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Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND
WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Reference: Education of boys

THURSDAY, 24 MAY 2001

CANBERRA

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Thursday, 24 May 2001

Members: Mrs Elson (*Chair*), Mr Barresi, Mr Bartlett, Mr Cadman, Mr Emerson, Ms Gambaro, Ms Gillard, Mrs May, Mr Sawford and Mr Wilkie

Members in attendance: Mr Barresi, Mr Cadman, Mr Emerson, Ms Gambaro, Mrs May and Mr Sawford

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

- the social, cultural and educational factors affecting the education of boys in Australian schools, particularly in relation to their literacy needs and socialisation skills in the early and middle years of schooling; and
- the strategies which schools have adopted to help address these factors, those strategies which have been successful and scope for their broader implementation or increased effectiveness.

WITNESSES

BALL, Ms Katrina Mary, Manager, Research and Evaluation Branch, National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd..... 1059

BORTHWICK, Ms Hilary (Jessie), Deputy Director, National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd..... 1059

Committee met at 9.04 a.m.

BALL, Ms Katrina Mary, Manager, Research and Evaluation Branch, National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd

BORTHWICK, Ms Hilary (Jessie), Deputy Director, National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd

ACTING CHAIR (Mr Sawford)—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into the education of boys and thank you for your attendance. I am obliged to remind you that proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. The deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public but, if at any stage you wish to give evidence in private, please ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I invite you to make some introductory remarks before we proceed to questions and discussion.

Ms Borthwick—I will open with a few general comments and then Katrina, I think, is best placed to take your questions or talk in more detail to our submission. Thanks very much for having us here this morning. One of the key messages we would like the committee to take note of is, not surprisingly, the importance of vocational education for boys in looking at the overall question of education for boys. The participation rates of boys in vocational education are quite high comparative to overall participation rates in VET. The balance in gender in vocational education is generally a little over 50 per cent for men. However, if you look at the lower age groups, the 15 to 19 age group, you will find that the balance in gender is 56 per cent in favour of boys. So it is very much higher for those younger age groups. Their participation as a proportion of the overall cohort for that age group is also very much higher. If you look at participation for 21-year-olds, for instance, you will find that girls are at around 17 per cent, while boys are at around 22 per cent. At age 18, girls participated at around 29 per cent and boys at around 37 per cent. So it is a significant difference in favour of boys.

You will note from our submission that the participation has mixed results for boys in vocational education, particularly if you look at the subset of boys who are still participating in school at the same time as in vocational education. So in some ways it is very early days yet to be able to judge the success or otherwise of introducing vocational education into schools. But we certainly think there is room for optimism, particularly for particular groups of boys. The submission that we have already submitted to you goes into that in some detail. We would be happy to take questions or provide further information on that. We would also like to table some further research that we have done recently looking again at participation in school based vocational education, and we are happy to talk to that this morning if that would be helpful to the committee.

ACTING CHAIR—We would welcome that.

Ms Ball—The main thing I would like to talk about is the research that we have conducted looking at the outcomes for boys from vocational subjects that they studied in the early 1990s before the vocational education training in schools program, VET in schools, was introduced and about the labour market outcomes resulting from those courses. Then I would like to talk

about some research that Jessie just mentioned which we have just completed and which looked at early school leavers—boys who have left school before completing year 12—and how they have gone in post-school vocational education and training, just to highlight the importance of post-school vocational education and training as a further education and training pathway for that group of boys who leave school before completing year 12.

In terms of research, Jessie has talked about our statistical data and our statistical collection. I would now like to talk about research that NCVR conducted with the Australian Council of Education Research two years ago, where we looked at the curriculum that students were doing in the early 1990s, up to 1994. We tracked those students through, looking at their further education and training and their labour market outcomes to 1997. This was a time before the VET in schools program was introduced. We found that there was great diversity in the range of subjects that boys did compared to girls. There were two main groupings of boys. The higher academic boys tended to be in the maths and science streams. They were there in greater proportion to the girls. This is documented in our submission. Another group of boys were doing what we classified as vocational subjects, which tended to be the technology and industrial arts subjects. There was a second group of boys in these vocational subjects who were doing agriculture subjects. Boys tended to be overrepresented in the industrial technology courses and the maths and physical sciences. All together, 18 per cent of boys were in what we call these vocational education and technology streams; that is one in five. So it was representing a large group of boys. Many of them were from low socioeconomic status backgrounds.

We found that, in the year after completing year 12, two-thirds of the students who studied the technology and technical drawing streams did not pursue any further education and training. By 21 years of age, half of these students had not studied any further education and training. Many of the students who did go on to further education and training obtained an apprenticeship by age 21, and these students had good employment outcomes. Of those students who did not go on to further education and training, most of them attempted to make a direct entry to the labour force after leaving school rather than pursuing further education and training. There was a relatively high rate of unemployment for these groups of students who did not pursue any further education and training.

By comparison, the other group of students who were in the vocational subject streams and who had studied agriculture based subjects had very good employment outcomes without going on to further education and training. So certainly, of the students who studied these subjects in the early 1990s, many of them had problems as they tried to enter the labour force.

Ms Borthwick—I think it is important to note that this is the previous or older model of vocational education in schools, which is what you would call the old industrial arts and design courses, rather than some of the newer programs that have been introduced recently.

Ms Ball—Since then there have been new developments in vocational education and training with VET in schools introduced into the schools curriculum. We are still waiting to see the results of what has happened to these students. Destination studies will assist that. But this early work, if you like, sets a benchmark against which these new courses can be judged.

Secondly, I would like to talk about the new work. I table a conference paper that was given in March by me jointly with a researcher who conducted the research while he was at the Australian Council for Education Research. The full report is not yet available. It is embargoed but should be released in the next couple of months. This work looked at students in the longitudinal survey of Australian youth, which is a Commonwealth longitudinal study managed by the Australian Council of Education Research. We looked at students who were in year 9 in 1995 and tracked those students through until 1999, looking basically at how they went in school and what they did subsequently. The focus of our study was early school leavers. We looked at those early school leavers who had gone on to vocational education and training and those who had not. I think it will be of interest to the committee because there are a large proportion of boys who leave school early and, of those, 42 per cent of boys who did not complete school had participated in vocational education and training in the post-school sector at some time before age 19. A high proportion of boys relative to girls participate in education and training at this time. So it is a very important avenue for boys to go on to further education and training.

The majority of the boys are in trade related courses. About 12 per cent of boys were doing a preparatory trade course, while about a third were enrolled in full trade courses. We also found that there were differences in the courses that boys—and girls, but concentrating on boys—enrolled in, depending on whether they left school before or after the commencement of year 11. About half of all boys who left school in year 10 were enrolled in a complete trade course compared to a third of those who left in year 11. So many boys are leaving early but going on to a trade course in vocational education and training. In the study I have tabled, we looked at outcomes for these boys in vocational education and training. We found that 62 per cent of modules studied by male non-completers resulted in a successful outcome compared with 57 per cent for females. So boys do very well in these courses relative to girls.

I might leave it there, having tabled this document so that you can look at the details. When the further report is available I will send you a copy of it, because there are quite detailed tables in there about the types of courses, the streams, that boys who have left school early are doing in vocational education and how they are succeeding in those courses.

Mr CADMAN—I seek a point of clarification. I need to understand the courses. I understand from what you have said that there are two processes—one in school and one after school. Is that right?

Ms Ball—Yes.

Mr CADMAN—And have you the impact on employment prospects?

Ms Ball—No. The first study was looking at vocational subjects studied in schools by boys who completed school. That was subjects in the early 1990s, pre-1995, before the current VET in schools programs, and their labour market outcomes. The second study was looking at early school leavers—that is, students who had left school before completing year 12, but that was in the late 1990s—and their vocational education and training outcomes.

ACTING CHAIR—I go back to the submission you gave us. You often can tell a lot by the language in which submissions are written about where people are coming from. Do you have an ideal concept in your minds about gender representation in VET courses?

Ms Borthwick—Not necessarily. As I said at the beginning, it is important to look at the question of gender representation across all sectors of education. You will find that there is usually a balancing out between the sectors. For instance, as I said earlier, in the older age groups females are more highly represented in vocational education, but less so in the younger years. I think that picture reverses for higher education. So what you are seeing is people choosing different pathways to employment. I think it is a difficult question to assess whether one pathway is better than another in that context. Some recent work we have done on apprenticeship training, for instance—which is obviously a vocational education and training pathway and one favoured by many boys—shows that it is an extraordinarily successful pathway to full-time employment and, indeed, to self-employment. So we would see that as a very strong positive in comparison to perhaps pursuing higher education.

ACTING CHAIR—The reason I ask the question is that in a moment I want to refer to a study by Professor Faith Trent and Malcolm Slade, who is a research fellow at Flinders University, of what boys think about what is being written about them. I want to come back to that in a moment. In your study you use the term ‘overrepresented’ quite often. ‘Overrepresented’ presents a negative picture. If you said ‘more represented’ it is pretty neutral. If you said ‘greater representation’ it is a positive. But you always use the term ‘overrepresented’. Why do you do that?

Ms Borthwick—I will let Katrina give her view, but perhaps it is a statistical artefact. It is the way researchers often refer to a greater proportion.

ACTING CHAIR—But it is a value judgment. If you were statistically correct you would use the terms ‘greater’ and ‘lesser’. You would not use the loaded terms ‘under’ and ‘over’. That is not statistically correct. I do not want to make a big deal of this. Perhaps the question will make more sense when I start referring to Professor Faith Trent’s study. But I want to go to another question first. What factors account for boys’ poorer performance in some VET modules relative to girls, and has that always been the case? Is that the case now? Was that the case in the early 1990s? Was that the case when we had technical schools?

Ms Borthwick—The information in the submission refers to the information which we currently collect on boys who participate in vocational education in school as well as in vocational education, and their relative performance. I do not think it is something that we have looked at over time. Katrina, you might want to clarify that.

Ms Ball—No, we have not. We could have a look at that for you, if you are interested.

ACTING CHAIR—I would not mind. A couple of principals, both public and private, have said to us—and these are principals who are highly respected and who run very successful educational programs—that if you going to run an academic high school, or secondary institution, that is what you do. If you are going to run a vocational educational system, that is what you do. There are not too many who can do both. It is interesting that people who have been highly successful in VET—I refer to people like Peter Turner at Salisbury High School in

South Australia and that enterprise high school concept, which is probably a modern version of a technical high school—say that the crisis in secondary education has come about quite unintentionally. The reason that Karmel presented to governments that we should have comprehensive secondary schools was an egalitarian reason; it was a positive reason. Yet in hindsight it was probably a big mistake because public education at the secondary level was quite diverse prior to the establishment of comprehensive high schools.

When you listen to what boys are saying about what is actually going on in schools, they are complaining about the quality of teaching, they are complaining about the total inadequacy and suitability of the courses and the methodology used to put them forward. That is all in Faith Trent's stuff. I might read a few of those comments to you just to get your reaction. But do you have any comments about the structure of our secondary schools in terms of vocational education? I think everyone on this committee thinks it is very important, but I am not too sure that the structure of our public secondary schools is the right structure to allow vocational education to succeed to its optimum level.

Ms Borthwick—I am not sure that we are really in a position to comment on that. The bulk of our work in research obviously concentrates on vocational experiences within vocational education providers, principally TAFE, in the public system. We have done some recent work looking at the vocational education and training in schools experience in particular regions in Australia, and that shows that there is a great diversity of models. So, in response to your question, we perhaps need to look at the full range of models available currently—and there are a lot of them—and to look at the success and failures of those different experiences. It seems to us that there are definitely some where there has been greater success and others where there has been less success. I would not like to venture a view as to what the optimum arrangement might be.

ACTING CHAIR—I was grateful for Katrina making the comment that you were prepared to put more information to this committee. I note that you are a research and development organisation; you are not just a collection of data group. Is that correct?

Ms Borthwick—We have two principal functions. One is collecting statistical data on vocational education and the other is conducting research. A lot of that research is quantitatively based, but we also do qualitative research and we conduct large-scale surveys, particularly in the vocational education and training area, on student outcomes.

ACTING CHAIR—As someone who is interested in vocational education, I would be interested to hear comments from people like you on what you think is an ideal structure of secondary education for VET to grow. I would like you to comment on the quality of teachers at secondary level and at TAFE level. I would like you to comment about the resource levels that are available to education, to VET. I would like you to clearly spell out the purposes of VET in terms of giving it a rationale that is not generalised but more specific. I would not mind having people give me an idea of what they see as the structure of VET. You have done this somewhat in dividing up all those courses. You understand what I mean by the structure—

Ms Borthwick—A clearer profile of participation and course delivery?

ACTING CHAIR—Yes, and how you measure the success or failure of those profiles, and what happens in the evaluation.

Ms Borthwick—Certainly.

ACTING CHAIR—The bells are ringing. As some members have to go to the chamber for a few minutes, we will suspend the formal proceedings and have an informal chat.

Proceedings suspended from 9.25 a.m. to 9.34 a.m.

Mr BARRESI—I missed the early part of the hearing, so I am not sure whether this has been covered or not. A lot of these studies were done in the early nineties to mid-nineties. There has been a lot more concentration on VET in schools lately. Have you noticed whether or not that has made any difference in terms of the gender outcomes? Also, there are different types of VET courses now available other than the traditional ones. Have there been any noticeable differences in outcomes and uptake between the genders?

Ms Ball—Some of the information that we have got in our submission looks at gender and uptake in terms of enrolments of boys who come into our collection—boys who are still at school. That is on page 2 of our original submission. But in terms of destination studies, these courses are still fairly recent. From our submission you can see that there has been a massive increase in the rate of uptake of these courses. During 1999, there was an increase of 70 per cent over the previous year of boys in these courses. So it is only now that the destination studies can be done on these courses, because it has been too recent up till now to actually be tracking the students through. So the information is still not available about what has happened to students who have done these courses.

ACTING CHAIR—There are a lot of criticisms coming from teachers and kids themselves that sometimes they are parked in vocational education for no purpose at all—just parked there. Because they cannot leave school or their parents will not allow them to leave, they just get slotted in there. Have you come across this?

Ms Borthwick—We have not done any particular research on what the entry requirements or processes are for boys into those streams.

ACTING CHAIR—I am talking about any secondary schools, not post-school.

Ms Borthwick—The uptake that we have seen I think coincides more with the availability of funding rather than anything else. What the educational strategies behind that might be within schools is a little bit difficult for us to fathom.

Mr BARRESI—In your research, are you also able to point to any differences between the single-sex schools and the co-ed schools in terms of the VET programs, once again in terms of the outcomes of kids going through?

Ms Ball—In our own collection we would not have that sort of information. The longitudinal survey of Australian youth conducted by ACER may have that information. They certainly collect data on non-government schools, including Catholic schools, as well as government schools, but whether they have it on single-sex schools, on a single-sex basis, I am not sure. If you were to ask ACER for specific information, they would provide you with that. But I am not sure whether they actually collect that data or not.

Ms GAMBARO—My apologies if this has been asked already; with all the disruptions, I am not sure. Just following on from Phil's question about private and public schools, has anyone asked you whether there are more of these types of vocational courses in private schools than in

public schools? And have they been going on longer in the private school sector? Do you have that information?

Ms Borthwick—In relation to the most recent vocational education training in schools, it is our view—and I think we would want to confirm that by looking at our statistics again—that most of it is in the public sector, not the private sector. Certainly, when we have talked to industry about apprenticeship uptakes, skill shortages and so on, they say very resoundingly that private schools have not, in general, been interested in providing those sorts of pathways to young people. But I would have to check the statistical basis for that.

Ms GAMBARO—So at this stage you do not have any data that would give you more of an insight into that?

Ms Borthwick—I do not know whether that earlier research looks at that split—government versus non-government.

Ms Ball—That was before the current VET in schools program was introduced. Through the longitudinal survey of Australian youth which ACER conduct they collect data on government versus non-government schools. They might be able to give you some information on that, but it would basically relate to the students who were in their survey as opposed to the national aggregate statistics.

Ms Borthwick—If the committee is interested, we can certainly follow up on that.

Ms GAMBARO—I know you concentrate on quantitative data, but do you think there are qualitative factors that come into play here, particularly in offering vocational courses, and do you know whether the disruption to curriculum, teaching methods and adaptations of administration systems come into play? I am probably asking you something that is outside the scope of your research, but do you think those things come into play when vocational courses are offered?

Ms Borthwick—Again, we do not have any evidence one way or the other on that, except anecdotally when we have had discussions with providers on this question. Some do report difficulties in association with timetabling and whether or not to have block releases—that sort of thing.

Ms GAMBARO—That is the sort of thing that I was wanting you to comment on. It might be a structural issue that we need to look at as well.

Ms Borthwick—That is probably the case but, again, we have not done any research directly on that question.

Mrs MAY—I am particularly interested in employment outcomes and some of the statistics which you gave us. Teresa just touched on some pathways to whether vocational education leads into apprenticeships. Do we have any data that indicates that someone, say in year 11, who opts out of school may have done some vocational education and would look at apprenticeships? I was interested in your statistics on employment outcomes and whether we are getting the employment outcomes we want from vocational education in schools. Are we

offering these kids an alternative so that they can get into employment? Would you like to comment on that? You did have some pre-1995 data on employment outcomes that you have referred to in your submission. Would you like to expand on where you think vocational education is going within schools as far as employment opportunities are concerned?

Ms Ball—It is still too early to do some of those tracking studies because the uptake in these course has increased over the last two years. In order to track these students through, you have to look at them some years further on, which again is why the study that we did in the early 1990s has only just been released in the last year or two—because it takes time to follow them through. The aim is to look at those employment outcomes at a later date.

Mr BARRESI—You mention the difference between the agricultural, the secretarial and the technology ones. Is there a reason behind that, or were you simply reporting a fact?

Ms Ball—We were just reporting a fact. The work we have done is purely quantitative. It is just reporting what has happened, as opposed to looking behind the data at why it has happened.

Mrs MAY—So that can be used to adjust or change, or to introduce new courses in the schools to meet the needs?

Ms Ball—It was pointing to areas where there had been issues in the past about the employment outcomes of curriculum groupings of subjects.

Mr BARRESI—From my perspective, I find it very limiting information. I am not being critical—that is your charter and that is fine. But when you tell me that seven per cent get jobs if they are doing agriculture versus 20 per cent somewhere else, that is a raw figure. Why is that? What are the circumstances behind it? Which regions would this involve? There needs to be a lot more information, otherwise it is not that valuable for me in trying to come up with some idea about where boys' education is going.

Mrs MAY—Agriculture is very limited too. In my electorate, you would not get a job.

ACTING CHAIR—It is one per cent of the employment market, isn't it?

Mrs MAY—Yes.

Mr CADMAN—Can I refer you to the table on page 2 of the second paper? You have there table 1, 'Module enrolments in vocational education and training by field of study and gender'. The second bunch of figures represents percentage growth. Is that a year to year growth? How did you measure growth?

Ms Ball—Rather than reporting the data for 1998 as well, what it is doing is a percentage change on the previous year.

Mr CADMAN—I needed to clarify that. On the percentage change, there appears to be quite a shift in preferences, because the growth area for boys, I notice, appears to be in the arts and humanities. Also, there is some growth in engineering, health community services, law/legal

studies and then TAFE multifield education—whatever that happens to be; I do not understand that one at all. To put it roughly, the growth for girls is in land/marine resources, animal husbandry, architecture and building, and education. Have you been able to make any assessment of the reasons for those shifts? They appear to run contrary to what you nominate as the preferred courses.

Ms Borthwick—One thing that is important to bear in mind with those figures is that really 1998 to 1999 was the first year of growth we saw at all; it really kicked off strongly in 1998. The growth rates are very high obviously, but they are coming off a fairly low base. So I think it is a little bit early to be drawing conclusions about whether there is a trend emerging there or not. Having said that, no, we have not looked into the reasons why.

Mr CADMAN—I was just wondering whether we could look behind the reasons for those trends. But that is not your role; I understand that. I guess this is a matter of curiosity, but I wonder whether it is societal pressure, home pressure or whether, in fact, it is the teaching services—and this is coming back to your original point where you say that certain cohorts are underrepresented or overrepresented, and we need to balance this out: we need to have equal numbers of girls and boys doing hospitality and equal numbers of boys and girls doing architecture. Do you think that is a philosophy being expressed by the educational institutions?

Ms Borthwick—I could not comment on the school situation. As I have said, in vocational education, there is very clearly a gender divide between the sorts of subjects and programs that young men do compared to young women. Principally, the trades area, which is TAFE—

ACTING CHAIR—Essentially, this is the question that Alan is asking: say there is greater representation of girls than boys in some courses; so what? Say there is greater representation of boys than girls in some courses than others—so what? I think what Alan is asking is: is there a move to basically make them fifty-fifty? If there is, on what sort of basis is that made?

Ms Borthwick—Not being someone who sets policies in schools or vocational education, I guess I cannot really comment on that.

ACTING CHAIR—But do you get the feeling that that is what is coming down?

Ms Borthwick—I cannot say that from these numbers we would deduce that.

ACTING CHAIR—No, not from the numbers; from the orthodoxies. You read the literature?

Ms Ball—Yes.

Mr CADMAN—I am just looking at the percentage growth, and there appears to be that process going on. The preferences you seem to have identified fairly clearly and fairly strongly, yet the growth seems to be into those areas that will achieve a balancing factor rather than a continuation of past trends.

Ms Ball—I am certainly not aware of any policies that are trying to have equal representation in courses. I think it is just more these courses are offered.

Ms Borthwick—No.

Mr CADMAN—I hear announcements from time to time—even from federal ministers—that we need to have more girls doing this or we need to have more boys doing that. Surely the educational institutions would take note of those expressions and seek to modify the availability of courses, wouldn't they? That is not a question for you guys at the moment, but what you have identified is very interesting. Are you going to continue this study? Is this going to be a longitudinal study?

Ms Borthwick—There are two sets of information that we have. We have our own statistical database, which goes back to 1994. With the vocational education and training in schools, it really only goes back to about 1998. So we collect—and we can provide them—those statistics every year. Katrina is drawing on a different set of statistics, which is the longitudinal survey, and that is a different process altogether.

Ms Ball—With that longitudinal survey, what we have done is match the students in our database. So basically we have tracked the students in the longitudinal survey.

Mr CADMAN—That is what I had in mind.

Ms Ball—We have located them within the vocational education and training database and looked at their outcomes. Obviously we are looking at aggregates. We would be interested in whether you find this sort of information helpful, because it would help direct our research program.

Mr CADMAN—I think the longitudinal studies are invaluable. I really like them; I think they are very good. Is the post-school study that you have described here going to be a longitudinal study? Are you going to track people over a period?

Ms Ball—The one on school non-completers?

Mr CADMAN—Yes. You have provided information here about what the situation is in one year. Are you going to go on with those people and see what their ultimate outcomes are and that sort of thing?

Ms Ball—That is certainly the aim as part of our research program that is determined through our board. They are very keen on these sorts of longitudinal studies, so part of our research program is to continue.

Mr CADMAN—So that is planned and funding is in place at the moment, is it? There is no uncertainty about it continuing?

Ms Ball—For the next year, it is in place. Our program is looked at on an annual and biannual basis.

Mr CADMAN—So you have not got a three- or five-year program locked in and committed to? Is that right?

Ms Ball—No. Our funding comes on an annual basis, I suppose. So based on that, we cannot commit until we know that we have the funds.

Mr CADMAN—Who makes the decision on it? Is it the ACER?

Ms Borthwick—No. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research has its own board, and the board has oversight of the program. We also have a national research and evaluation committee which advises our program representation from states and users of the system.

Mr CADMAN—So do they contract you to do this work? How do you get funded?

Ms Borthwick—We are funded through three channels largely: the Australian National Training Authority, who we are funded through on contract arrangements; the Commonwealth and the states on a population share basis; and the commercial work that we do.

Mr CADMAN—I think it would be a shame to see this study terminated, because it would be almost valueless on one- or two-year figures.

ACTING CHAIR—Maybe that is a challenge for Jessie and Katrina to approach ANTA and the Commonwealth and state governments to get some training and funding, but that is another question. We need to complete this inquiry this morning, but I have one last question. Could you list for the committee the differences between current VET courses and those that existed and which have been highly criticised in the mid-eighties to nineties and perhaps those that went back to when we had a technical school system in this country.

Ms Borthwick—We can do our best.

ACTING CHAIR—Just briefly because we are running out of time.

Ms Borthwick—I do not know that I could do it now.

ACTING CHAIR—Could you get us that information?

Ms Borthwick—We certainly could in relation to vocational education and training in schools, which is funded through the vocational and training system, because that appears in our statistical collection. The other information does not appear and we would have to look elsewhere for it, but we can certainly attempt to do that for you.

ACTING CHAIR—That would be much appreciated.

Ms Ball—In terms of going back to when there were technical schools, we may have problems with that.

ACTING CHAIR—Only if it is possible, but you do have the information about the VET courses in the eighties and the nineties?

Ms Borthwick—Yes. I take it you mean VET in schools, not just vocational education and training in general.

ACTING CHAIR—Yes, VET in schools. Jessie and Katrina, thank you very much for being prepared to put forward a thought provoking submission. I think we understand some of the difficulties you operate under now in terms of annual funding, which is a question that Alan raised. I would like to add that I personally think longitudinal studies are pretty absent in research in this country.

Mr CADMAN—They are, aren't they?

ACTING CHAIR—It is pleasing that at least your organisation is conscious of that and is actually doing them. I just hope your funding arrangements suit that on a much longer term, as perhaps Alan has suggested. Thanks very much for your appearance here today.

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

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

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

That the committee receive as evidence and include as an exhibit for the inquiry into the education of boys the document received by Katrina Ball, 'AVETRA CONFERENCE 28-30 March 2001'.

Committee adjourned at 9.55 a.m.