope that the greater emphasis on case management with the new proposals will help those people who may not have had that advice—and they do not have a network to seek that advice from because they do not have the family background. Many of the things that the two people who were here before me were saying will be replicated in country areas where you quite often do not have stable family backgrounds to support young people. So I would like to stress that.

I would also like to stress, and I have done this in other arenas with the government, that some of the programs that were chopped, particularly over new work opportunities and jobskills, should be looked at again, not so much by putting such stringent criteria on them but by using them as facilitating programs. At Charles Sturt University we took on 120 jobskills people over our three campuses. The results that those people got were extremely pleasing. In fact, an ex-jobskills person is working for me; a dean has an executive assistant who was an ex-jobskills person who became the jobskills coordinator. These people, being exposed to employers, were then able to compete for jobs.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—On the total, just to catch on that point, of those 120 jobskills positions, do you have a global picture of what has actually happened to them: how many have got into work, how many have on to further education and so on?

**Prof. Humphrey**—One of the things that the ACC has been trying to get DEETYA to do is that follow-up. We know that from, say, the first group of 12 that went through at Bathurst, eight of those are employed.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—And the other four?

**Prof. Humphrey**—About the other four, I do not know, because people do leave the district and they do not follow up. But what we did catch in those early jobskills programs were quite a lot of people from Koori background and, for example, one research program on thermal heating and athletes was used at the Atlantic Games. So they actually got the opportunity to be involved in quite significant programs.

Also there is going to have to be some facilitating mechanism in country areas for employment to be created through regional development programs. One of the problems we have seen is that regional development has taken a back seat. Perhaps the concept of the green corps in some locations—even if it is a

vision for 25, 30 years down the track about plantation forests—is an area where you can relate to people living at home, having meaningful employment and, at the end of the day, there is going to be an infrastructure benefit. But until there are infrastructure benefit programs in the country areas, you will always have this situation of hand-to-mouth, high unemployment, people having to leave. I will just rest it there. Of course, other things like higher HECS charges and changes to Austudy have all affected rural areas.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In terms of careers advice that is available to the secondary school system, to rural youth, exposure to job opportunities—you mentioned this with jobskills—what do you consider is more important for country youth? I know they are both important, but what is more important?

**Prof. Humphrey**—Having come from the far west myself, I think country youth need to know much better what careers are available because they may take options that leave them in the country or go elsewhere. It is a very difficult question because if you do have exposure to employment, the employment also has to have the various levels of employment, such as a professional level, to attract people who want to go to professions. One of the big problems I see for a lot of the professions is in, say, the health area. Charles Sturt has come in to do radiography, paramedical and so forth and that has provided opportunities. We are now beginning a pharmacy for young people in the country to get access to professional programs so they can then work back in their regions and in their communities. What we have seen is a tremendous waste in training people in urban areas for professions where they will not go to the country. We have seen the disaster with health. I would say that it is the same with Koori community workers, Koori health workers, Koori police and so forth. We have tended to take people out of communities, and they very seldom go back or, when they do go back, often they are not able to assimilate.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In terms of the careers advisory counselling services available to rural youth in your area, it was reported to us this morning by students of neighbouring schools here in Blacktown that the one careers advisory counsellor often had other teaching duties as well for 900 students.

**Prof. Humphrey**—Yes, that is right.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Basically, it was a position according to a formula, not necessarily filled by anyone who had any altruism or skill in the particular area. Is that a similar situation or is that exacerbated in rural areas?

**Prof. Humphrey**—I think it is exacerbated in rural areas because of distance. I have done a lot of work trying to bring careers advisers into the university. I have organised through the ACC careers advisers days, but it is still seen as a part-time function. You have careers advisers who have never experienced what employment is about outside of a school system. So, they tend to have a very narrow perspective of what careers are available.

One of the things the university is doing is putting the HSC on the web. It is also now working to put lots of other programs on the web, in cooperation with school ed. But there is a reluctance, I think, within the school system to give that vocational emphasis, and you have to resource it. I remember that, with a different hat on, I was CEO of the ETF. We had $1½ million sitting for almost two years, hoping to get a careers advisers program in, and we never got a proposal.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is the ETF?

**Prof. Humphrey**—That was the Education Training Foundation, which was established by the previous New South Wales government.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—What role does the TAFE system play out in your particular area? My experience is that, particularly in country areas, it generally plays a vital part because of the lack of general training opportunities.

**Prof. Humphrey**—I think you could talk to ACC chairs in that area. I know that the chair from Riverina, Mr Peter Barrter, who runs a big poultry business, has been quite critical about being able to get access to TAFE and in fact has established his own training centre. TAFE has removed a lot of services from small centres, which again is compounding the fact that young people have to travel to a larger centre, sometimes out of the city, to get a TAFE course. Of course, when you compound that with their costs of transport, plus their costs of subsistence which they have to bear, it does make it prohibitive for a lot of young people to get TAFE training. One of the reasons why the small business traineeships have been so popular is that they can be done on the job or they can be done in conjunction with the community college. So I think TAFE—and I can only speak of the situation in my region—does need to be more pro-active. It has tended to become centred on towns and centres rather than reaching out.

**CHAIR**—In your submission you talked about the need to update careers advisers. Does industry not have a responsibility in this respect, and how might we go about encouraging industry, business and commerce to take up their responsibilities to let young people know about what careers are available, what work opportunities are available, and how the world of work in their particular vocation is going to change? How do we go about doing that?

**Prof. Humphrey**—I do not think there is one simple answer to it. I think one answer is to actually get industry to become more involved on a day-to-day basis, primarily through the teachers, then from the teachers through to the students. We run at the university, as an example, a very big young achievers program. We have had our finalists and national winners. That is involving industry in something that they can relate to. So I think project involvement of companies with school is very important, because companies will not get involved with esoteric things. They like to see something that is practical, something that they can actually relate to and they can see an outcome from. From my experience, just to put to business good ideas does not work. They like to actually have practical projects, and we have found tremendous support from the local community and the business community.

We have held a series of breakfasts, where we have had the financial advisers, the accountants and so forth to small business in particular, who are the very hard ones to target, and have explained to them the benefits of traineeships in a business sense, which they then have explained to small business. The traineeship uptake increased by 100 per cent. I think you have to get to know your business well. I am the biggest employer in our region, which you do not think of, being a university. That is how we got involved. We have the jobskills people. We got a benefit from it and they got a benefit from it. So, I think, with business, the benefits on both sides have to be spelt out quite clearly.

I think that many of the experience programs for teachers particularly, or careers advisers, would be extremely beneficial. I was in the education sector before I went to the university. There is often a reluctance to release good teachers to go to industry, because they feel that they will not get them back. But I think you have got to take the chance. I do not think you can actually say, 'We are not going to do it in case something happens and the teacher does not come back.' The majority do.

Also, you can get businesses to adopt schools. So, you have an ongoing relationship. There have been some problems with this, in terms of some ideological problems about sponsorship. But, if the ground rules and the partnerships are very clear, I think businesses, rather than just one business, will adopt schools. That has happened with the technology high schools to a large extent. But I think there have to be some changes in attitudes on both sides.

We have shown that business will come in if you create incentives or benefits. They do not always have to be financial. The good citizenship benefit can work, if you can also show that there are outcomes from this. We have, at the university, a system of governorships. We do this to support young people from the regions. They are actually given a scholarship, awarded very competitively, by governors who are big companies. They then have work experience programs with those governors, and that often leads to a very long-term relationship, particularly with our communications people and the media. They are all through Channel 7, Channel 9, the rural press and so forth. That has come from the interaction.

**CHAIR**—If I said that it seems to me at least that we generally have seen education as the preserve of government in Australia—in a sense we have told industry, 'You don't need to bother, we'll educate the children and we'll take them to university and we, the government or governments, will train them'—if you accepted that as partially true, are there a whole range of things that we could do now to try to encourage industry to become more involved?

**Prof. Humphrey**—I think that has changed. Okay, it has hit the university sector first. But I think the introduction of HECS in 1989 and the expansion of user pays for HECS going through the moment is hitting many employers because many of them do sponsor. I quite appreciate that I am only talking about one segment. But I think that, as there is a greater user pays principle, people then—and we found this at the university as well—are saying, 'We want value, we want to participate.'

The one thing that does concern me is there being some justification, I think, when one is going on to get multiple degrees or putting it within a continuing education framework. I think, for people starting off with their first qualification—just as I would say for people starting off with the first qualification at TAFE, or wherever—there probably is a case for some greater public support. So I do not have a problem with subsequent qualifications.

Presently, a group of students going from school into university pay HECS; if they go to an alternative, they do not. Somewhere down the track that will need to be looked at. We are finding credit transfers becoming very popular—that the first year is given as a credit from, say, a TAFE program. But I believe that, when people are getting that start, it is something that society benefits from, so do employers and so does the individual. As to how you apportion that, I do not have the answer for you. But I have seen a change in that, since people have had to make some contribution, they are becoming more discerning, particularly the

continuing education students.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I used to live in country Victoria; about 23 years ago I suppose I left there. A lot of the same issues were still the issues then. There was a continual drain of kids, 17-plus, away from the towns into Melbourne. Do you think that has got worse, or do you think that is a continual perennial problem for country areas?

**Prof. Humphrey**—I think it will always be a fact. I am not too sure whether I would always call it a problem because, if there had not been that drain, you would not have some of the community and business leaders whom you have at the moment who went from the country to the city. But I think what worries people in the country is that that drain is taking place at the moment at a pace where the infrastructure is also being depleted in country areas. So, when you get both of these happening at once, where do you go in the future to attract people back, to attract business? It becomes a self-defeating cycle.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—We had both happening as well. I have to admit that there were five local schools that were closed in the time that I was there. We ran the post office, which used to be the bank—then it was not, and so on. So it was a continuing process. That is all.

**Prof. Humphrey**—It has just been continual. What may have been quite viable little villages, if you just travel through my region, are now shells. Australia needs to think very carefully whether it wants a sustainable regional Australia to support urban areas. You will come to a point where you will run down past a level which will be attractive. One of the problems is that, just as you can have urban ghettos, you can have rural ghettos too.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—There seems to be a lack of structured work experience. Everyone says that it is a good idea. But a lot of the school kids we spoke to were critical of the experience they got once they got into the workplace. Do you have any comments on that? Do you have any reasonably good systems going in the area?

**Prof. Humphrey**—Frank and I were involved in accreditation, and I know that there were concerns that accreditation was too bureaucratic—and this is accreditation of training programs. I think you can swing the pendulum too far in the other direction. In cooperation with the community college and Chamber of Commerce, one of the things we are trying to address is that, when you get into the small business traineeship, there is virtually no quality control with what happens in the workplace. That is not to the benefit of young people. Also, there is the fact that you do not get exposure to broader practices, ethics and skills than only those available with that particular employer. Many of the employers do not have the skills.

I think you have to be very careful to say, 'Okay, we're going to be flexible and facilitative, and we'll just throw it out and have providers that don't have to go through any rigorous process.' But if you do that to too great an extent, the whole training system loses a lot of its credibility. I think that is happening at the moment. I can tell from experience, because I used to chair the accreditation board in New South Wales. I do not believe in mail order accreditation.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for appearing before the committee. We hope to complete our inquiry

by May or June. We will certainly send you a copy of our report. Steven has proposed to me that we view your video at our meeting in Canberra next Thursday, which we will certainly do.

**Prof. Humphrey**—Before I go, I will just give you one example of an outcome from that forum. The Bathurst City Council had a full debate on the outcomes of the forum. They have, in fact, committed themselves at a full council meeting to develop the concept of a youth council of the Bathurst City. They will have young people helping in advising them on the decisions that are made with respect to their services.

**CHAIR**—Very good.

**Prof. Humphrey**—So I think it has had one positive response.

**CHAIR**—One win?

**Prof. Humphrey**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Excellent.

**Prof. Humphrey**—We will certainly tell other councils what Bathurst is doing. I am sure that Orange will follow suit.

**CHAIR**—We will have a look next Thursday.

**Prof. Humphrey**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

[3.50 p.m.]

**KOMMER, Mr Gil, Member, Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board, PO Box 242 Parramatta, New South Wales 2124**

**McNAMARA, Mr William, Chairman, Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board, PO Box 242 Parramatta, New South Wales 2124**

**CHAIR**—I welcome the Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board appearing before the committee today. Thank you for coming today, gentlemen. I would simply remind you, as I have reminded all the respondents to our inquiry, that our inquiry is largely about employment of young people, rather than unemployment, and that we are really trying to achieve two outcomes. The first is to figure out how we might assist young people to become more employable; and, secondly, how we can encourage industry, business and commerce to make more jobs available for our youth.

**Mr Kommer**—I am also a member of the board's business enhancement subcommittee as well as being the managing director of the company All Metal Products in St Marys. We have 70 employees who are mainly involved in the manufacture of light metal products.

**Mr McNamara**—In the past I have been an apprentice carpenter, carpenter and construction builder, and I have employed up to 600 people in my time.

**CHAIR**—Would you like to make a brief opening statement to the committee before we start asking you questions?

**Mr Kommer**—Yes, it is unfortunate that we have been asked at this latter stage to come in and present our case to you. Both Mr Alan Cadman of Mitchell and Mr Frank Mossfield of Greenway have requested that we appear. We have not really had the time available to thoroughly research the problem and present the case. We have, however, circulated a request to some of our board members and other people to make some submissions. We have these submissions here and, again, I apologise for not having submitted them to you before.

I have drawn up 12 of our junior employees around a table, and I have requested them to respond to some of the questions I have put to them and find out what they think themselves about the problems of youth unemployment and how to improve it. That is probably more direct advice from those who are involved in this whole problem of youth unemployment, because they have many friends and neighbours that are still currently job seekers.

I have some papers here for the committee. I have noticed that, as you said, it is mainly about trying to find work and opportunities for young people. I have also noticed in the National Commission of Audit's a recommendation of changes so that the primary and secondary school education program would be directly responsible to the states, and that the Commonwealth would pick up the tertiary and the vocational training aspect of it.

Throughout the whole of the submissions, I have sort of missed the third partner to this question—that is, the employer. We, as employers, will pick up the results from the education system and, although they are probably a few years in the education system, they are many more years under our care and attention. Whereas there are six years in primary school, and some four years at high school, we are asked to sometimes take these youngsters for the next 10 or 20 years.

So the third partner in this whole educational process, which is directly involved with the end result of what happened before, is going to be the employers. I have focused to some extent on those that our company employs, which are mainly the unskilled youngsters that leave the school system as soon as it is practicable for them.

Firstly, we have in the paper that I presented to you a response from the University of West Sydney of the vice-chancellor, Derrick Schroeder, in response to our request to submit a report. We also have a response from Westbus, from Mr Fred Burley, who is the Human Resources Manager of Westbus, which no doubt employs many of the youngsters coming on the employment field. And we have a response from Geoff Corrigan, the Executive Manager of the South West Sydney Regional Development Organisation.

I cannot very well make comments on what they have said, and I am suggesting that if there is anything that the committee would like to clarify, you should write to them directly, because I cannot speak on their behalf.

In addition to that, I have here some observations that I have got myself in relation to school leavers who do not complete year 12 or who leave school as soon as is allowed. Because we are on the edge of the Mount Druitt area, which is the largest youth unemployment area in the whole of west Sydney, and probably New South Wales, I have a more or less direct contact with these youngsters applying for a job, and I have got a summary of responses from those 12 that I interviewed during a lunch period.

There is a problem coming up of employing unskilled youngsters. This is that whilst it is necessary sometimes to have a cheaper labour force than the senior skilled people, or unskilled people—and these youngsters are then involved in very simple tasks like drilling or deburring in our factory or packing or assembling, and they have to be done—they go into a senior wage structure so what we were paying $150 for, sooner or later, especially with the unfair dismissal law, the youngsters are doing exactly the same task virtually but they get up to a $400 a week bracket. It becomes uneconomical for us to merely employ them, because being import competing it is vital that we keep our costs down. To get some of these into a skill level is fairly difficult because if the generic skills are not in the company, and already fulfilled, we are looking at a range of menial tasks. I have been racking my brain to see what can we do with them apart from probably saying that they should go back to school and get some general knowledge and general education.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—So there is no the capacity to actually skill them up within the firm?

**Mr Kommer**—We do this as much as possible but we can only employ so many MIG welders and we can only employ so many press workers.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I thought I heard you say that one of the problems was that the capacity for skill

development within the firm was difficult, therefore it was difficult to raise the skill levels up on some of these kids?

**Mr Kommer**—Those that want to learn we multi-skill but then they have to go back to the other task because we need five MIG welders and not 12 MIG welders. If any of the youngsters are willing to become a MIG welder we will teach them and they are likely to go to TAFE if they want to. But then—what after that? Hopefully they will get another job and move out. We find it very difficult sometimes to convince them into saying that they need a skill in order to sell themselves better. Some of them are just not interested, but like to stay on that very menial task and then we almost have to tell them, 'Listen, if you don't create a skill, you'll become too expensive for us.' It is as simple as that.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Do you think it is a matter of a question of a lack of drive intellectually or is it a question of mere laziness?

**Mr Kommer**—Both. I have a number of employees that are fairly loyal but had difficulty in filling in employment forms and it is quite staggering today that out of every 10 applicants applying for a job, two of them at least need assistance—and they are 16 year olds—of filling in their own employment form, or reading the employment form for that matter. And as I said, that is the result of our education system and we have to cope
with that.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I would also put it to you that that in itself is not necessarily new. I recall when I first started working in the late 1970s, I worked in some factories. A number of the people that I worked with were not literate or numerate but it was not required in terms of the particular job they were doing at that stage and had been doing for, in some cases, 20 or 30 years.

**Mr Kommer**—True.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—But it is more of a problem these days because of higher skill levels required to undertake tasks.

**Mr Kommer**—We now have three robots in the factory and about five numerical controlled machines. We are currently purchasing some more of these machines and there is a fair level of mathematical skill required for those.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—You mentioned 70 employees I think?

**Mr Kommer**—Yes.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Has that gone up or down over the last 10 years or so?

**Mr Kommer**—Down, initially in the last eight months.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Because of new technology?

**Mr Kommer**—We have downgraded by nearly 10 to 15 employees.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Because of new technology or because of lack of business?

**Mr Kommer**—A flat spot in the national economy.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—If your employees were able to upgrade their skills, would you be able to utilise them within your work force? So there is an incentive to do it there which would mean they would move to a higher rate of pay?

**Mr Kommer**—We encourage it. We have had in the last six months two youngsters acquire skills which gave them a higher rate of pay. One of them was a press operator that became a tool setter and the other one was a young person that got his qualifications at TAFE.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—So he went to TAFE and got this trade?

**Mr Kommer**—We encouraged him to go to TAFE. What we do in our company is, if they get a positive result, they can come back with that positive result and we pay all the educational expenses involved. If there is no positive result it is to their own cost.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—How many young unskilled employees would you have? You seemed to suggest before that with some of them, if they were to improve their skills, in fact they may need to move out of the company because there would not be spaces, which is sensible in the circumstances.

**Mr Kommer**—All these youngsters that we start off with are basically unskilled; they are 16- and 17-year-olds. We have a selection process and they stay with us for a trial period. We find, to our own sorrow really, that those that have come from dysfunctional families and from single parents—mainly mothers only—find it very difficult to accept instructions from foremen. Whereas we sort of sneak a few questions in the initial interview with those youngsters and, if they have got a dad who is a little bit of a disciplinarian, who makes them wash the car and do the lawns or something like that, and if they have got a functional family at home, they are more apt to accept instructions and stay on the job.

Around this time of the year in the past, we need a few extra workers towards the Christmas rush and we get a number of the school leavers who have done their HSC. We find the more the youngsters are educated, the quicker they can grasp the job but, especially with menial and monotonous tasks, the quicker they leave us. They just have not got the interest or see the future in that sort of work environment.

But from an employer's point of view, these youngsters who have had to discipline themselves at home to want to study, have organised themselves into study, are literate, can grasp problems fairly quickly and are a delight to work with. But as soon as the university starts or they can get another job, off they go because we have not got that type of factory. So there are many factories in west Sydney that just have not got that type of environment. I think the problem will have to be addressed as what we do with those youngsters who come out of the school at the age of 15 or 16. How can we get them? There is no difficulty training up a bright youngster who has got the HSC—no difficulty in getting them to work the computers or whatever.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—But quite often the bright youngster is not leaving school, whereas if it is a bright youngster from a dysfunctional family the circumstances will be further complicated to an extent.

**Mr Kommer**—Yes, but you pick them up and, if they are willing to stay, they will become good employees.

**CHAIR**—Bill, your experience is in the construction industry. We understand that there is a great skill shortage in New South Wales in the construction industry. The press yesterday reported huge wage rises and not enough people entering the industry being trained, getting skills. Have you got a view on why that is so, on why the industry is so slow to fill apprenticeships and traineeships?

**Mr McNamara**—I have been saying for quite some time that it all comes back to economics as far as training apprenticeships is concerned. That is why I mentioned I was an apprentice carpenter. I have just taken out figures today that show I was getting 31 per cent of a tradesman's salary when I started—I hate to remember, it was a long way back—

**CHAIR**—Me, too.

**Mr McNamara**—By the way, I was going to tech, three nights a week in my time, and travelling all the way from Riverstone to Granville. Today an apprentice carpenter gets 47 per cent of a tradesman's wage and he gets one day off a week. That is the big thing. The economics of today are very tough. The prices are cut to the bone and you cannot afford to carry any dead weight. An apprentice today is dead weight. We have employed many apprentices over the time, and still are, as a matter of fact, but we only look for them if they have got leadership qualities and you can train them up to be a foreman or a project manager as time goes on. That is the only way that we would employ apprentice carpenters today.

**CHAIR**—We had a couple of groups earlier this afternoon who said that youth wages were, firstly, discriminating against young people and, if wages were increased, there would still be the same number of jobs. Would you hold the same view?

**Mr McNamara**—As far as apprentice carpenters go, an apprentice carpenter today will take home, from day one—a 16-year-old—$275.54 a week. That is not a bad wage, and a carpenter only takes home $576.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—When you started and were getting 31 per cent, what were the average weekly earnings in those days?

**Mr McNamara**—Do you know what a pound was?

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I remember it, just. I was fairly young at that time.

**Mr McNamara**—I was getting £2 2s 6d and a carpenter was getting £7 10s.

**Mr BARRESI**—I have heard this a couple of times today. You can prove me wrong or convince me. I

cannot accept that an apprentice is dead weight. What is different about an apprentice today, in terms of the work that they are doing, and when you were an apprentice? You are not employing a tradesman; you are employing an apprentice.

**Mr McNamara**—That is right. In the first year, the apprentice today is the same as I was—useless. But they probably were not paying me as much money and they could put up with that. They could wear it. But, when an apprentice today is getting more money, he has got to be able to produce something; and he cannot.

**Mr BARRESI**—So, the first-year apprentice is dead weight.

**Mr McNamara**—That is right. After the first 12 months, maybe they are getting a bit useful. The pre-apprenticeship course they have at the technical college is a very good scheme. The only thing with that is that they expect you to pay them second-year money from day one. That is the pre-apprenticeship course through tech. A young guy today, if he is not going to go on to higher education, is probably better off leaving at 16 in fourth form, as I call it, going for a 12 months pre-apprenticeship course and then going into the work force. You will find you will get people to employ them. That is my view.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I think you are right. The only thing is that I think what is happening now is that kids who would have gone and got an apprenticeship 15, 20 or more years ago when they were 15 or 16 years old are now staying on at school because they basically see that qualification as being what they need to try and get a better job. A lot of kids these days, whether it is partly because of shortages of apprenticeships or partly because of perceptions of what being a tradesman actually is—which are wrong—basically look at it and say, 'That is not what I really want to do with my life.' So, you are getting different sorts of kids moving up and being the ones that are actually leaving school at form 4, as I call it too, and trying to get those jobs and they have not got the same sort of skills base.

**Mr McNamara**—You are right; they have not. But I think being a tradesman today is much easier than it was in my time. I learnt the trade right from start to finish. I had to do everything. Today, they are specialists—specialist form workers, specialist door hangers, specialist people putting locks on. They can do a little bit of the trade and they can learn it very easily.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—And there is more scope today to move on up through companies into senior positions. You agree and I agree, but I do not think the people out there realise that.

**Mr McNamara**—Yes.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—We are not getting that across to the average punter.

**Mr McNamara**—You are probably right. The youth of today are no different from the youth of my day, really. There are a lot of good kids out there. But it is the system that we adults have developed for them. It is the bed we have made for them to lie in, and it is just not working.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Take that point on the wages front. I think you have got a valid point there, to an

extent. I guess the point I was trying to allude to was that, when you were a first-year chippie, your circumstances were such that you could live off that £2 and a couple of shillings. On $200 a week, or whatever it is, for a first-year carpenter's apprentice, if you are living at home, you can live off it. If you are not living at home, paying market value rent for a one-bedroom flat, or even in a share arrangement, food costs, travelling costs, et cetera, means that often they cannot survive on that. That is one of the questions that often you get asked. We were talking to kids today at the forum we had at Blacktown Boys High. The argument from a lot of those kids was that apprenticeships do not pay enough for you to live on. So, that is one of the reasons why they were not considering it as an option. It was not the only reason, but one reason.

**Mr Kommer**—Mind you, apprentices in the early days were not living by themselves; they were living as part of the family.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Yes, that is right.

**Mr Kommer**—Whereas today they expect an apprenticeship wage to be a livable wage in its own right, and I think this is where we have gone wrong. To answer Mr Charles' question about discriminating against the youngsters, if the employer does not pay a slightly smaller wage for a youngster, why should he employ a youngster? It is that uptraining from learning the work culture, because when they leave school they have not got a clue what work is all about. This came up fairly strong in the questions I put to these youngsters. If you look at question three for instance, 'Did the school prepare you for the work force and what did you think of school?' According to all of them, the school did not prepare them for the work force. The employer was a mystery to them.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—That is definitely true. The only point I would make on the question of the survey is that there is some very interesting information in there. I would also think that we would all probably agree around the table when we look at some of the answers that have come through that some of them are extremely relevant, but some of them are a bit off the beam and total generalisations.

**Mr Kommer**—Sure, but these are still their answers.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—As Bill is more or less saying, I do not know that the school system is any different to what it used to be when we started our apprenticeship. I do not think the school system prepared us for work either. I do not think we can single out the school system. I think it can be improved.

**Mr McNamara**—There is one important thing. If you go out of school and you can read I think you will get by in life.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Literacy and numeracy.

**Mr McNamara**—If you cannot read, you are hopeless. I do not think they are turning them out able to read. I have tried some of these boys and the final test I give them is that I throw them the *Herald* and say, 'Read that paragraph to me.' After they read it I say, 'Okay, now tell me what that meant.'

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I think two things have changed since those times. Schools poured people out in those

days who did not read. The trouble was they were not pouring out in form four, form five or form six. They were dropping out in grade six. That is what was happening. The difference now is that, because kids are staying at school for longer, there is a responsibility for school to become more relevant to the question of employment because they are bringing them further down the track.

The other change is the nature of work. We talk about apprenticeships, but the fact is that in manufacturing we are down an awful lot of jobs, not just apprenticeships. A lot of those jobs are the sort of unskilled work that people without those skills would have been doing 20 years ago.

**Mr Kommer**—There are more and more generic skills coming up in the industry and I think it is matter of finding out what the generic skills are. The apprenticeship system was a fairly simplified system where you are a fitter and turner, carpenter, plumber, et cetera. But today when you are looking at qualified NC control machine operators, it is a skill in itself. You are looking at the skills of powder coating, learning how to clean the guns, put microns of powder on it and prepare the metal. It is a skill in itself and these are generic skills.

I think they have to be recognised and the best persons to teach those skills are the ones that are actually operating with those skills in the factory and they are all sellable skills. If you can create some sort of enthusiasm amongst the employers not to jealousy guard those generic skills from within their own factory, but teach the youngsters those skills which are sellable, they can then tell them to get out and they have a sellable skill at a higher price. Do not forget there is a heck of a lot of competition and jealously out there. Quite often on simple tasks, confidential agreements are being signed. So your skills are not readily available, apart from the signed confidentiality agreement.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—They do need to have a qualification. I think it is important that we encourage young people, no matter at what level, to either do a traineeship or an apprenticeship. They can use that then to move elsewhere and to build upon that. But if they just develop a skill without some recognition of that skill, it is a lot more difficult for them to move around.

**Mr Kommer**—I would say that you get more responses on advertising for a fitter today than if you are advertising for a first class NC machine operator. That is not a recognisable skill. You will not get many responses because they are very jealously guarded by the employers. This is a sellable skill and what we are looking for is youngsters who must be able to be more sellable within themselves.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—That is important.

**Mr BARRESI**—But that is not where the growth of the jobs is going to be, is it? My brother is a fitter and turner. As to the job opportunities for tomorrow, yes they will still need fitters and turners. We may still need people who know about baked enamel and those sorts of things, but that is not where the growth is going to be. It is going to be more in terms of these new industries which have a component of electronics as part of it.

**Mr McNamara**—Tourism too.

**Mr BARRESI**—We can list them all off.

**Mr Kommer**—I focused my approach mainly on the earlier school leavers without those skills. I have got no doubt that if you have got good mathematical qualifications, there is no problem for you in this world. If you want to train, if you have got good computer skills, you would have no problem finding a job. If you have got very good language skills and communication skills, I think you would find a job as well. This is where I think we are looking at a sort of twin society. I know what is coming out of the school system. Dunheved High School, for instance, has got 1,400 pupils and I think about 37 end up at the final year 12. The rest all fall out along the way. And you have got vast ethnic communities like, for instance, the islander communities have come up in west Sydney in the Mount Druitt area, and they just do not seem to want to have a job. How can you get skills into these people?

**CHAIR**—Gentlemen, I thank you very much. I am sorry to cut it off, because I can think of a whole group of questions I would like to ask you, but our next people are here and waiting, and if we do not take them then we will cut them terribly short. Again, I thank you for those submissions and any future ones. We will authorise them for publication at our meeting in Canberra on Thursday. We hope to conclude our inquiries by May or June and bring down a report, and we will certainly send you a copy of the report and our recommendations. So thank you once again.

[4.19 p.m.]

**VALICH, Ms Samantha, National Advertising and Research Manager, Hills District Youth Service Inc., 248 Old Northern Road, Castle Hill, New South Wales 2154**

**CHAIR**—I welcome the Hills District Youth Service appearing today before the committee. I remind you, as I have previous correspondents to this inquiry, that our inquiry is about employment of young people rather than just looking specifically at unemployment. We hope to accomplish two objectives: firstly, to come up with a series of recommendations which, hopefully, will help young people to become more employable; and, secondly, to figure out how we can encourage employers to make more jobs available for youth.

Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we ask you questions?

**Ms Valich**—The advertising part of my position refers to a publication we produce which goes into high schools around the country, and research into youth attitudes concerning that. I have actually put together some information for you so that you do not have to take lots of notes on everything that I say.

**CHAIR**—Hansard take complete notes of what you say, very accurately.

**Ms Valich**—All right. I have been working at Hills District Youth Service for about three years, and in that time and over the last month I have really looked at the issue of youth unemployment from the perspective of young people and what motivates them, what demotivates them, how they think, why they tick, basically. I have come across five contributing factors which people have looked at a lot: young people not being trained the right way; unemployment being caused by not having enough education or not having the right education; unemployment is through lack of work experience; unemployed youth are losing their sense of work ethic; and unemployed youth have become acclimatised to living on unemployment benefits, commonly termed as the dole.

**Mr BARRESI**—Just before you go on, just so I can get a picture in my mind, what are the geographic areas that your service covers in Sydney?

**Ms Valich**—We cover the Hills District, which is Castle Hill, Baulkham Hills, Pennant Hills, right out through Windsor and Richmond, but a lot of this work that I have put together for today, I did a lot of work face to face with young people in Mount Druitt, Blacktown, as well as taking from my own experience in working with kids in the Hills District. Very different, very different indeed.

I took some like comments from different students who ranged in age from about 15 to 21. Those students said stuff like it is hard to get a job; they would not get a job because they have no specific training; school is about education and when they leave school they should be educated enough to get a job; employers need to loosen up on their experience limits and let young people prove themselves; a lot of their friends do not want jobs so why bother—it is too easy to get the dole.

They also said things like, 'Youth unemployment is self-imposed. There are jobs out there. Most of my unemployed friends do not want jobs. They want to kick back and get stoned. You get up one day and you are

in a routine of bludging. This routine can be very depressing. My friends and I were in a routine and took off and travelled on the dole. There are a lot of jobs around. You do have to be motivated and, now that I have a career, it is much better. A lot of young people do not want to work. They are too caught up in their own routine.'

So we have basically looked at all of those issues. What I really want to look at today is what will motivate a young person outside of education, outside of training—outside of all those issues that have been looked at over and over again. I want to look at the root issues, I suppose, of young people. I have kind of chucked some of them down. There is this transition period between school and work, and there is a breakdown in that transition period, for a number of different reasons, we believe. Media would have to be one of them because of what they portray as being the perfect job, what they portray as being the perfect life and what they portray as being success. All of those different issues which are being bombarded onto youth as this consumer market and as this young group of people—

**Mr GRIFFIN**—A '90210' society.

**Ms Valich**—Yes: *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Melrose Place*, *Mad About You*, *Seinfeld*. I mean, what does Elaine in *Seinfeld* do? She does nothing. She shops or she hangs out in Jerry's apartment. What does she do? She is cool, she is funky, and everyone wants to be like Elaine—or everyone wants to be a comedian like Jerry, but what does he do? He does nothing. He just bludges all day, does he not?

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Kramer?

**Ms Valich**—Kramer! What does Kramer do? Kramer sits in a solarium. Young people are being bombarded with all these different images. I, being different from a lot of the people you may have already spoken to today, am very raw in my feelings about young people and my approach to young people.

The media have stereotyped young people in four different categories, I believe. First, they have stereotyped them as the ideal youth. These young people are the high achievers, have smiley faces with perfect teeth and the perfect tan. They are bronzed heterosexuals, and everyone loves these people.

Then there is the threatening youth. These people are those who take drugs or they dress like they are punks or whatever. They are just scary people. They listen to weird music or heavy metal. They challenge the status quo of our society and the way our adult society views the way things should be—no rights and wrongs.

There is also the victim youth. These are the people who either have committed suicide, are a victim of homelessness or are a victim of unemployment. These are presented through the media as sensationalised horror stories as such. Young people have then become this object of adult pity instead of adult envy. Everyone wants to be young. Being young is great. It is a wonderful time of your life with so many opportunities coming your way, but now youth is becoming an object of pity.

And then there is the parasite youth, as they have been labelled—which is just dreadful. These are the young people who are presented as the dole bludgers, those who are ripping off the welfare system or lacking in incentive and wasting their youth as such.

So we have one positive view of young people but three negative views. Young people are reading about themselves as well. I am wondering what that does to young people. I am wondering whether they feel like they have to fit into those moulds as they are so heavily influenced by media and adults are so heavily influenced by media also.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—So where do we go from there with that? How do we correct that?

**Ms Valich**—Where do we change that? I have to present this, because I am biased. This is something we did at the youth service. We looked at where young people are being influenced and how they are being influenced negatively. We then built projects based on those areas. This is *The Stand* youth newspaper—you can have a look at it; I brought a couple of copies with me—which is basically a form of positive media which looks at youth issues. It looks at things which are important to youth, but it does it in an entertaining way, I suppose. It incorporates it into things that they enjoy, like their entertainment, their video games, their movies—all sorts of things like that. So it is not sticking a finger in their face and saying do this, do that, be this, be that. You are instead letting them take it on and letting them make the choices that they want to make. Young people want to be treated like adults, but they are being treated like children with the expectation of being treated like adults. So that is something that we do.

**Mr BARRESI**—Sam, you are perpetuating *90210*.

**Ms Valich**—I know, I know.

**CHAIR**—You said in the beginning that some of your young people said that one of the big problems was that it was too easy to go on the dole. What do we do about that?

**Ms Valich**—You take the cash component away from the dole. There is this whole issue that I found when I was doing some studies with Blacktown and Mount Druitt young people. Case workers and case managers were saying that in Blacktown and Mount Druitt there are some families with three to four generations of unemployment. Therefore, the children of those families have no idea of what work is. They do not even have the idea of going and getting a job. They have never seen their parents in a job so why would they, and their parents survived on the dole, so what the heck?

I like the concept of using vouchers, giving them vouchers for travel, for accommodation, for food and for things like that. Take the cash out of the dole so that they do not waste it. Then you can work on the homeless situation or whatever. At present they are wasting their money and spending it on things that they should not be spending it on because they have never been taught budgeting.

**CHAIR**—Don't you think the Council for Civil Liberties would complain instantly that we were discriminating against youth?

**Ms Valich**—I don't think that it is something that is just for youth, I think that it needs to be right across the board. That would then increase the value of working. At present people say, 'Why should I bother working if I can get only a little bit less by going on the dole? Why would I bother? I would have to spend $30 in travel a week getting to my job and I would rather spend that $30 on myself'. In that case, why would

I bother?'

**Mr GRIFFIN**—That is a choice some people make. I would also say that you have to put it into perspective as to how many people make that choice versus those that do not.

**Ms Valich**—Sure.

**Mr BARRESI**—Is that an observation or is that just an opinion that you are giving about that?

**Ms Valich**—This is what a lot of case workers in Mount Druitt and Blacktown tell me. I went and spoke to them for a couple of hours. They were talking about young people that were coming through their placements.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—There is another perspective on the youth wage front. When the wages are down and they are not much more than the dole, therefore, in a purely economic sense, people look at it an say, 'I am not making much more if I go and do this job. Therefore, why go and do this job?' That is one variation on it. When you are talking about a voucher system you have the question of, 'Okay, how does that voucher system work in the rental market?' There is the question of vouchers for accommodation versus having to top them up. With a lot of young people, often their discretionary expenditure will be on things like smokes, drink and drugs, and if they have not got that discretionary money to buy some of that then they will get that money whichever way they can.

**Ms Valich**—So you are thinking that if we give them vouchers that will turn them to crime.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—That might be the case. I am just not sure, I am just kicking it around.

**Ms Valich**—I think that occurs anyway.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—To an extent, yes.

**Ms Valich**—Yes.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—But if you take away that discretionary amount maybe it will occur more.

**Ms Valich**—Sure.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—It is an interesting point.

**Ms Valich**—I have to be really honest with you. As far as economics and all that goes, you could say, 'You know nothing Sam, shut up and go away'. As far as—

**Mr GRIFFIN**—If you knew us you would probably say the same thing about us.

**CHAIR**—Was that a set of negatives from such a positive person! Wow!

**Ms Valich**—The points that I have put down here about having unrealistic expectations of the work force and having a dissatisfaction with the realities of life, they are issues that I can point out.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—You have been positive. How successful have you been with getting young people into employment?

**Ms Valich**—At the youth service we do not directly deal with employment situations. What we do is educate young people. It is from a different perspective.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—You are not placing people in employment? You are getting them ready?

**Ms Valich**—Yes, we are educating them. We are giving them positive information on which to make good decisions and good choices with their life as opposed to bad decisions and bad choices. It is educating young people about the consequences of their actions but giving them the whole story, not just giving them the trendy picture or the picture that is in at the moment.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—You are dealing with people still at school?

**Ms Valich**—Yes, we are dealing with predominantly 12- to 16-year-olds.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—So they are both at school and unemployed possibly?

**Ms Valich**—Most of our programs are filtered through schools. That is where we work with most of our young people but we also do it with a lot of young people that are not in high schools.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—The unemployed kids you were talking about before, is it mainly from talking to case workers that you have come across them?

**Ms Valich**—And kids. We talk to a lot of kids.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Are they mainly 15 to 18?

**Ms Valich**—No. A lot of the face-to-face work that I did was with 12- to 25-year-olds and then some 12- to 16-year-olds; then just a group of 15- and 16-year-olds; and then a group of 17-year-olds just on different levels. I found it very interesting. There are a lot of interesting statistics in here that might help you.

I have also talked about—and the gentlemen before me spoke about it—the lack of family, the lack of support and the lack of nurturing and giving personal development to young people. There is a huge lack in that. Forty-two per cent of young people have been in child care. The divorce rate is increasing and increasing. Where are they getting their security from? Where are they getting their values from? Where are they getting their understanding of what life is all about from? Are they getting it from role models in *Beverly Hills 90210*? I just have to add *The Stand* is actually put together by corporate funding.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—*Beverly Hills 90210*?

**Ms Valich**—Channel 10. But it is from the image of role models. Role models have a huge influence on young people—your Michael Jordans, your Courtney Loves—

**CHAIR**—Fathers?

**Ms Valich**—Your fathers? If they are around. Don't quote me on this, but I think it is three minutes a week fathers spend on average with their children. That is frightening—a fatherless generation as such.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—It pretty much scares my kids when I give them three minutes, I will tell you that.

**Ms Valich**—That is shocking, I reckon.

**CHAIR**—How do we fix that, Sam?

**Ms Valich**—How do we fix that?

**CHAIR**—How do we get value systems back in society? How do we teach kids value systems without functional families?

**Ms Valich**—With dysfunctional families?

**CHAIR**—Without functional families?

**Ms Valich**—I think that we need to train people properly who are working in youth services. I have met a lot of scary people in youth services who are just negative. They frighten me. I mean 'Man, you are so down on life, like I don't know what you could give into these kids' lives'. They have not even got it together. I think we need to train people who are working with young people: youth services, people who train parents.

We do parent seminars with people from our own community. They come in and say, 'Belinda does not tidy her room. We think that is a sign of a lack of respect'. I said, 'Have you actually talked to Belinda about this?' 'No, no, she wouldn't understand. She is only 14'. I am like, 'How do you expect her to read your mind or something?' It is like teaching parents how to relate to their children, teaching parents how to understand youth culture and to understand the pressures that the young people are under—the image that they feel they have to live up to because of all the outside pressures that they are under.

I think family is so important, I really do. I think we need to get back to the basics of what family is about and what family is meant to be, as a support structure for family and for children to grow up in that, and to be able to feel comfortable in growing up in that. A lot of people are saying that our society has become less caring, that people do not want to give as much as they used to give to other people, that it has become self-absorbed.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—It is true, though? That is the question. Is it true? We talk about the fact that—

**Ms Valich**—But is it a reflection?

**Mr GRIFFIN**—It is more violent these days and we had two world wars earlier in this century. An issue that is currently in the news a bit is the question of child abuse. Yet a lot of these cases are coming out 20 and 30 years ago, back in the good old days, and that is when they happened. How much is that the case? Divorce rates are up now, but there are less actually stuffed marriages continuing compared to what there were 30 and 40 years ago. I do not know. I am just saying that there are a few question marks there as to how many of the ideal Brady Bunch families really were there back in those days, versus the fact that now what has happened is that we have actually twigged to the fact that the Brady Bunch was only ever a TV show.

**Ms Valich**—I do not think that the Brady Bunch ever actually existed.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Yes, that is my point.

**Ms Valich**—I am not actually saying that. I think that there was a lot more support though. Parents stuck around. Divorce is easy now; they just nick off.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—True—and I will not go into personal examples—but then put that against the question of a family environment where Mum and Dad are sticking together for the kids and kicking the hell out of each other in front of the kids.

**Ms Valich**—Sure.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I am saying that there are some question marks there.

**Ms Valich**—I take your point on that.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—It is all subjective, is it not? You cannot identify it. You know you are against it, but there has been a breakdown of marriage and the power of the family unit over the years, and I think it is reflecting now in the community.

**Ms Valich**—I think it reflects a lot of things, not just youth unemployment. I think it reflects violence. Because young people are not finding support within the family they have started up what we term tribal communities where they get together with their peers and people who are like them and form support networks. Drugs can be an initiation into those groups. They feel accepted into those groups. What do they have to do to be part of that group? It is like in movies like *Once were warriors* or *Colours*.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—When I was a kid they called them sharpies and when Bob was a kid they called them bodgies and widgies.

**Ms Valich**—Now they call them grungers, homies—

**CHAIR**—I do not remember either of those, actually.

**Ms Valich**—There are skankers, skeg heads—

**CHAIR**—But I cannot recall what it was. It was so long ago!

**Ms Valich**—I think these issues are at the root of the problem. That is what I am trying to say, more than patching everything up with stuff.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—I think you are right. But how much are they new problems versus problems that have always been there? I guess my thesis is that they have always been there to an extent. What has happened now is that certain aspects of modern society mean they are either a bit worse or they are a bit more obvious and the results of them have been a bit worse again. For example, the lack of unskilled jobs now compared to say 20 or 30 years ago means that the easy option for someone to go out and just get a job is not there, therefore all those other pressures create more pressure. There are a few other issues around that too, but I am using up your time, so I had better shut up.

**CHAIR**—Sam, we are going to have to go.

**Ms Valich**—That is okay. I didn't really talk about much, but that is okay.

**CHAIR**—You are absolutely delightful! I have been sitting here browsing over your report to us and I wanted to take it home and read it on the plane, but Stephen has got to have it so he can sign it and put it into formal play so that it becomes a formal submission and everybody gets to read it. I will read it as soon as he gets it to me on the fax. It is absolutely fascinating.

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—Would you like to leave us with one thought that we might take away with us and say, 'Okay, we have just spoken to Sam and this is the thought she left with us which we can take back.'

**CHAIR**—Hit us with the one thought, Sam!

**Ms Valich**—I do think that the thing that I am wanting to get across—

**Mr MOSSFIELD**—That is the point—what do you want to get across?

**Ms Valich**—The point that I want to get across is that after really evaluating young people and working with young people and talking with young people and spending most of my life with young people, there are root issues. Whether or not, as Alan stated, they have been there all the time, they have become more obvious, and they are there and we cannot just put into place and implement structures which are going to cover them up again. I think we need to go right back down and look at those root issues and find answers to those root issues, because they are also the root issues for a whole lot of other things which are becoming more and more obvious in our society today.

**CHAIR**—Sam, thank you. We appreciate your submission. We thank you for coming to talk to us. We hope to finish by next May or June. We will certainly send you a copy of our report.

**Ms Valich**—That would be fabulous.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Griffin):

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

**Committee adjourned at 4.42 p.m.**