



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**Reference: Vocational education in schools**

TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2003

SYDNEY

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**Tuesday, 25 February 2003**

**Members:** Mr Bartlett (*Chair*), Mr Sawford (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Albanese, Mr Farmer, Ms Gambaro, Mr Johnson, Mrs May, Mr Pearce, Ms Plibersek and Mr Sidebottom

**Members in attendance:** Mr Albanese, Mr Bartlett, Mr Farmer, Mrs May, Ms Plibersek and Mr Sawford

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

The place of vocational education in schools, its growth and development and its effectiveness in preparing students for post-school options, with particular reference to:

- the range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, including teacher training and the impact of vocational education on other programs;
- the differences between school-based and other vocational education programs and the resulting qualifications, and the pattern of industry acceptance of school-based programs;
- vocational education in new and emerging industries; and
- the accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for indigenous students.

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**Committee met at 9.42 a.m.**

**BAUER, Ms Janina, Manager, Industry Training, Bradfield College**

**GOLDBERG, Ms Ami, Student, Media and Performance, Bradfield College**

**HARVEY, Mr Elliott, Student, Design, Bradfield College**

**HELLIER, Mr Andrew, Student, Accommodation Services, Bradfield College**

**JACKSON, Ms Deborah, Student, Accommodation, Bradfield College**

**MARTYN, Ms Anna, Student, Information Technology, Bradfield College**

**PLUMB, Mr Tim, Student, Information Technology, Bradfield College**

**PURCELL, Ms Melina, Student, Tourism, Bradfield College**

**SEARGEANT, Mr Jim, Student, Media and Performance, Bradfield College**

**THOMAS, Ms Georgina, Student, Commercial Cookery, Bradfield College**

**WADE, Ms Tahnee, Student, Commercial Cookery, Bradfield College**

**WHITE, Ms Julia, Student, Retail, Bradfield College**

**CHAIR**—Before we actually start some discussion, we will go through a few formalities we have to do here. I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into vocational education and training in schools. Thank you to the director of Bradfield College, Mr Michael Hyam, and thank you to the school for hosting us today. We certainly appreciate your time. Thank you to the students, first of all for the guided tour, and for what you are going to discuss with us now. You have no doubt been filled in as to the reasons for the inquiry. We are trying to get a handle on what is happening with vocational education in schools, so we are visiting a number of schools. What you discuss with us today will be on the *Hansard* record and will help form the information that we use for our recommendations and our report. We certainly appreciate you volunteering to be part of that. Like you, the committee members are from areas scattered all around the place—perhaps a little bit further.

I will get the ball rolling and then my colleagues will have a number of questions. We certainly appreciate your input. I am curious as to what prompted you to come to Bradfield College given that you are scattered all over Sydney. There are obviously other high schools closer to where you live. No doubt some of them offer vocational education courses as well. Did you come here because this college offered courses that your local school did not? Or did you want a change, some variety or a different structure? What was it that prompted you to come to Bradfield rather than a school closer to home?

**Ms White**—I found that the timetable at Bradfield is different. It gives you a lot more time to do an extra TAFE course or something like that and also handle the studies with your HSC and Board of Study subjects too.

**CHAIR**—So that works better than in other schools?

**Ms White**—Yes, I found it did.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is it that is different about the timetable?

**Ms White**—We dedicate a whole Tuesday for industry placement, whereas my old school would make us do a week in the holidays or in our own time on the weekends. Bradfield caters for that extra time that they see that you need to do it.

**Ms Purcell**—I found that, although I am from Avalon and I have to come to North Sydney, I had courses available here which my old school did not offer. I would have to travel to combine TAFE studies with my HSC so I find it easier to come to the one place and do it all at the same time.

**CHAIR**—What is the TAFE course you are doing here?

**Ms Purcell**—Tourism is my vocational area.

**Mr Harvey**—I live in Gladesville so Bradfield College is relatively close to me. The reason that I came here was because of the design fundamentals vocational course. I am looking to get into fashion design so that will assist with my tertiary studies. I also came for the work studies program they offer here. I have worked for fashion designers, Wayne Cooper, and Australian Fashion Week as well. The opportunities that they offer are what drew me here.

**Ms Martyn**—I only live about five minutes away so that is why I came here. I did not like the school that I was going to. I got into a lot of trouble with teachers. They had a lot more to offer here.

**CHAIR**—You do not get into trouble here?

**Ms Martyn**—No. They have a lot more to offer like help with class. We have a lot of help from this school.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—Do you think that the reason you do not get in trouble here is because the curriculum is more flexible or do you think it is the extra help? I notice that you have three full-time counsellors and stuff upstairs. Do you think it is that part of it or do you think it is the flexibility and being treated like an adult?

**Ms Wade**—It is the flexibility and them putting most of the responsibility on us. If we do something wrong, it is our fault and we are putting ourselves down, not the teachers or anyone else.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Who was the strongest influence? How did you come to find out about Bradfield College? Was it a person, a friend or a careers adviser in an old school, or was it something you read in the newspaper? What was the significant event that made you decide to come here?

**Ms Thomas**—One of my brothers and one of my sisters came here but they did not do so well. They dropped out. But Bradfield offered all the courses I wanted to do. My old school really did not offer anything so it was mainly because of the courses I wanted to do. I was not doing very well at my old school in my marks. Since I have come here I am getting much better marks in school and everything.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—Why do you think your marks have improved?

**Ms Thomas**—Probably because it is more me doing it than anyone else making me do it. It is my choice to get better marks. At the old school I was kind of being forced to do it and I did not want to.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—So your motivation is a lot better now.

**Ms Thomas**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—What course are you doing?

**Ms Thomas**—Hospitality cookery.

**Mrs MAY**—All of you have talked about ‘choosing’ Bradfield and coming here. I wonder how many of you had to meet certain criteria. Are there courses here for which you had to demonstrate that you had a skill in that area? Ami and I have talked about it: some of you are doing drama classes or design classes. Did you have to meet a certain level or criterion to be accepted into those courses, once you had chosen to come here?

**Mr Seargeant**—To get into the entertainment course, what you had to do at the start of last year was to go through an audition—to perform a song, a monologue—you had to show previous work that you had done in the industry, and it was just a general interview.

**Mrs MAY**—So there was a certain standard you had to reach to be accepted into the course?

**Mr Seargeant**—Yes.

**Mrs MAY**—Is that for every course here at Bradfield, or just some?

**Mr Plumb**—It is for music, entertainment and design.

**Mr ALBANESE**—What about industry work? What would you do on a Tuesday, off campus, for example?

**Mr Seargeant**—What we had to do was to organise industry placements that suited our vocation. So I was working at ABC Radio National for all of last year. I did that every Tuesday. You have to ring them up yourself and give them a resume. You have to do it all yourself, and get the job yourself.

**Mr ALBANESE**—Is that paid work?

**Mr Seargeant**—No. It is a lot like work experience, except that it is more spread out through the year.

**Mrs MAY**—Do you have to source those positions for yourself?

**Mr Seargeant**—Yes.

**Mrs MAY**—Do all of you have to do that?

**Mr Seargeant**—Yes.

**Mrs MAY**—With some guidance from the college—some ideas of where to go? Mel, do you want to expand on what you mean by that?

**Ms Purcell**—Yes, the teachers do suggest some places or areas where children have gone in the past, but it is up to us to find where we would like to do our industry training.

**Mrs MAY**—Are you assisted with resumes, putting together a package, how to contact people?

**Ms Purcell**—Yes. We have classes before we are allowed out into the workplace, to prepare us for it. It is really all up to us.

**CHAIR**—Could you just quickly run around and tell us where your work placements are?

**Ms Purcell**—Manly Visitor Information Centre, Manly Art Gallery and Museum, and in retail at a shop called Bow Wow.

**Ms White**—A retail store in Newtown called Beyond.

**Mr Plumb**—I have worked in two IT related work placements. My first place was working at a government office called the Office of the Protective Commissioner. I did 72 work hours there in prelim year. The next work placement I worked in was an IT consultancy company called Herson Communication Services. I worked there for approximately 48 hours last year, and I am doing another 35 hours there at the moment.

**Ms Martyn**—I worked at Unisys, a software development company.

**Mr Harvey**—I worked for a fashion designer, Wayne Cooper, based in Surry Hills, for 80 hours. I also accumulated 50 hours working at Mercedes Australian Fashion Week as an usher.

**Ms Wade**—I worked in a cafe in Greenwich called Double D Cafe and Catering, and I worked also at another place, in Wollstonecraft, called One Tequila. It is in a building complex and the cafe is restricted to residents.

**Ms Thomas**—I worked in an Italian restaurant called Le Cointreau, in north Sydney, and also in a cafe called Jago's.



**Mr Seargeant**—I worked mostly in ABC Radio National, but also did a bit of time at the Stable Theatre, in Kings Cross.

**Ms Goldberg**—I did some industry training at Australian Theatre for Young People and Pact Youth Theatre, at Winning Post Editing and at Cameron-Jane Make Up Designery. Also I learned how to do the lighting for the HSC drama pieces this year.

**Mr Hellier**—I worked at a hotel in the city called the Western. Once I had done some hours there, I went to the McDonald's at Gladesville.

**Ms Jackson**—I did most of my time last year at a hotel at Circular Quay called the Renaissance. This year I have been at a cafe in Coogee called Cafe Congo.

**Mrs MAY**—How many industry hours do you have to get up as part of your course? Is there a minimum or maximum of industry hours?

**Ms Purcell**—Yes.

**Ms Bauer**—To clarify something that was said before, all the students who come to Bradfield College spend most of term 1 doing off-the-job classes before they go out into the workplace, so that we do some preparatory work before the students start their work placements. We do things such as resumes, cover letters, telephone skills, communication skills, occupational health and safety, harassment issues, a mock interview and so on. Most students would be enrolled in their vocational courses as well as doing a work studies program. Through the work studies program, they do an extended work placement. So the students, in the main, at a minimum, would be doing 100 hours in the workplace. Those who are doing the industry curriculum framework courses would be doing, in addition, another 70 hours over the two years that they would be doing those curriculum courses. So it could be 155 hours, and on top of that they could be doing an extended work studies program, which might mean another, say, 100 hours in the workplace. So it is quite extensive.

**Ms Purcell**—I have done 215 hours of industry training and work studies.

**Mr Harvey**—I have completed roughly 100 to 120 hours of industry training.

**Ms Wade**—I have done about 300 hours so far. Last year I did 155 hours and this year I have already completed 150 hours for the 2-unit course.

**CHAIR**—Do you think the work placement is valuable? Do you learn a lot from it? Do you feel that your employers at those different places are trying to help you learn or do you think they just treat you as someone there to do some of the hack jobs for them? How do you respond to them? How do they treat you?

**Ms Purcell**—I originally approached Manly Visitor Information Centre asking if I could do two days with them, and I have ended up doing 115 hours. At the end of each day I would say, 'Do you think I could come back?' and they would say, 'Yes, sure.' I have found them to be very helpful. They have offered me a reference and really wanted to assist me in my school work as well.

**Ms Wade**—Both my works have offered me full-time jobs when I leave school. They all wanted me to stay on and work in the kitchens. One of the work placements in Wollstonecraft called One Tequila offered me an apprenticeship to become a chef.

**Mr Plumb**—I also have had an offer for full-time or part-time employment after I finish my HSC at the IT consultancy company where I am doing work. I found that both of the work experience places that I went to were very accommodating in the tasks that they gave me and their demands. They knew, obviously, that I had not had the training, specifically in the government office, that most of the employees had had, so they were willing to give me tasks that could be both productive and a learning experience.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Janina, what are the bureaucratic necessities for the work placement?

**Ms Bauer**—In terms of what?

**Mr SAWFORD**—The agreement between the firm and the college or the firm and the student. What bureaucratic necessities do you need to go through?

**Ms Bauer**—There is an agreement form, and this has to be signed by the student, the college and the employer. The employee gets an information pack, in which there is a guide to employers for work placements. It details the benefits of work placements, the responsibilities in the workplace, insurance issues, child protection issues and those sorts of things. So there is a written agreement between the three parties that a work placement is taking place. Further to that, we have teachers of work studies classes monitoring the work placement. They contact the employers, they keep in contact with students and they visit the workplace—so they monitor their progress throughout the course of that work placement.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How regular is that monitoring?

**Ms Bauer**—The first set of monitoring in terms of employer contact is as soon as that completed agreement form comes back to the college. That is when the first phone call to the employer happens, just to check that the student has arrived, that everything is okay and that there are no difficulties. Then the monitoring is ongoing. That is the responsibility of the teachers. Once the off-the-job classes finish in term 1, the teacher's role is to monitor student progress and to make sure that everything is going well in the workplace. They do visit at least once in the workplace while the student is there. Then it is ongoing monitoring—talking to students while they are here, and being in contact with the employers by phone or through a visit.

**Mrs MAY**—I have a follow-up question from talking to a couple of the students this morning. How many of you would see this as just the first stepping stone to some further studies in the industry you want to go into? Tahnee, you said that you may have been offered an apprenticeship. For any of the others, is this a stepping stone, maybe looking at university, tertiary or any further studies here that you are able to do? Could you expand on that?

**Ms Thomas**—I found that when I did my work placement in the kitchen I did not enjoy it as much as I thought I would. I have basically found out that I do not really want to be a chef, which I did think I wanted to be. I am still studying cheffing because I am travelling when I

finish school, so I can cook in the kitchens and so on while I travel. But as a long-term career path I do not think I will take it up. That is what I found out through it.

**Mr Plumb**—I discovered that I would like to go and do, possibly, some further TAFE courses on IT later on at higher levels—maybe certificate IV or possibly a diploma in IT through TAFE.

**Ms Goldberg**—I am doing the media and performance course. What is good about it is that we do not just study acting. We study other areas like radio, film and acting for theatre as well, which is good. I do want to do acting as a career but, because of the type of industry it is, it is good to know other skills. Now at least I have some idea of what goes into the other parts of the industry in case I decide to pursue some of those other options, if I am having a dry patch in acting or something like that.

**Mrs MAY**—Ami, could you say for the record what your work placement is at the moment.

**Ms Goldberg**—We actually finished our work placements last year.

**Mrs MAY**—What were you doing last year?

**Ms Goldberg**—I did Pact Youth Theatre and Australian Theatre for Young Performers.

**Mrs MAY**—Were you actually acting on stage?

**Ms Goldberg**—In Australian Theatre for Young People I was. At Pact I was helping out backstage. Winning Post was post-production and editing, and I did the lighting for the HSC group last year so I learnt how to do lighting. I also did Cameron-Jane Make Up Designery. I did quite a broad—

**Mrs MAY**—You are multiskilled.

**Ms Goldberg**—Certainly I have some idea about other parts of the industry.

**Mrs MAY**—Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Are any of you planning on going to university?

**Ms Purcell**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—You are still applying for UAI, and you are hoping to get to university to combine that with what you are studying now? How will you work that? Is what you are studying with TAFE and work placement perhaps a fall-back position?

**Mr Plumb**—I am currently looking at the TAFE course for IT as something to do as a short-term career, possibly as something to provide funds for study at university, as I am currently in two minds as to what career path I would like to follow. I am also looking at studying an English literature course at university, as well as doing the IT courses through TAFE. I have not quite decided what I would like to do yet, as far as that goes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What do you want to do, Melina?

**Ms Purcell**—At the end of this year I will have my HSC, I will have a UAI and I will have certificate 1 and 2 for tourism—sales and office. I would like to go to university, and I will. I think I will finish my TAFE studies first and do certificate 3 and the diploma, and then look at my options from there.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you have anything in mind at university?

**Ms Purcell**—I am interested in journalism, but I will wait to see my mark and then decide what I will do.

**Ms White**—I am a retail student. I see it more as a fall-back certificate for me. I would like to go to university. I am still a bit unsure of what I would like to do there. I would definitely like to study another industry such as the personal training and fitness area. I thought having a TAFE certificate in retail would be very good for part-time work and give me an advantage over other students who come out of school and do not have it.

**Mr ALBANESE**—I would be interested in how your industry placement courses fit in with the curriculum at the schools that you used to go to. How do you sort out the balance with your HSC studies?

**Ms Purcell**—I find it okay. It sort of fits in together. It is certainly easier coming to the one campus where you can do your HSC and TAFE at the same time. Otherwise having to travel to two different places would make it difficult and there would probably be more work to handle.

**Mr ALBANESE**—What HSC courses are you doing?

**Ms Purcell**—I am studying English, Maths, Biology and Modern History, and Tourism is combined into that.

**Mr ALBANESE**—How big are each of those classes?

**Ms Purcell**—Do you mean: how many students are there?

**Mr ALBANESE**—Yes.

**Ms Purcell**—Anywhere from 16 to 30.

**Mr Plumb**—I want to clarify. Did you want a comparison between the relevance of high school curriculum and TAFE curriculum?

**Mr ALBANESE**—Yes, I was interested in how it fitted in, whether you saw conflicts of time, what was good and bad about doing both, and whether it was difficult to go from a course in, say, visual design to an English class the next day.

**Mr Plumb**—The integration is not much of a problem. My course is the TAFE IT course. The HSC component and the TAFE module components are so well integrated that it seems to

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be one class. The only really discernible difference is that you do a specific HSC exam for IT at the end of the year and half yearly as well. For the TAFE component you get a certificate II or a certificate III if you choose to go and do the extension subjects or modules for that. As far as class time goes, there is no real difference between the two curriculums.

**Mrs MAY**—Are the class sizes smaller for the HSC based courses or do they tend to be larger?

**Mr Plumb**—For most of my English classes, the classes tend to be 20 or so students. Compared with other schools, class numbers are lower, which means more time for the teacher to dedicate time to students who are having trouble or to explore issues more thoroughly with students.

**Mrs MAY**—Are there any problems with the hours of the school? Does anyone find the hours too long or too much of an imposition?

**Ms Bauer**—I want to clarify two issues. The vocational courses and the HSC course run parallel so it is one seamless course. The HSC component may have additions that the TAFE module certificate course does not have. The delivery is in the one subject area. It is not as though it is a huge division and that you are jumping from the traditional academic subjects into vocational subjects. The timetabling and the course delivery are similar to what you would normally expect in academic subjects. In most non-practical classes, the maximum number of student would be 17, although our numbers would be lower as the students have suggested. In practical classes, the numbers would be 15 or below. One of the requirements of the practical classes is that the numbers be low.

**CHAIR**—Are all the vocational courses two-unit UAI qualifying?

**Ms Bauer**—No, they will not all qualify for a UAI. They would be two unit but they do not all qualify for a UAI.

**CHAIR**—Could you run through which ones do and which ones do not?

**Ms Bauer**—The industry curriculum framework courses would qualify for a UAI. They would be in IT, hospitality, retail, tourism and business services. The other courses would not qualify for a UAI.

**CHAIR**—Presumably, those of you who are doing courses that do not qualify are not planning on going to university. Is that right?

**Ms Goldberg**—I am actually keeping my options open anyway. I am still getting a UAI, and I do have enough subjects to get into university, but this is just an extra course that I think would give me a head start into the industry.

**Ms Bauer**—It is not unusual for our students who have taken a vocational focus in a subject which does not provide them with a UAI to take extra subjects. They might have, for example, 14 or 15 units in year 11 so that they have sufficient units to qualify for a UAI, as well as doing that vocational course that they were so keen on doing.

**Mr SAWFORD**—This question is to you, Janina. Is the scheduling here done on a weekly basis, fortnightly, or what?

**Ms Bauer**—It is on a weekly basis.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Could a couple of the students run us through their week. How many hours do you do, and what sorts of things do you do, Monday to Friday?

**Ms White**—I have four two-hour classes on a Monday, going from 8.30 through till six. On a Tuesday I have—

**Mr ALBANESE**—What sorts of subjects are they? It would be really useful for us to get the detail.

**Ms White**—I will run through the subjects I have. I have maths first off, then I go to English, then to business studies and then to ancient history. On a Tuesday, because I have finished my industry placement now, I am working in paid work. On a Wednesday I start at 8.30 and have retail—my TAFE course—first in the morning, for four hours. That takes me through to one o'clock. Then I have maths in the afternoon, till 3.45. On a Thursday, in the morning I have business studies from 8.30 to 10.30. I have a break from 10.30 till four o'clock, which can get a bit much but now I am doing HSC it gives me a lot of time to do my assessments and that kind of thing, so I am not stuck with them at home all the time. Then, in the afternoon, I have English from four till six. Then on a Friday I do not start till 11. I have a class from 11 to one, ancient history. So I find that, even though there are long days, it does balance out because of having Tuesday doing what I like—I choose to work on a Tuesday—and Friday afternoon off. I find it balances out.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What happens on the Mondays with holidays throughout the year? Does that get replaced, or do you just miss it?

**Ms White**—If there are Monday public holidays, that just get missed. It gets cut out.

**Mr Plumb**—On a Monday I have an 11 till one o'clock class of English advanced. On Tuesdays I have an 8.30 till 10.30 class of English extension II, after which I go to work experience. That is where I will be going today after this. On Wednesdays I have an 8.30 till one o'clock class of information technology vocational. On Thursdays I have a 1.45 till 3.45 class of extension I English, and after that I have a four o'clock till six o'clock class of English advanced. I have the Fridays timetabled off, so I have no classes. But it usually ends up going towards study or something.

**Ms Purcell**—On a Monday I start school at 8.30 and have a two-hour class of maths, and then from 11 to one I have two hours of English. Tuesday I have off, because I have finished all my industry training. On a Wednesday I am here from 8.30 to six o'clock with the big four-hour start of tourism. That is the only tourism class for the week. I have two hours of maths after that, and two hours of modern history in the afternoon-early evening. Thursday I start at 11 and have biology till one o'clock, with a three-hour break until my next class, English, which is from four to six. On Friday I am at school from 8.30 to 10.30 for modern history and from a quarter to two to a quarter to four for biology, in the afternoon. I find that, as Julia said, it all balances out and works well together.

**Mr Harvey**—I am a Pathway student at Bradfield College, East Sydney. I am currently studying HSC subjects and a certificate in fashion design. I study English on Monday mornings. I study design fundamentals on Wednesday afternoons from 8.30 to 1 o'clock. I also do work studies. When there is a scheduled class, it is on a Tuesday, but the hours for that subject are accumulated in the workplace. Those are my three Board of Studies classes which I study this year. I will be completing my HSC next year.

**Ms Wade**—My timetable is a bit different because I do not do English at this school; I do it at North Sydney TAFE. On Mondays, I do maths—two-unit general—from 11 o'clock to one. I have art from 1.45 to 3.45, then I finish. I have Tuesdays off because I have finished all my hours. On Wednesdays, I go from 8.30 to one o'clock doing art, then I do biology from 11 o'clock to one and then I finish. I then do English from six o'clock till 10. On Thursdays, I go from 8.30 to one o'clock doing hospitality—commercial cookery—and from four to six doing maths. On Fridays, I do not start till 1.45. I do biology till 3.45, then that is it.

**Ms Thomas**—On Mondays, I start at 8.30 with English till 10.30, then maths from 11 to one. On Tuesdays, I do my work placement. On Wednesdays, I start at 11 with food technology, and I have English from 1.45 to 3.45. I then have IPT from four o'clock to six o'clock. Then on Thursdays, I start at 8.30 with commercial cookery at Crows Nest TAFE. That finishes between 12.30 and one o'clock-ish. I have a three-hour break and then I come back here at four o'clock for maths. On Fridays, I have IPT from 8.30 till 10.30, then a three-hour break. At 1.45, I have food technology. I finish at 3.45 on Fridays.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—I have two questions. The first question relates to the two-hour classes. Do you find it hard to concentrate for that long, especially when you are doing the more difficult subjects? The second question relates to the few of you who are doing subjects at different campuses, different TAFEs, high schools and so on. Do you make friends here or do you feel you are always running to other places? Do you feel as though you have a strong bond with the other students here?

**Mr Sargeant**—With respect to the first question, at first it was hard to get used to the two-hour classes. We do get a break every hour for five or 10 minutes. We only have three to four classes a day, whereas most other schools have six or seven, so it evens out.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—So it is not too bad?

**Mr Sargeant**—It is not too bad.

**Ms Goldberg**—I find, too, that because the classes are longer it means that we do not have as many different subjects per day. We get to focus on certain subjects, and that gives us more time to catch up on the work. If we have longer classes, we do not have to stress ourselves out about having huge loads of work, getting to bed really late and being tired for next day's classes.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—Do you mean that because you have English for two hours, you are not going to have it again until the following Wednesday, or whenever, so you will have more time to do your homework? It means that you do not have eight lots of homework every night for the eight subjects the next day. Is that what you mean?

**Ms Goldberg**—Yes. It also means that you can put more effort into the homework instead of rushing it to hand it in.

**Mrs MAY**—Most of you have also talked about having two- and three-hour breaks; would you stay here on campus and use the resources here to do your assignments so that you do not have to take them home? Do you see the three hours that you have being utilised or being wasted? It is probably too far to go home. How do you fill in that three hours?

**Mr Seargeant**—Pool tables.

**Mrs MAY**—Pool tables and ping-pong.

**Ms Purcell**—I have two breaks during the week, both of three hours, and I will go to the learning centre where there is a free tutorial and the teachers help me with my subjects. There is Internet access as well in the library or the learning centre so I do do my work. I have to travel for an hour and a half each day so I do stay at college and I do catch up on my study.

**Mrs MAY**—Do you have to pay for Internet access?

**Ms Purcell**—No, we do not.

**Ms White**—On a Thursday I have a 5½-hour break which can be a bit daunting sometimes. After my first class I might go out for an hour or two, go and get some lunch or go into the city, but generally I will come back, do two to three hours and get all my work and assessments done. I can pretty much get it all done at school. I do extra at home but the raw minimum I can get done at school in that break. I find it very beneficial.

**Mr SAWFORD**—This is following on from what Tahnee was saying about making friends here. One of the great strengths of vocational education 30-odd years ago was that often the institutions had opportunities for extracurricular activities that were non-examinable. For example, sometimes the best swimmers, debating teams and art appreciation classes came from those schools. Do you have any extracurricular activities here that are organised by Bradfield College and, if so, what are they and are you involved?

**Ms Thomas**—I know that Bradfield puts on basketball for the boys but then the girls can also do cheerleading and go and cheer them on and stuff like that. I did the cheerleading. It was a bit of fun. You get to know a variety of people because both years 11 and 12 do the basketball. I know they do that but I am not sure about anything else. I want to go back to your question about making friends. I go to Crows Nest TAFE to do my cookery but all my friends are here. I make all my friends here. I do not have anyone that doesn't go to Bradfield that I am friends with at Crows Nest TAFE because there is a class of us that go from Bradfield to there so it is not really mixed over there.

**CHAIR**—How do you think the system could be improved? It sounds like it works fairly well. Your HSC studies fit in well with your vocational work. Can you see any ways that you think the system could work better?



**Ms Goldberg**—I heard that there was a new entertainment course that they were bringing out that actually counted towards the UAI. I heard that it was about ushering and make-up. Because of the work that we have done in our entertainment course, which was the first one and not a UAI one, we have really learned some very valuable stuff and very practical skills. We have learned how to edit films and acting skills as well. We have learned how to write for radio, theatre and film. I think that I have done as much work, if not more and definitely more useful stuff that I would use in later life in my vocational course than in some of my other subjects. I think that for the work and effort that we put into the course it would be good if it was counted as a UAI subject. It seems to be that we are doing work that is as important as the other entertainment course. I know some of my friends could be getting a UAI if that course was counted as UAI whereas they cannot now.

**CHAIR**—Are there any other suggestions or ideas?

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is there a lot of work and no play in Bradfield?

**Ms White**—We do have a lot of time on our hands. We get to choose how we would like to use that time. I think some people use it more wisely than others do. The main thing at Bradfield is that we are not pushed to do that work. It is up to us to do it. We are not slapped on the wrist if we do not go to class. It is all put on us and that is what motivates a lot of people to go to class because if you do not go, you are only hurting yourself. There is a lot of leniency here and the HSC is not put on us as the end of everything. At my old school they put a lot of pressure on you. At Bradfield there is not as much pressure. They do tell you how important it is but it is not the end of everything. It is really up to you. So it does give you a lot of time if you want to sit out with your friends and have a talk. We do get a bit of leisure time, yes.

**Ms Purcell**—I have not found there to be any real problems with the industry training course and my study here for the HSC. Maybe that is because at my previous high school I did not have this option, so I feel that it works well. Perhaps if I was still at my old school I would think that that system was not working so well.

**Mr Harvey**—Could I just say something regarding the HSC here at Bradfield and the value that they place on it. It is really to do with the industry training. Bradfield College does value the HSC but it is also seen as a stepping stone into other career paths as well. I can give examples of two past students who went ahead without the HSC. A work placement contact of mine, a friend at Wayne Cooper, Belinda Cowell, went to this school during year 11 and she did industry training with Wayne Cooper. She did not go on to complete year 12 but she attained a position with him in fashion management, which is a career path she would like to pursue.

I am in a similar situation, where I did a medal certificate last year and was since encouraged to apply for the certificate IV in fashion design at East Sydney, which is a full-time course. That is why I am doing Pathways and working HSC subjects around that course. I have always wanted to get into fashion design. Although with Pathways at this school it is flexible, I am keeping my options open so I can accumulate a UAI next year and possibly go to UTS to do visual design, which is another career path I would like to pursue. Right now I am interested in fashion design. It is interesting, because they will encourage you—the HSC is not the be-all and end-all here; they see it as a stepping stone to go to bigger and better things.

Another past student did work experience with an apprentice chef at the Rockpool restaurant at the Opera House, an international chef, and since then he has gone on to work overseas, in America, with renowned chefs there. So they value the HSC but coming here broadens your options as to the opportunities that you have.

**Ms Wade**—I think Bradfield makes us open our eyes to see what we can actually do and achieve outside. We realise that there are so many options out there; the world is not this little box that we live in. I have noticed that there are so many places where I can go and do so many things; I can go and see as well this workplace and that. Meeting different people is a lot harder than I thought it was. I thought it would be easy just to go up to someone and say, ‘Hi,’ but it is a lot harder, especially in the hospitality industry, because you are constantly meeting so many different people. There are always different people every day. You do not see the same people—sometimes you might, but that is once a week at most. It is always different. It broadens your horizons and makes you realise that life is not all so easy.

**Mr SAWFORD**—One last question: are there any non-assessed activities that are planned by Bradfield? For example, if you were doing hospitality and you were interested in photography, could you do it here as an activity, rather than as an assessed part of a subject? If you cannot, would you like to? One of the vocational schools I went to actually had stand-up comedy as an activity. It was very popular. A lot of people got a lot of confidence out of it, and a lot of entertainment as well. It was a very popular course. People did photography; people who were doing IT wanted to do something about cooking. Can you do that here? If you were doing IT, would you do—

**Ms Bauer**—You could take a course—

**Mr SAWFORD**—As a non-assessed activity?

**Ms Bauer**—No. It would be a one-unit subject. If you wanted to do photography as well as commercial cookery, for example, you would then have to select a one-unit course which is photography. Then that would be delivered and assessed in the usual way for a one-unit subject. But in terms of other activities that are in the college, an example is Lunchbox, which the entertainment staff put on and which invites students to be involved—I do not know all the details of that but some of you might be involved in that. There are a whole range of activities that occur on an impromptu basis around the college. So, in terms of socialising and also developing other skills, there are opportunities for students, but not to quite the extent that I think you are suggesting.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I ask this question about all work and no play quite seriously. It seems to me that this a very serious place and maybe you need to lighten up a bit. There needs to be some other activities. That is just my impression. I guess you could say that about us as well.

**Mr ALBANESE**—If there was one thing you could fix about the way that the system worked, either the way that you entered into it or a course here or what have you, what could you suggest to us that would be a good idea to help not necessarily yourselves but younger people coming through? It can’t be perfect!

**CHAIR**—You have stumped them. It must work perfectly.

**Ms Bauer**—In response to Rod’s suggestion that it is all work and no play here, if you were here at the college for even a short while then you would soon understand that that is not quite the case. Even at information evenings when we have presentations to prospective students and their parents one of the features that our presenter Ross Yates makes known to all involved is that learning is fun. I think some of that underpins what Bradfield is about: that there has to be an element of fun to motivate people. A past student coined the statement that the Bradfield College barbecues are held for no reason at all. These are held from time to time and everybody participates. That kind of establishes the sort of tone that Bradfield College would like the students to participate in and that we would like other people to understand that we have. There is fun here.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for your time. Your evidence has been very helpful in giving us an idea of how it all works. Good luck with your studies this year and in your future careers, whatever they might be.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.32 a.m. to 10.56 a.m.**

**BAUER, Ms Janina, Manager, Industry Training, Bradfield College**

**HYAM, Mr Michael, Director, Bradfield College**

**ROBERTS, Ms Sharon Lee, Acting Assistant Director, Bradfield College**

**WHITE, Mr Paul Richard, Assistant Director, Bradfield College**

**CHAIR**—I reiterate our thanks for your time and for hosting us today. The last session with the students was very informative. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but should you wish to give any of your evidence in private then you may request that of the committee and we will consider your request. I invite you to make an opening statement; then we will proceed to questions.

**Mr Hyam**—I welcome you formally and officially to Bradfield College. It is a pleasure to have you here. We will give you some background and context to what Bradfield College is about. We have given you a folder containing information you may want to look at in the future. Bradfield College is celebrating its 10th year this year. It began in 1993 and, we are not ashamed to say, it began as a political initiative in New South Wales. It had its origins in the fact that the school over the road, which was Crows Nest Boys, a non-selective boys high school, had falling numbers. The government of the day decided that that school would be closed. It was refurbished and North Sydney Girls, which was on this site, moved over there. That left the site of North Sydney Girls vacant.

At the same time, although I was not personally involved, there was a growing sense that vocational education and training was a way of inserting into the curriculum of years 11 and 12 a renewed sense of vigour and excitement and a new challenge for students. That came about. It was decided that Bradfield College would try a completely new and different model, and that model is the model we are working on now. Bradfield College began as a TAFE college and a school, so our students have, for example, access to free travel, which, in NSW, is only available for schools, not TAFE colleges. But, as a sense of how that bridge occurs, it is a school in many ways. Our students enrol in TAFE and use the TAFE enrolment process. For all administrative purposes, we are managed by the Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE. We are one of its seven colleges.

Our ethos is still very much about vocational education and training. It began that way seven years ago, and it is still very much that way, although clearly things have changed in our community. There is a sense that local schools are now much more involved in vocational education and training themselves. As a result of that, fewer students want to come to Bradfield specifically to do vocational education and training. We still do it differently and very well, and we will point out to you shortly how we do it differently. A lot of students still want to come here. We fill up each year, but the demand for vocational education and training is not as strong as it has been in previous years, simply because other schools are more involved in it.

Students come to Bradfield College for a variety of reasons. As you have seen, it is a college that has no uniforms and has a very different way of operating. It is a place where students are treated as young adults. We get to follow a disciplinary code which is very different to that in

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other schools, and we rely very much on the personal connection between students and teachers and the personal connection between students and workplace employers. It is a college where students can get a lot of support. Our clinical psychologists who work in the college are very good. They work very hard and case manage a huge workload with our students.

Some of the information in your pack points out the sorts of surveys that we do with our students and the sorts of learning difficulties that they have. We would have by far the largest number of special provisions students in the New South Wales HSC—that is, students who have learning difficulties and require support for the actual exam. We would have more special provisions than any other school in New South Wales—again, because students have a sense that they come to us, they can get support and they can work towards their HSC in a completely different atmosphere.

I think our enrolments at the moment are around the 700 mark, but they are TAFE enrolments; they are not students. A student can actually enrol in two courses. For example, they can enrol in retail as well as the HSC—two different courses, same student. We also attract over 100 students from neighbouring schools who come here for just one subject. They may come here for information technology, society and culture or whatever. Because of the way we structure our timetable, we can provide courses for other schools which those other schools cannot provide.

We fill up fairly well. We have the equivalent of around 400 students—full-time equivalents. The students are very keen to come here. We have a selection process. We try to make sure that the only selection process we have is an interview, where we try to ensure that the students who are putting their hands up to do vocational education and training understand what it is and understand what is involved. We also try to make sure that the students have a commitment to learning. We are not particularly worried about what their learning difficulties are or what their background is, but we are particularly concerned about how we can work with them to achieve their outcomes. The outcome for many students is the HSC, or simply to receive some support to get them through the next couple of years. Many of our students, for example, will do the HSC over two, three or even four years—in fact, in some cases, five years. We have an organisational set-up that can facilitate that. Many of our students can do year 11 work as well as year 12 work. That is very difficult to do in a normal high school with a normal timetable, but at our place we can do that.

We have no uniforms, teachers are called by their first names, we have a very flexible structure, and we are trying to ensure that students are supported. From speaking to our students, we believe that they feel as if they are valued and they feel as if they can come to Bradfield and leave their past behind. Second chance of re-entry is still a big issue for us. For example, this year we have in our year 11 group over 30 students who do not have a school certificate. In New South Wales, you cannot do year 11 unless you have a school certificate. But the Board of Studies has a provision that says that they can be offered provisional enrolment and demonstrate that they can work to achieve the outcomes of the course. We are giving, as we do each year, a large number of students that opportunity. Not all of those students will actually manage to do that, but a large number of them do—and we are very happy to provide that opportunity. So, again, a student will get an opportunity at Bradfield that they would not normally get anywhere else.

Our curriculum contains the broad range of about 30 subjects of HSC typical Board of Studies subjects as well as the 10 vocational courses, or 11 depending on demand. We weld that together into a package of curriculum that our students then engage in. We do that in four days. We have an 8.30 a.m. start and a 6.00 p.m. finish, because we need to leave one day free for work placement. The whole basis of workplace learning is that it is contextual learning. As many of you saw this morning, they do their work in the classroom—a four-hour block of retail, tourism, hospitality or whatever—and the next day they are out in the workplace on a weekly basis contextualising that and putting into practice the concepts that they have learned. That is very important to us. So there is an 8.30 a.m. start and a 6.00 p.m. finish. Of course not all students will have those start and finish times; it will vary depending on how they are going.

Broadly speaking, it is what we would call a school of opportunity. We try to encourage enterprise learning. We certainly value vocational education and training but, more importantly I think, we understand the importance of contextualising that learning and developing networks in the community. As a broad overview I think that will suffice. We can move on to other things if you have any questions.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Michael, the genesis of this college fascinates me. It is a one-off, it began 10 years ago and it looks highly successful. You mentioned a political initiative prior to its being set up in 1993, but there has to be more to it than that. Was there someone in TAFE or in the education department? What was the response of the teachers union? There has to be more to the genesis than just a politician. As politicians, we know that. What was the other genesis of it?

**Mr Hyam**—I was not around—others were—and I would be loath to get into our perceptions of the politics of the time. My understanding is that it was a combination of factors: an available site, a real push towards introducing vocational education and training into the curriculum of schools—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Where did that push come from?

**Mr Hyam**—It was part of a community move at the time but also certainly a political move as it eventuated. When I was working in vocational education and training 10 years ago, it was only just starting—there were a few thousand students. Most VET training was done through TAFE colleges as the old joint secondary schools-TAFE program, now TVET. This was a real push to get it embedded into the curriculum. It was also a push to make sure that schools were not necessarily seen as streamed into academic and vocational. It was a way of integrating the curriculum in one place, and I think that has been very successful. I think it was a child of its time—it was a set of circumstances around at the time.

It also had its own industrial award, and our full-time teaching staff still operate under their own industrial award which sits outside the awards for all the other TAFE teachers and schoolteachers in New South Wales. My own opinion is that that would probably be almost impossible to replicate in the current climate. I do not see any enthusiasm from anybody, including the Teachers Federation, about replicating that process. That does not mean that Bradfield could not survive without that industrial award. It might be difficult, because of our working hours and holidays and how we arrange things during the holidays, but I think it could still work without the industrial award.

Going back to your original question, I think it was a child of its time and it has been very good. Why hasn't it been replicated? There are probably a whole lot of reasons, but certainly the concept of the senior college is now well and truly out there in New South Wales—in fact, when we were at a conference in Dubbo last year I think we found that there were 20-plus senior colleges in New South Wales.

**Mrs MAY**—Michael, you were talking about your industrial award. Without getting into all the nitty-gritty of it, could you expand on what conditions the teachers do work under? We are talking here about a school that is open from 8.30 a.m. until six at night.

**Mr Hyam**—In fact it is longer—10 o'clock.

**Mrs MAY**—How are the teachers slotted into those working hours? What does happen during holiday periods? Is someone here all 12 months of the year? If you have students here at those times of the day, you obviously need teaching staff here. Can you expand on how that award has worked?

**Mr Hyam**—I will ask Paul to do that, because Paul has a background in that area.

**Mr White**—What was negotiated in 1993 was an enterprise agreement; in the last two renewals it has changed to a consent award. There are specific aspects built into that consent award which were seen at the time as being crucial to the running of a vocational college. The teachers who came to work here largely came from the comprehensive high schools and had to agree, or were happy to agree, to some of those particular conditions. One was a recognition that, as a vocational college, we did not want to be teaching our students one thing about private enterprise or work or whatever whilst we had teachers on 12 weeks of holiday a year. That would be inconsistent. So one of the conditions we agreed to in the consent award was that teachers here have four weeks holiday a year but, like the conventional work force, we can take that leave at pretty much any time we like, even during teaching time.

Technically, the consent award says that the college is open from 7.30 a.m. to 10 p.m. and from 8.30 a.m. and midday on Saturdays. We have never scheduled classes on a Saturday, but that flexibility is there. There is a different pay scale for the teachers here in recognition of the fact that our conditions are different from those of other teachers. Another really crucial aspect of that consent award is that we recognise that Bradfield is quite different from any other place and, as with schools that have special needs, we have a clause in our contract which says that every teacher who comes to Bradfield College is merit selected. There is no teacher—

**Mr SAWFORD**—How is that conducted?

**Mr White**—It is advertised in the newspaper. Teachers from the public teaching system, or from private schools, or maybe people who have been outside the teaching system for some time, can apply in a true merit selection. Again, we go back to the vocational aspect of this place.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Who judges the merit?

**Mr White**—A selection panel is formed under TAFE regulations. The panel usually comprises three people—one from the college, someone from the industry and an independent—in the same way that every other selection process—

**Mr SAWFORD**—So there is no departmental person?

**Mr White**—There could be, but not necessarily.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is a teachers union person present?

**Mr White**—No. But again, bearing in mind the vocational nature of this place, without excluding anybody, we did not necessarily want a staff of teachers who had been to school, been to university and gone back to school. In fact, one of the criteria that we look at in terms of appointing teachers here is their knowledge of post-compulsory education. The fact that they may have some experience in an industry outside a school is perhaps an important aspect of working in a vocational college. The industrial award recognises some of those unique aspects of the college and tries to address them. As Michael said, I doubt very much whether either party—the employer or the union—would be interested in negotiating a separate award for what is only 30 or 40 teachers.

**Mrs MAY**—Do you have trouble attracting teachers if there is a vacancy or are you run down in the rush?

**Mr White**—It varies according to the subject. If you want to attract IT people or maths and science people I think there is a dearth of teachers in that area across the state. It depends on the subject. But we normally do not have a problem appointing good people to the place.

**Mrs MAY**—Are your hours flexible, or is it a 35-hour or 40-hour week?

**Mr White**—The award states that classroom teachers have 20 hours of face-to-face teaching a week. They are required to be in attendance for an extra 10 hours—so that is 30 hours—and there is an assumed five hours of home preparation, which has been a decision made by the industrial commission. However, once again, working on the basis of flexibility, within our consent award we recognise that teachers are professionals so we have flexitime over a 12-week period. A teacher must be in attendance for 360 hours over 12 weeks. Consequently, when the non-teaching time rolls around and there are no classes, if teachers have got through the job and have documented their 360 hours of attendance, in the non-teaching period they can have a few days off—they are not expected to be here. It is a very flexible arrangement and it truly recognises teachers as being the professionals they are. I do not think we could point to one instance of any sort of abuse of that system, partly because teachers understand that they are being treated as professionals.

**Mrs MAY**—What number of full-time versus part-time teachers do you have?

**Mr White**—It is approximately fifty-fifty. We probably have slightly more full-time teachers than part-time teachers at the moment.



**Mr Hyam**—To answer the component of your question about after hours and weekends, last Saturday, for example, our information technology teachers were here running workshops around mechanical Lego and the computerised driving of machinery. That was a Saturday workshop and the pictures are up on the TV screens celebrating the fact that the kids did that. At night, we have two TAFE courses running three nights a week through to 10 p.m., and during the holidays we run tutorial workshops, particularly in preparation for the HSC. This year we are also running some summer school type workshops for HSC students from neighbouring schools.

**Mrs MAY**—So students have terms or semesters, but the teaching staff do not.

**Mr Hyam**—That is right.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Just on a point of clarification, when Paul was explaining about the appointment of staff, does the same process apply to senior staff and to you as college director?

**Mr Hyam**—Absolutely. We have all been through the DET or the TAFE selection processes, which are well organised and documented. I do not fit into this award; I fit into the TAFE directors award. But these guys here all fit into this award and they have all been merit selected from a panel. There are rules around how a panel is formed, the same rules that all DET panels follow.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So your substantive position is equivalent to that of any director of TAFE?

**Mr Hyam**—Yes. The TAFE directors award has five levels, and I am on one of those levels.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—I just wanted to check something. You said that the pay scale is a little different from the normal TAFE award. I hope you are getting paid more for losing your 12-week holiday.

**Ms Roberts**—Not much.

**Mr White**—The term ‘bracket creep’ also applies to Bradfield College—as well as the tax system. We have lost some of the differential over the years. I do not think that is the fundamental reason for teachers being here. In fact, over the past 10 years I can remember perhaps two or three teachers who have actually gone back to the conventional high schools. Teachers do move on—they go into private industry or whatever—but very few actually go back to the conventional system. In the same way that students find the liberal environment liberating, I think teachers also enjoy that environment.

One thing I did not mention about the consent award, however, is that none of us except for Michael have permanent positions. We are appointed on three-year contracts, which to all intents and purposes are renewable, but we are not permanent members of TAFE. My substantive position is as a classroom teacher in what was the old NSW Department of School Education. If Bradfield ceased to exist tomorrow, having been a deputy principal, I would go back to the classroom, probably out at Fairfield High School.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—Some of your classes finish at 10 o'clock at night. You do not find that a safety issue for the students? Are they worried about leaving here at 10 o'clock at night?

**Ms Roberts**—We have a contingent of older students who come. We call them stand-alone students. These people come from six until 10 o'clock at night to do a TAFE course—for example, a theatre course that we run. By and large, these students are older students. They would be between 19 and 21 years old. This course is taught by practitioners, not by a classroom teacher. The theatre course would be taught by a number of part-time acting teachers or people who are industry based. The courses that run late at night are for older students who just come here to do a TAFE course.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—We were talking a little earlier about how the move to get vocational education into schools was accompanied by a desire not to have vocational education traded as a second-best thing for kids who are not bright enough to go to university. Do you feel that your kids see vocational education as equal to the academic studies that they are also doing, or do you think they see it as an easy option?

**Mr Hyam**—One thing we have been very good at doing here is demystifying the university admission index, the UAI. For our students in a cohort sense, it is not a case of 'One in, all in: everyone must get a UAI.' Paul could tell us the numbers, but probably at least half of our students actually say, 'I do not want a UAI.' Therefore, when they do their subject selection and package their curriculum up, they discount themselves from getting a UAI, because of the rules involved. We have taken the UAI out as a factor. That is No. 1.

Number 2 is that, in terms of the academic achievers, the spread of students who actually do vocational education is quite equal. We have students—who are doing, for example, design or media and performance—doing 14 units, which is a massive workload in year 11, because they want a UAI yet they value vocational education and training as well. Particularly because the pathway from schools and TAFE into universities is well established through credit transfers, it is not uncommon for a student, say, doing design or media and performance to actually get credits into a university course. Sharon, do you have a recent example of that? Did we have one the other day concerning a university in Wagga?

**Ms Roberts**—A student who had done the media and performance course—which is a media course that looks at radio, television and theatre—was not doing a UAI. We were a bit concerned that this person may want to go and do something at university. They then came back and said, 'I was actually accepted at Wagga on audition and on interview.'

I think, too, that we are developing and have developed a good reputation in some areas, particularly the entertainment and music area. Our students have to audition to be accepted into that course. It is quite a feather in their cap to actually be coming here to do it. They see the course they are doing as being what they may want to go into. There is no stigma attached to it.

**Mr White**—In terms of that demystification of vocational education, I think there are a couple of things operating that you might be interested in. One is that in many respects we are a known quantity as a vocational educator. Interestingly—I have not done the statistics this year—for the last few years, approximately 35 per cent to 40 per cent of our students came from private schools. In that respect, we tend to reverse the general trend. Anecdotally what we are hearing is that private schools that are very much academically focused do undervalue

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vocational education. There is not necessarily a very strong push for vocational education in school so some of the students self-select. They come because we are a known quantity.

Michael also mentioned that we have stronger competition from comprehensive high schools, which are integrating vocational education more and more into the syllabus. As a school that has to win every student we get in year 11, we have to move to address the market—as any business would, if you want to see us in a business sense. We accept that there are more and more students who want to come to Bradfield who do not necessarily come here to do a specific TAFE course as part of the vocational education. We admit those students. Overwhelmingly, those sorts of students may not necessarily take a vocational TAFE certificate. But the overwhelming majority do take on work studies, which are the industry placement.

The other thing we do is try and demystify vocational education by asserting very strongly that every subject has a vocational focus. In fact, students who are not doing design, IT or whatever are termed ‘general vocational’ kids. We try where possible to stress the idea that, if you are doing ancient history, for example, which involves research and presentations, they are all the sorts of skills that you would need in the workplace. Rather than being precious about what falls into vocational education, we see all education as vocational and refer to the students as general vocational students, design students or IT students. With that sort of atmosphere around the place, it does demystify and destigmatise the understanding they may have of vocational education in the private system.

**Mr ALBANESE**—When we went round the room before and a number of the students went through their day, there seemed a great variation. We did not want to grill the students. But there seemed a great variation. Some of them were clearly doing a lot of conventional subjects as well. But there were a couple of people who that did not seem to be the case for. I guess a potential weakness in the system that I can see concerns someone who comes here, who wants to do design or what have you, and who does that but does not pick up enough of the conventional, if you like, HSC subjects and then decides they do not like design. Given the age at which they are choosing to come here—you are talking 15- and 16-year-olds—how do you ensure that they are not behind the eight ball in terms of the fact that they have chosen a vocation very early without getting that broader educational aspect with it? Is that a problem for you?

**Mr Hyam**—No, I do not see it as a problem. We certainly have students who start off on a particular vocational path and then want to change their mind, which is absolutely fine, because we are fairly good at working within the boundaries of the rules of the Board of Studies who run the HSC in New South Wales. It is around the number of units that they choose. We would work to ensure that every student has enough units to cover those issues.

**Mr ALBANESE**—But do all students here get the HSC?

**Mr Hyam**—All students come here to get an HSC, but they may not complete or they may end up with the job. They may decide to leave to take up employment or they may decide to leave to go to a TAFE college, because they like design so much that they want to go to one of our sister TAFEs to do design. That flexibility to move in and out of the system is really a positive; we do not see it is a negative at all. In fact, it works in the students’ favour.

**Mr ALBANESE**—But isn't it an objective that, when a student rocks up in January or February, they get their HSC at the end? Is that one of the things that the career—

**Mr Hyam**—Certainly, that is how we market ourselves. The outcome is for a student to get their HSC. But underpinning that are all sorts of layers which are really positive. One of the things we do not want to do is only have that one outcome, because that is how you set a student up for failure. If all a student ever wants is a HSC and a UAI, if there is nothing else under that, I think you have real problems. If you have things underneath that, for example, a TAFE certificate, you are much better off. At our presentation night we would have 200 students on stage who are getting their HSC—fantastic—but, equally, we would have another 200 students, many of whom are the same, who are getting their TAFE certificate. It is a dual graduation. To us that is as equal a celebration as the HSC.

**CHAIR**—I have a couple of questions on your work placements. How many workplace coordinators do you have?

**Mr Hyam**—Janina is our manager of that area, but working with Janina are a range of part-time and full-time teachers who are supervisors and teachers of issues to do with work placements. For example, the introduction to work placement is a seven-week off-job training of two hours per week. In that seven to eight weeks we would be going through a whole lot of issues about how you work in a workplace, work as part of a team, OH&S issues—that really important prep work for getting students out into the workplace. As well as that, we cover a whole lot of issues around curriculum vitae building, cold-call canvassing, how you approach employers, the writing of resumes and things like that.

**CHAIR**—Are those teachers responsible for visiting and supervising in the workplace?

**Mr Hyam**—Yes. Normally you would form a team. A teacher would work with that group of students off-job in the first term; in the second, third and fourth terms, that teacher would be out there supervising those students. The model we tend to use more than anything here is an enhancement model as opposed to an actual 'competency delivered in the workplace' model. The enhancement model for us is practising those competencies and not necessarily an absolute training of those competencies on the job. In many cases, we are not asking employers to deliver those competencies on the job to assess students through a formal assessment process; we deliver most of those off-job here in the classroom and we practise them in the workplace. When you speak with employers, I dare say you will get a view on that.

**CHAIR**—Are your teachers in specific vocational courses—say, hospitality and IT—involved in supervision and visitation in the workplace as well?

**Mr Hyam**—No, not necessarily. Not on a day-to-day basis, although the person who is involved in supervising that group of students would work very closely with the teacher of that group of students.

**CHAIR**—Sure. Some of the submissions we have had from teachers unions and from some schools have said that the work studies coordinators—the work placement coordinators—suffer a very rapid rate of burnout because of the stress, the lack of time release from classes, the difficulty actually organising work placements, the supporting et cetera. Is that the case here? From what Paul said, it does not seem to be.

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**Mr Hyam**—No, we have a different model. If we relied on that model to deliver the supervision, find the work placements and send out 420 students on work placement, I think we would be in trouble. Clearly one of the reasons why you are probably not going to get another Bradfield in the true sense—and it goes back to some of the other questions you had about the model—is the cost. Our dollars per ASCH is quite high here—around \$13 per ASCH. That is equivalent to the most expensive delivery at any TAFE college in Australia. Hospitality is certainly the most expensive TAFE course to deliver, and those that deliver it do that for about \$13 per ASCH. Our price per hour is quite high. It is quite high because we use our budget. I have responsibility for our budget. I get to decide, in consultation, how we are going to spend our budget, including our salary component. If we want to hire more teachers to do workplace supervision, we will; if we do not, we will not. We actually get to make those decisions, and that is one of the reasons why our dollar delivery per ASCH is quite high.

**CHAIR**—I think you said that 100 students come in from other schools to do courses here. Do you charge them for that? How does that work?

**Mr Hyam**—They enrol as TAFE students. The New South Wales TAFE administration charge at the moment is \$260, and they would pay that.

**CHAIR**—That is for the year for the course?

**Mr Hyam**—Yes, that is for the year.

**CHAIR**—Is it the same regardless of whether they are from a public school or a private school?

**Mr Hyam**—Exactly the same. It is the same at any TAFE college in New South Wales for a certificate II course. Even if they are doing 10 of their units back at their own school and two units here with us—in society and culture, say, or business studies—they would still enrol as a TAFE student and pay that TAFE administration charge.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I have two questions, one seeking some information and one asking for an opinion. Where were you prior to coming to Bradfield? What were you doing?

**Ms Bauer**—I was a teacher in the education department system about 10 years ago. I left that and was involved in a TRAC program, which was a vocational education and work placement program. From that I came to Bradfield College.

**Ms Roberts**—I was head teacher of English at Belmore Boys and left that to take up a position at the Sydney Stock Exchange, where I was a training and development officer. Then I spent a year at a private school and then I came to Bradfield College.

**Mr White**—I came to teaching reasonably late. I spent probably 15 years working in multinational companies. At one stage I was the national credit manager at Honeywell Bull for Australia and the Pacific. I began teaching late and came directly here from Fairfield High School. I started on the first day that Bradfield opened.

**Mr Hyam**—My background is as a teacher in schools, although I have not taught in schools since the early 1980s. I left teaching and owned a retail business. When I came back into teaching from retail, I developed retail training programs for students. I worked for four years as the ASTF—which is now the ECEF—coordinator for workplace learning programs in Victoria and Tasmania. I was appointed as a deputy director here never having held a promotions position in a school, which I think is very unusual. It is the sort of place where you could actually get appointed to an assistant director or director position without having trodden the boards of the traditional pathway.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Here is the loaded part. In the Australian secondary education structure we have a comprehensive high school system, in the main, and a private system. Can vocational education really succeed in those models?

**Mr Hyam**—My opinion is that it absolutely depends on the culture of the school and its drive and enthusiasm, on the community and on the employers. If you can bring all of those players together and develop a sense of what vocational education is about in terms of a young person's education in the real sense—the development of lifelong learning—I think it can work in any system. I have seen lots of examples where it has worked in a range of systems—particularly in Tasmania with their senior college set-up, although Victoria has some classic examples.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The question was about the comprehensive high school system, not senior colleges. So exclude senior colleges from your answer for the moment.

**Mr Hyam**—The best examples I have seen are in comprehensive high schools in rural Victoria where there is a real sense of community in a regional setting. If you can get that real sense of community and get buy-in from employers and from the community, and you value lifelong learning and you value the place of vocational education and training in lifelong learning, you have got it sold. There are lots of really good examples of that, particularly in regional Australia. When you get into the urban areas, that sense of community is very difficult to actually manage and get going. We rely on our employers to buy into that big time and, even though they may not realise what their part in that is, I think that is certainly the key to it. That is an opinion.

**Ms Bauer**—I think the incentive is also from the other direction, in that the vocational courses now have a UAI component, so it becomes much more attractive to students to undertake these courses, and there are more courses coming on board as they are being developed. There is a drive then from the other angle where there is a demand from the student populations. I know that 10 years ago the only vocational course that a school would be offering was hospitality. That has expanded quite remarkably; now you have half-a-dozen or more vocational courses throughout the state in comprehensive high schools. To a large degree, I think they are very successful in that area. They do not have quite the range that Bradfield has, which is why we have students coming here, but certainly that inroad has been made to a large extent.

**Mr White**—I think another crucial aspect to making vocational education work is to ensure that the funding from governments recognises some of the difficulties in vocational education. I suppose the most important is the cost of setting up the resources. Hospitality, commercial cookery and that sort of thing are one example. Bearing that in mind, we have vocational courses that are still on the books but just do not attract students. Vocational education has to be

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adaptable to the economy—not necessarily to fashion but to what students are looking for. It is all well and good to have curriculum established, but if curriculum moves as slowly as general education curriculum does to change and adaptation, you will have problems. You will have the courses but you will not have any kids who want to do them. It has to have those two things. It has to have the adaptability to address the market and what students want to do; and you also have to have governments and a funding arrangement recognising the set-up cost and also pushing the various curriculum bodies to ensure that it is up to date.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—The students that we heard from earlier were all talking about having very positive work placement experiences. Some of them had been offered jobs from those and many of them had been offered references that would come in handy. But obviously that is not always the case. I was interested that in your introduction you talked about teaching kids about occupational health and safety issues and workplace harassment. Have these been issues for some of your students? Have you heard about people having really negative work experiences as well?

**Ms Bauer**—In terms of occupational health and safety and harassment issues, they seem not to come up in the workplace; certainly in my experience that has not been an issue with any of our students.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—That is a pretty good record. You have a lot of kids going through here.

**Ms Bauer**—Yes, it is. I recall one experience of harassment—it must have been about six or seven years ago—which would fall into a minor category. That was not in Bradfield College; it was in another vocational area that I was dealing with. The student in my care reported to me. That was reported back to the workplace supervisor and the issue was handled. The harassment was in terms of somebody asking one of the students out, which she did not appreciate. It was of that sort of nature. That was settled and there was nothing else. But that is the only example that comes to mind of anything that has happened in the workplace.

In terms of having positive experiences, I think that the students that we heard from this morning in the main reported positive experiences. If we delved deeper, there would probably be experiences which would perhaps not be quite as satisfactory as the students had indicated, because they perhaps did not speak of them. The experience is a positive one because just to do the work placement is already a positive experience: it is something that you have not done before; it is skills and knowledge and self-esteem, something that becomes a comfort zone that you were not used to before. The non-positive, if you like, experiences in the main are those in which the students do not get sufficient skills and knowledge in that particular industry or that particular business simply because of the nature of it.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—Where they spend their whole day photocopying?

**Ms Bauer**—That is right. That sort of opportunity is not there for those students. Our students have the flexibility to go to another placement if one does not turn out to be satisfactory in terms of acquiring new skills and knowledge.

**Mr Hyam**—This whole work placement agenda has moved over the last 10 years to an extent now where our employers are very sophisticated. The level of activity has cranked up a fair bit. The days of a student going there for a week, doing photocopying and making coffee

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are well and truly gone. We do not have that sense amongst any of our employers that that is a legitimate learning experience. It is about a level of sophistication.

**Ms Bauer**—Furthermore, the history of vocational education now spans well over 10 years. You now have in the workplace supervisors, managers and owners of businesses who themselves were work placement students. Now the new lot of work placement students are coming to them. They are very well aware of the kind of pitfalls that could happen and are aware of their own experiences—the good, the bad and the indifferent. They do not perpetuate the pitfalls, and they look on this as a value that they can add to the students and the community.

**Mr White**—In terms of that positive aspect of the industry training, one of the questions that students most frequently ask when they come to enrol in Bradfield college is ‘Do I have to get my own work placement?’ That tends to terrify a lot of kids. But the assessment task of the first seven weeks of theory is to go through a mock interview to see whether they have picked up job-seeking skills and those sorts of things. Then the kids start phoning prospective employers and win their own placements. As a general rule, we do not go and get the placements for the kids ourselves. For them, getting a placement and being successful is like winning a real job. As they hit the work force and the industry placement, they say, ‘I’ve got my job, and it is like going off to work.’ Winning that place is a positive experience right from the very outset.

**Mrs MAY**—You mentioned having 10 to 12 vocational courses here at Bradfield. How have the course options changed over the last 10 years? When you think of technology changes in the work force, has Bradfield changed over the years in the type of courses it is offering—this will come back to funding—and would you see changes in the future? You talk about some courses not being taken up by students, so students obviously know what they are looking for. Do you work with employers and industry on what you offer, or do you just judge it year by year on the number of people applying for those courses? How much flexibility would be there to change courses when you consider the funding that is needed for the resources in courses? Do you see a problem there at all?

**Mr Hyam**—The New South Wales system is fairly centralised through the department, and particularly through the Board of Studies, so the days of developing your own courses in response to some intuition or to thinking you know what is happening in the community are well and truly gone. The Board of Studies tightly controls the development of new courses, so the introduction this year of two new frameworks courses was very centralised. We do not get the opportunity to really respond in the sense of developing new courses. It is very difficult for us to judge those market shifts and determine whether they are about other schools making clearer offers and options for their students or whether it is a shift in the marketplace. For example, we have fewer students coming to us for, say, information technology this year than we have had in the past. Some of that could well be because—and there may be some employers here who have an information technology background—of a downturn in the IT industry, but a lot of it is also about the upping of the availability of IT by our competitors, our other schools and the Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE, which offers vocational education and training to over 2,000 students in schools in this area. Many of those students are in IT. Our neighbouring TAFE colleges also have the TVET option. It is difficult for us to work out whether that is an industry shift or whether it is a shift in supply. It is really difficult to answer your question.

**Mrs MAY**—Do you actively go out and market Bradfield to schools?

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**Mr Hyam**—Absolutely.

**Mrs MAY**—Do you have to win every placement here?

**Mr Hyam**—We have to win every seat we get, and we have to take those away from other schools, so we are very active. An example of that is in the front of your folders. It is a mini CD-ROM. We are out there, almost in their faces, telling them about the advantages of coming to Bradfield. There certainly has been a sense that some schools are very happy to share that with their other students, and some are not. But we hold a series of information evenings, and we are very active in the marketplace.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. Your evidence has been very helpful.

[11.52 a.m.]

**BAUER, Ms Janina, Manager, Industry Training, Bradfield College**

**CORY, Mr Alan Ronald, Support Manager Australasia, Sun Microsystems**

**DENNISON, Ms Mary, Administration Manager, Audio Loc Sound Design Pty Ltd**

**KEAN, Mr Gregory John, Managing Director, Lots of Watts Pty Ltd**

**KENDALL, Dr Kim, Owner, Senior Veterinarian, East Chatswood Cat Clinic**

**LEONARD, Mr Damian, Director, Integral Event Management**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. Thank you for joining us today and leaving your busy businesses to spend a bit of time with us. We do appreciate that. The committee generally prefers all evidence to be given in public—that is, on the *Hansard* record—but if for any reason you have any comments that you want to make in private, please let us know and we can arrange that.

The students before the committee this morning spoke very positively of their work placements and of their value to them. Could you give us your impression of how it is for you to have students in your workplaces? What are the benefits and what are the disadvantages? Do you do it only as a service to those students? Do you do it in terms of finding potential employees for your businesses? What are the benefits for you and what, on the other side, are perhaps some of the problems in terms of supervision, cost, down time, et cetera?

**Mr Cory**—There are a couple of motivations for my having used students—and let me say that I have had only one student from Bradfield College. One was that it was a good opportunity to get somebody to assist us with doing things that we may not have been able to do or that would have kept some of our current workers working a little longer. That is a purely business type of reason. I have a background in education myself, and I think that to get people to understand what they have to do or what work is about is quite important. So, philosophically, I am a great supporter of it. I also have a couple of children of my own who have been involved in workplace placements and who have had some fun and some ‘not so bad’ things. I thought that we would give them an opportunity. I thought also that to have someone who is keen to be involved in our business was a good thing.

**Mrs MAY**—What is your business?

**Mr Cory**—It is delivering education on IT equipment to people who purchase IT equipment—high-end computers, servers and such. Another reason for being involved in workplace placements was for the staff who work with me to understand not only what is it to explain what they do but also how to explain that to the students. I think that to understand what the staff have to do is a valuable thing not only for the students but also for them. By the staff learning to be teachers, they are helped to understand their role. I see a whole lot of benefits.

**CHAIR**—So there are no downsides or costs in terms of supervision and administration?

**Mr Cory**—No, I do not see that as an issue. If it were a general worker, we would still have to explain what was going on. It would still be exactly the same sort of thing. I suppose the greatest disadvantage is that by the time one of these people have gone through the training and worked with you for a period of time it is often a loss when they leave. Often people re-employ them because they have already spent that time—and that is a great thing too. In our case, we were not looking for anyone at the time; it was just a great opportunity to have someone make work a little lighter for everyone.

**Dr Kendall**—My work placement person—and I have had only one—has been coming around for about 18 months. She found me. She just walked in off the street and put down her resume. I tend not to do the week-long work experience things from high schools, et cetera because it consumes too much time. You have got to find something for people to do, and they tend to get in the way. I liked the idea that this would have some continuity and that Gemma was older.

There is a big expectation problem in working with animals in that whoever comes to work expects that they are going to spend a lot of time with the animals. That is not the case. Gemma came as a retail assistant. She had some training in selling and customer service, and those were the things we are looking for. I liked it that she had X number of hours over a term or whatever that she had to complete and that we did not have to pay for. We did not originally train her. She just turned up and helped around with what she saw. I guess on another placement we might make a more structured effort but we did not in this case, and it has still worked out. I could not figure out what the times were that she was going to turn up. There was no structure for us. Having worked with the system for a bit longer, I can see where there should be structure. She was very helpful. I do think that she got a bit bored, so maybe the length of time is an issue to consider. Once she had learnt the basic rules, there was a problem of ‘It’s more of the same.’ I do not know how you get around that.

We did employ her over Christmas. That was fine when she was 16 years and 364 days old, but suddenly she was 17 and costing the same as my other workers, and she lost interest at about that time. In the end, there was a big problem and a big blow-up, and we parted on less than happy terms, but I spoke to her mother and offered her an opportunity to come back. That was my only negative experience. There were many positive ones and, when I originally agreed to come to the committee, we had not had the fight yet. I am disappointed that there was no further follow-up to that. I would have liked Gemma to learn that she has to admit her mistakes, get over them, grow up and get on with it, because I now feel that we have lost an asset. She became an asset. Again, I guess I fell into it and only had minor discussions with Janina. Possibly it could work better next time. But I do not know how you fill the expectation gap that there is between work and school. This seems to be a really good way, but there has to be one last push where they realise that, even though we do not pay for their time, we do pay for my nurse’s time. I estimate it cost me personally, as a one-man business, \$3,000 to initiate somebody sufficiently so that they could do work without a backup and without doubling up on everything. I do not mind donating that to students, but I feel that I would like to see some of it back again.

**Mr Kean**—Much of our work that young kids want to be involved with is concert production, because that is what they want to do. In the early 1990s when the company was in

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its infancy, on Friday or Saturday night we would inevitably get kids from school who just wanted to be involved and to come along and help. None of that is possible anymore because of occupational health and safety, WorkCover and all that. If they are not paid, they are not covered. When they started coming through their school, that became an opportunity to show the kids what it was like. Also, probably in the growing stages—the first two years—about 50 per cent of our staff came through some sort of work program where they had been working for us, coming in on Saturdays or whatever, and then would start as a part-time employee. Some would end up full-time and some would just work casually.

The problem with coming to us for one week—that is, just through a normal school program—is that, if the students get a week when there is nothing on, they sit around the factory feeling bored and think, ‘What sort of job is this?’ Or perhaps they think that it is a really great job. Then there are other jobs where it is flat chat from day one and there are really late nights, and either they realise that it is not quite the job for them or they really enjoy it. Something like the Bradfield experience, where they come over a longer period on a set day, gives us a flexibility to be able to make sure that they get to go out on jobs. Also, as the college is very flexible, if the students want to change days to be on a particular job, it is easily done. So it is a very positive experience.

We have about 20 full-time employees now, so the direct cost to us is really very minimal because the students just tag along with somebody. However, that immediately shows up the ones that are self-motivated and the ones that need constant motivation to get them going. At the end, we always ask them what they think and take a note of that. We keep that on file so that, if they ever do come for a job, we can pull out their file and see what they were like then. Most of the time they feel like they enjoyed it. They have a good time. We try to take them to Channel Nine or somewhere like that so that they can tell their friends they went somewhere really exciting and can feel that they had a good time. Overall, the experience is very good, certainly from our point of view.

**Mrs MAY**—How many students have you had?

**Mr Kean**—If I remember correctly, we have had about four from Bradfield. We had two very recently that were quite good and quite interested. However, the very first one had an interest in sound and lighting, but he was studying to be an accountant. That is what he thought he wanted to do. Interestingly, after about four weeks, he said ‘I’m out of here.’ He could not cope and he changed his whole study. For me, that was a positive thing, because, way before it was too late, he realised that he did not want to be, I think, a DJ. We have had about four students from Bradfield.

**Mr Leonard**—I run a small owner-operator event management business that specialises in outdoor events at venues such as Darling Harbour and Sydney Olympic Park where I work for those government authorities on contract. I used to work for the Darling Harbour Authority and, during that period, we had a couple of students from Bradfield on short-term placement. Over the last five years, my own business has had two or three students on short-term placement—not for an extended period of time. With those students, we spoke with their teacher and identified what the student was looking for from the placement. Then we agreed on a date on which we had an event where we would hopefully be able to deliver the sort of work placement that they were after.

I am not in a situation where I would be able to take someone on for a one-week or two-week period, because, during that period, most of the tasks are administrative and it is hard to hand over those sorts of tasks to someone not skilled in that area. With student placements, I will generally try and ensure that I am there on the day for the full day or for part of the day and will speak with the student at the start of the day to try and identify exactly what they want out of their placement period. Sometimes we identify additional areas of interest that they may have which may not have been going to be part of that day but, if the day is going to slow down and if, for example, they have an interest in recording and we are at a live sound event, we may set up a separate system to allow them to do live recording of the event and then to listen back to that. I got most of my grounding from other people being able to give me the opportunity to work in theatre and events, so I see the benefit of providing those opportunities to new students. Certainly, what some of the students participate in at some of our events is not exactly the area that interests them, but most of them have shown a keen interest on the day and asked questions throughout the day.

**Ms Dennison**—You will have to excuse me if I get nervous because I have spent 20 years in my career path being on the other side of a mike, trying to avoid being on this side of a mike. We do feature film, television and sign postproduction. Unlike live stuff, we come in after the film has been edited and do the soundtrack. We try to screen a lot of the kids that come our way. I get about 40 unsolicited asks for work in a month. I am up to about 25 in February. A lot of that comes from tertiary institutions, and a lot of it comes from private institutions, like schools of audio engineering.

When you say that we do sound, you have to filter out the kids who think they want to do live mixing and the kids who think that sound on film is music or being on location. We go through that pretty stridently. Then we jokingly decide that we are going to try and turn them into an accountant by the end of a week: 'Are you sure you really want to do this?' Unfortunately, you cannot let the students have much hands-on experience with the kind of stuff that we do. If we have a client and they are a director, there is no way they are going to let a work experience person start fiddling around in real time on their film, so we tend to give the student parallel kinds of things or cataloguing to do. Unfortunately, a lot of that stuff is pretty routine and fairly boring. But, if they are focused enough and it really is what they want to do, most of the smart ones see through that and keep pushing. Two of our employees are people who did not give up. They needed that level of commitment.

Unfortunately, with a lot of the people we actually screened, when we got them there it was just that they needed to do something for work experience and I had said yes. But the two we have had from Bradfield have been outstandingly good. I think that is because they are a bit more focused and a bit more understanding of what is involved; it is not that funny thing of them coming in for a week. As some other people have said, if you come in for a week it is just too bad if nothing is happening. You cannot organise for a film to be getting cut or someone to be in there who is interesting. We had one till quite late last year, and knowing that he was coming in every Tuesday for eight hours made us able to incorporate him into our work life, know that we could give him something meaningful to do and know that he was going to show up. If he did not show up on the day—and he did that once—we would find him. That was quite good. I think the most important thing I want to say here is that the week blocks are not sensible in a lot of industries but the weekly thing is good.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You have all made a pretty big plug for the continuous structure sort of model. Greg, you mentioned confidence; you used the word ‘motivation’. Sometimes, confident kids cannot deliver; sometimes, shy kids, if you work with them, can deliver. In other words, presentation is not everything; substance is far more effective. How long do you have these students for? Do you have them for a semester or for a year? Do you notice changes in kids’ confidence and motivation levels?

**Ms Bauer**—Our students in year 11 would start in term 2—that is 10 weeks of work placement—and continue into term 3. Some of them may continue into term 4 and do their HSC component of the work placement if they are in an industry curriculum framework course.

**Mr Kean**—It is interesting that you talk about confidence. We have one guy who, after having a week of work experience with us, the year he was leaving school rang one of the managers to book some equipment that he wanted to hire and actually said, ‘I’m going to go into your industry next year but I haven’t decided whether I’m going to work for you or one of your competitors.’ We thought that was fairly overconfident, but we did take him on and he has turned out to be really good.

Because of the nature of the industry, a lot of the kids who come to us already have some knowledge, so you get that division between the ones who already think they know everything and want to show you what you should be doing and the ones who do have a genuine interest but have no confidence in themselves and perhaps are a bit too young, which is often the case when they come through school. If they are only in year 10 they are still quite young.

When I went to school most people left school after year 10 and were in the work force the next year as an apprentice or something, but it seems that many of the kids are much younger in their outlook and their abilities in year 10 and year 11 these days. I do not know why that is so. Certainly they cannot spell and they cannot add up. That is our other big problem. If they are preparing equipment and they have to get the numbers right or whatever, you have to recheck everything because they are not always accurate. Whether that is lack of confidence or whether they are too scared to ask, ‘Have I done it right?’ we are not sure.

**Dr Kendall**—But they can work a computer.

**Mr Kean**—Yes, they can work a computer.

**Dr Kendall**—They are not scared of it.

**Mr ALBANESE**—I have learned spellcheck. None of my staff can spell, and they all have degrees.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That deserves a one-liner but I will not put it in *Hansard*.

**Mr Cory**—Although we have only had one from Bradfield, we have had other work experience students. Generally I have found that, because Sun is a large company and there are lots of people, they are typically very shy when they arrive and for the first few days, but that eventually goes away and they become confident with the people they are working with. I do not perceive that as a problem. As far as adding up goes, as a matter of process we make sure

that we do not give them a responsible role in anything that is going to go out to someone before someone else checks it.

We work on a system—and it fits beautifully with the Bradfield model—whereby we have the student assigned to a worker for at least the day that they are there. If that person does not look after them for the day, they pass them onto someone else who has something for them to do. It is an extravagance and a luxury that we have because we are such a large company. Our guy might turn up in the morning and say to me, ‘Here I am; what do I do?’ I might say, ‘I haven’t got anything to give you today, but come with me,’ and I will give him to someone else who needs a hand in assigning something, setting up some equipment, pulling some cables somewhere, turning over some stock or whatever. They get to do a variety of things.

I think that the whole concept is good because—in a big company anyway—it provides kids with the chance to see all of the different things that go on in a job. A lot of the children who have come to us have never been anywhere but school. They come to a job and say, ‘Is this what you do? Really? And you can go to the toilet whenever you want?’ That is a big surprise. They say, ‘Can I go to the toilet?’ or ‘Can I have my lunch now?’ It is something that kids and people going straight into the work force have never experienced. Again, it is large company stuff. If you are in a smaller operation, it is probably a requirement, but with us it is a bit less tight.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Three of you have mentioned nonpayment and two of you have mentioned cost. Is that an issue in dealing with a college like Bradfield in work placements?

**Mr Cory**—I am not sure what you mean by nonpayment.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In your introductory comments three of you mentioned nonpayment and two of you added ‘in terms of cost’. Is this a serious issue that needs to be addressed?

**Dr Kendall**—Getting the labour for free.

**Mr Cory**—From my point of view, it may turn the motivation around the wrong way. Getting free labour or getting paid to have someone might motivate people to take work experience students for the wrong reasons. It does not worry me but, again, if I were in a smaller business it could be an issue because I might be spending more time trying to provide something for them to do, which could be a cost to me. Payment might be the wrong motivation, but I am talking big business, not smaller business.

**Dr Kendall**—It was probably my comment that concerned you the most. As a one-person business, if money goes out it goes directly out of my pocket. I liked the fact that we did not have to pay our trainee through the training stages, but I still had to pay my staff during that stage. In general, when we train somebody, a one-hour job takes four hours. I will not tell you the little system, but I have a name for it. An experienced staff member has to show the new person and watch them do it, and then the job finally gets done. If I am paying for somebody, it costs me four hours wages to get one hour of work done during the training process.

The fact that the work placement person was not being paid halved my training cost. To an extent, it also meant that we did not push as hard and accelerate the training as much either, so that may be part of the boredom level. But at some point in every job you know most of what

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goes on and it is more of the same. That is what I found difficult, there is this concept of 'is there any more?' The answer is, 'No.' At some point you are just going to be doing the same thing again.

In terms of training anybody, it took longer to train the younger person. She was okay with the computer; she did not make it crash as often as everybody else did. In terms of getting her to understand product knowledge and customer service, she had some background, but we have 2,000 items. She had to learn what the stories were and that sort of stuff. She would do it if she were interested; if she were not, she would not do it and we still had to fill the gaps. I guess it was partly my misunderstanding of what she was trying to do. We used her as slave labour for a while but when she showed interest and came forward then we put in more time. Then when she just left, as I said, we had not yet recouped the time and effort that had gone into it. I am not sure that it is a good beginning for her to think that when you get tired you make a big enough mistake so that there is a blow-up and then you just walk away from it. I am not sure that should be the lesson that is learned.

**Mr Cory**—I think it is about setting the expectations of the student and also having your own expectations. My expectation is that the kids are never going to be employees. This is not because I do not want them to be, but because, in the time that we have them, they are never going to be able to do the job that you want them to do. All I am doing is giving them a taste of work and a taste of the sort of things that could happen. Then, when they go away, they have a better idea of whether they really want to work in that environment and whether they like it. My philosophy is to give them a chance to do the little bits and pieces that there are. They do not do anything that is going to bring the world down and I do not give them too much responsibility.

I understand it when you say that you really want to get them to do something and be responsible for it. That responsibility is important. For me, it is only to give them a taste so that they know what they might like but they know what they do not like. They have experienced a bit of work and that is what work experience is about. Then they can go off and make a more or less informed decision rather than thinking that they really want to be an accountant because they used to like working the calculator in maths and going out there never having known about accountancy.

**Mr Kean**—My comment on cost was related to the fact that, as our company has grown and as costs build on costs, it becomes very difficult to justify having extra people on jobs who do not really know what they are doing. Unfortunately we are in an industry where there are not any real courses to back up the practical experience. You cannot go to TAFE or school and learn how to set up a PA properly, load a truck, empty stuff into the entertainment centre and all those sorts of things. There are specific courses that can train components of the job. There are people trying to set up courses at the moment to teach people, but that means, when you are looking for an employee, you have to pay them in the hope that they will actually turn out to be something. That is why these sorts of courses are good for us. Kids can come along and we can see whether they have got potential.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—You have mostly answered my question. I had a publican in my electorate that had a lot of trainees. He used to say to me that, for probably the first six months, the big effort was in getting people to turn up on time with clean fingernails and a clean shirt and to get into the habit of having a responsible attitude to work. What you are saying seems to



be that you feel this work experience is better for doing that than weeklong blocks because you are getting people to make a commitment over a long period of time. Is that your experience?

**Mr Cory**—Yes.

**Mrs MAY**—Dr Kendall, I was interested in your opening remarks. I gathered from listening to you—and I wonder how many of the other witnesses are also in the same situation—that you did not know much about the work placement program when someone knocked on your door and asked you to take her on. This experience obviously has not worked out for the best. If you are using Bradfield College students, would you say there should be contact between the college and employers so you understand what your responsibilities are, as well as those of the student? Do you think some sort of information package or evening or some contact regarding expectations from yourself as well as from the student would have helped make that a better experience all round?

**Dr Kendall**—I was given a package and a CD, but I run a Mac, which has Virtual PC on it. It is a pain in the patootie to look at anything other than Mac products. It sounds as if I am unhappy with the experience, but I am not.

**Mrs MAY**—No, it has been positive.

**Dr Kendall**—It was actually very positive. I am not sure whether that was so much because of the personality of the—

**Mrs MAY**—Of the student.

**Dr Kendall**—We will call her ‘the student’. She came with enthusiasm. I think it was my mistake to give her responsibility, and she did not know when, or how, to say, ‘I don’t want to be responsible for this much.’ Over Christmas, we did actually employ her as a proper employee because she had run out of her free hours or whatever and she was valuable enough to be offered her work. Perhaps we jumped the gun on that, which then created a snowball effect. I guess it would have been good to have more idea of what was required. Certainly, my experience was that I did not know what day she was turning up, and we did not know whether or not she would turn up.

**Mrs MAY**—Does that happen with most students or is there a structured day? I think we heard from a couple of students this morning that Tuesday was their day out in the work force. With your student, there was obviously no structured day.

**Dr Kendall**—Not that we could pick. She also turned up on weekends and things, which was nice.

**Mrs MAY**—Is that normal, Janina?

**Ms Bauer**—There are two days in the week that students have organised for a work placement, which are free of classes. For year 11 this year, it will be a Wednesday, and for the HSC year 12 students it will be a Tuesday. Last year it would have been the reverse of those days. The student has one particular day free in which they do their work placement. They can

then negotiate with the employer to work on other days, if that happens to suit the employer and if it fits in with the student's timetable. The student is able to work on that Tuesday, for example; they may have free time on another day of the week when they can go in and do some work; or they may work on weekends or in school holidays. That is negotiable between the student and the employer on that basis.

The expectation from Bradfield is that, when a student is going on a work placement, they are going out as if it were a real job. The expectation is that, if their starting time is nine o'clock in the morning and they finish at five o'clock, that is what they are going to do in the workplace. The expectation is that it is a regular thing and that they do have regular times and schedules. Some students do not do that. Our students are not all perfect, and I know that does happen. But our expectation still is that they will be there on a regular basis, performing as you would expect them to in the workplace. We are also hopeful that they are going to learn that, if that situation does not occur, they will not be able to secure that work placement.

I know that has happened in the past with a few students, where the employer has said, 'Look, with your irregular attendance, we just can't work with you on this basis. You'll have to look for another placement.' There has been a learning curve for that particular student—that they cannot come and go as they please and that they have some responsibilities in those terms. I regret that some of the students have not been as consistent and conscientious as we would have liked, but that is a learning experience for them as well.

**Mrs MAY**—As a follow-up to that, as employers, were you happy with the involvement of Bradfield College? We have heard this morning that they do one site visit during a period of work placement. As employers, would you say that that one site visit is enough for you to give feedback on or would you like more?

**Ms Dennison**—I would say with all candour that one is intrusive enough, because it is really hard in a workday to make the time. The student is fine but I know that a couple of times when I had some visits they just came at a really bad time. You want to be polite and courteous and helpful but it not a good time of the day. It makes such a difference when they come in on that weekly placement. I said earlier that there was one time when Felix did not show up. Because he had been coming on an ongoing basis and because I knew the nature of his seriousness, supposedly, I rang him up. With a week-long placement, I would not dream of intruding like that. I rang him up and said, 'Hi, Felix,' when he answered the phone. He said, 'Oh, sorry, I had a few assignments I had to do.' I said, 'Yes, but you're supposed to be at work.' I made that point. I felt comfortable making it and I think he understood that I did attach some gravity to his attendance. But I did not report it to Bradfield.

**Mrs MAY**—But he had not contacted you to say, 'I am having the day off today'?

**Ms Dennison**—No. I think they still slip into their institutionalised approach from when they are in school and think that I am no different from a teacher, but that is not correct. I think again that that amount of time on a weekly basis gave him time to realise that something happened when he wagged.

**Mr Leonard**—I have had positive experiences in dealing with the teachers from Bradfield and receiving information prior to the students commencing. Generally I have had one-on-one conversations with the student by phone prior to their scheduled day of work. Because I have

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only been a short-term placement, on two of those occasions teachers did come down, but generally they just had a brief chat with me and spoke with the student during that period and maybe observed work practices. There were no major problems from my side.

**Mr Kean**—I think once is fine. We did have a bad experience once when we could not find a student, but we eventually found him.

**Mrs MAY**—Where did you find him?

**Mr Kean**—I think he was at the Entertainment Centre. There was a band that was going in that had a vacant seat. He said, ‘Can I go?’ and someone else said yes. Normally we do know where they are. It would be good knowing when the teacher was coming, but once is usually enough unless there are problems.

**Mrs MAY**—Janina, do you usually book that visit in or do you just turn up?

**Ms Bauer**—I was just about to comment on a couple of issues. We are talking about work experience. In this conversation, we have been talking about the one-week block of work experience for year 10 students. But we are also talking about the work placement program, which is how we define the year 11 and year 12 programs. I think we are talking about all of those as one type of program, whereas really we are trying to differentiate the two.

In terms of talking to employers, the policy here at the college in the department that I am running is that appointments are made with employers before a teacher shows up. We try as much as we can to make sure that the time is convenient to the employer. Usually there would be a phone call first to say, ‘Is it okay? I am planning to come next week’—or tomorrow or whatever the case may be—and to try and find a suitable time. It may happen occasionally that a teacher has not been able to contact the employer by phone, for a variety of reasons, so they may do a spot visit on that day. Perhaps that has occurred to the people present, but in most instances it would be by appointment.

**Dr Kendall**—I do not remember the visit but I may not have been there. The student was actually responsible to my nurses, not to me directly. I could not comment on it. It seemed such an informal arrangement. I was unaware of any structure. I did speak to Janina a couple of times. Perhaps a conversation on more structure early in the piece would have been better rather than just a form that I filled in to say yes, I was aware that there would be somebody turning up on some schedule. I got all the forms and I filled them all out and sent them back, but possibly a phone call so that I connected with the full story would have put me in a better position. I do not think it needs a lot of school supervision.

**Mr Cory**—My experience was positive all the way. We were informed before the student arrived. He made contact initially with us and asked us if we would do it. Then he gave us all of the brochures, CD-ROMS and everything else that we wanted and told us, if we needed to speak to any of the teachers, to call the teachers and talk to them. That was unnecessary, however. Likewise, when we had a visit, I was called, an appointment was made and everything was fine. I do not have any issues at all. I thought the structure was wonderful.

The only comment I would make is that Tuesdays did not quite fit our schedule, and that was unfortunate. Like I said, being a large company, we were able to shuffle him around to do other things. We would have liked a different day but that does not matter.

**Ms Dennison**—One of the things I have found, because I have had quite a few students come through, is that the questions that have been answered have usually been done on paper. When a work experience person comes, they fill in a form and it is sent to us. A couple of times, even though I know it is probably saying, ‘I’d like more to do,’ I have actually thought it would be really nice if the kids came out and fronted for a job interview, rather than filling out a questionnaire. Sure, that is their template for what is likely to be asked. But it would be good if they came out and spoke so that you got face to face with them. If you thought they were not the right candidate, it would—as in a job interview—give you the chance to say, ‘No, I don’t think that one’s going to work.’ Having everyone on paper is a very bland way to look at them. There might be some value in a job interview component to work placement and work experience.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—A lot of these judgments really are gut instinct, aren’t they?

**Ms Dennison**—They certainly are.

**Ms Bauer**—Mary, would you set aside time to interview the students?

**Ms Dennison**—Yes.

**Ms Bauer**—Our students are available for interview. It is then up to employers as to whether they wish to interview our students or not. One would be at liberty to do that. Quite often our employers suggest that they would like the student to fax their resume and a covering letter, and the students have done that in preparation, so they would do that as well. Those options are available if employers have the time and the desire to do that.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. I am afraid our time, unless we have any other burning questions, has gone. That has been very helpful. We really appreciated that.

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

That this committee authorises publication of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.39 p.m. to 14.14 p.m.**

**COLLINS, Mr David, Director, Skills Development and Workforce Policy, New South Wales Department of Education and Training**

**LOBLE, Ms Leslie, Deputy Director-General, Strategic Planning and Regulation, New South Wales Department of Education and Training**

**SMITH, Mr Bob, Director, VET in Schools, New South Wales Department of Education and Training**

**WILLMOTT, Dr Gary, Assistant Director-General, TAFE Educational Services, New South Wales Department of Education and Training**

**EVANS, Mr Bert, Chairman, New South Wales Board of Vocational Education and Training**

**CHAIR**—We will now resume this public hearing for the inquiry into vocational education and training in schools. You have no doubt all been through this process before, but I do need to remind you that the 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 contempt of parliament. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public but if at any stage you should wish to give evidence in private, please ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. Before we start the questions, one or more than one of you might like to make some introductory comments.

**Ms Loble**—I will kick it off, thank you very much. I will not say very much except that we appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about VET in Schools activities in New South Wales. As the committee undoubtedly knows, it is the fastest growing aspect of VET provision nationally, and New South Wales is no exception. It is rapidly growing. More than a third of senior secondary students are now undertaking some form of VET in Schools—a course or sometimes even more than one course. There are several aspects which are outlined in our statement that we think make for a unique program in New South Wales, including its dual accreditation, meaning that you will get a VET qualification plus an HSC outcome. There is also the fact that it clearly links to post school pathways, whether that is TAFE or university. In fact, New South Wales is the only state where all universities will recognise a VET in Schools course for purposes of entry.

It is delivered by RTOs and, therefore, is subject to the quality standards of the national system. The curriculum is tied both to the VET system through training packages and to the school education program through the Board of Studies curriculum. As well, we have structured work placements that ensure that students get out into the workplace. I am sure you will have lots of questions, but if you will indulge us I would really like Bert Evans to make a statement on behalf of New South Wales.

**Mr Evans**—Thank you. We commend the committee for its interest in this critical issue of vocational education and training in schools. In our view, this is the most important reform in the education system in the past 10 years. For my part, I have been very fortunate for the last six-odd years—since I retired from my full-time job at what is now the Australian Industry

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Group—to be involved, almost on a daily basis, in looking at vocational education and training and very much looking at vocational education and training in schools. It is something my both my boards are very committed to and they are delighted I am here today to have an opportunity to talk to you.

We see this VET in Schools as a key to improving the state school base, strengthening young people's transition from school to work or further education and improving the relevance of secondary education. And we have seen what it can do. The board prides itself for having visited all regions—I stress that: all regions—of the state where we have met extensively with students, teachers, employers and parents. We have seen and heard what VET in Schools means to the people of New South Wales and we know it makes a difference to students' lives. It makes a real difference.

I have brought a few documents that I will table, with your leave, for the information of the members. It is a document talking about New South Wales and its role in vocational education. It talks about vocational education in schools. It talks about the Toyota project in particular, but there are students in here telling their own stories. Then we have got a number of documents about partnerships between industry and schools where employers and industry talk and schoolchildren talk. We think that is the best evidence we can put before this committee—what the actual participants think.

There may be some doubts in some people's minds about the importance of VET in Schools. Just before Christmas, I had an interview in Armidale with an announcer from the ABC who was obviously misinformed; she clearly had the wrong perception. She took the view that only second-class students do VET in Schools. I said that I had just come from the road; I had just been to Guyra High School. I rattled off the names of the students—and these are students who are going to do university courses after they leave Guyra High School—that I had been talking to, their parents and the teachers. I had the devil's own job with her; but I stuck to my guns, because I believe it to be true that it is not people of lesser ability who do VET in Schools. I will talk a bit more about that in a moment.

In New South Wales, 64,500 young people in years 11 and 12 enrolled in a VET course in school. I said that, if I do nothing else on behalf of my board, I am here to put to rest the notion that it is the less able that do VET. We have seen the wonderful things it does for young people who might not otherwise have stayed at school. Many of our VET students are looking towards university when they leave school. When they do that, they will put their VET skills to great use in their future careers. VET provides choices; it provides pathways to the future. That is what it is all about: providing choices and pathways.

One thing that is not really understood or appreciated in the community is that last year 34,000 people with university degrees enrolled in TAFE courses. The general perception is that people with TAFE courses graduate to university; the flow is the other way. Can you imagine the advantages for students who have done VET for a couple of years, since they were in high school, and who then get a degree—the choices and options they have for their careers?

In New South Wales we have an optional HSC exam that qualifies students to count their VET course for the university admission index, which is very important. In 2002 more than 16,000 year 12 students took these exams. The chair of the universities technical committee on scaling said of the VET exams, 'In the vast majority of cases at least one student gained a UAI

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of 99 or above. And students in the information technology and hospitality operations received UAIs of 99.55.' Guyra High School is a great example of what this is about. When we advised Guyra last year, there were 47 secondary students, 90 per cent of whom were taking a VET course. Of the six students we met, two had secured jobs with local businesses for when they finish. One had gained a specialist apprenticeship with Mercedes-Benz, and had left; another two were headed for university, where they were going to do a bachelor of business. In this case, both were female students who wanted to come back. One wanted to open up a shop, with a bachelor of business degree and a VET qualification; the other one wanted to open a restaurant. They knew precisely what they wanted to do. In the debate I had with the ABC announcer, she did not know what VET was about. Students know precisely what it is about.

To demonstrate here what VET means in a local community, a dozen businessmen—and I have represented businessmen all my life—stopped work for a lunch with our board and told us how critical VET is to supporting local industry, how it is helping the region develop. They spoke highly of the schools and the quality and relevance of the courses of their students. We heard similar views all over New South Wales. You only need to go down to Dee Why and walk along the shopfronts along the beach and you will see dozens of students working in those shops. We met with them and talked to them, and we talked to the host employers, who told us that some of the students had been offered jobs. Some students get offered jobs while they are working. They have a dilemma. Some of them take those jobs. I do not see that there is anything wrong with that: they have got a job and that is their choice. But other host employers have been so impressed that they are keeping the jobs open for when the student finishes their HSC. We have also met other students down there who were going straight to university; they are going to do their VET courses and then go.

When we were in Albury last year, we were stunned—I use that word deliberately—by the professionalism of the hospitality students training in the commercial restaurant at the TAFE Albury campus. I was particularly taken by one young woman who had mapped her future through VET in Schools and a TAFE qualification. She was on her way to owning a restaurant. She would be a boomer; she had everything.

I want to stress that New South Wales has a very strong line on quality in VET in Schools. We have a very strong line on quality in vocational education generally. I can say that with great experience, because I chair their accreditation board. We are vigilant members of that particular board to ensure that vocational education—whether it is in the schools, at a public provider like TAFE or with the private providers—keep up a very high quality of TAFE. It takes some doing. Of all the concerns of the vocational accreditation board about quality, schools do not rate highly in that regard. It is some of the private providers—not all, of course—that we have to look at.

All the courses in our schools are delivered by a registered training organisation. This is generally done by either a school district or a TAFE New South Wales institute. Courses are based on industry demand and student interest. Courses are developed in close consultation, of course, with industry, and they include—and this is vitally important—a mandatory component of workplace training. We have all had work experience where people just turn up and look at somebody or sweep the floors. This is real work that people are involved in.

As a board, we have had a commitment to the importance of work placement. We recommended this inclusion in VET in Schools courses when the HSC in New South Wales was

reformed. Students apply their skills in a work situation. They increase their understanding of the world of work, and work placement strengthens the link between employers and schools. We have supported the expansion of work placement by allocating significant resources to support coordination. We started off a few years ago, but we have now increased that commitment to over \$3 million to enable students to secure quality workplace training positions. We want to ensure that students gain access to real work situations rather than simulated work placements. In this, we need the ongoing support of industry, which is vital. And we get that support. The fact that we found over 53 workplace training opportunities last year is testimony to the employer support for VET in Schools. The BVET funds complement the \$3 million-odd provided to New South Wales by the ECEF for work placement coordination. This year, BVET has entered into a \$6.5 million partnership with ECEF, led by Kevin Power, a BVET member who chairs this board. We are managing this program to improve outcomes for students across the state.

A major motivation for us in establishing this program was to provide relief for VET teachers in schools. Six years ago, in so many cases, we found the maths teacher who had a passion for this, who would knock off school and go around and ring up factories, workplaces or restaurants and get jobs. We thought that was an unreasonable burden on some dedicated, enthusiastic people. The system was not going to work if it just relied on individuals. We have coordinated this program. We are immensely proud of this program. When we go to regional areas, we find the Catholic schools and the private schools all with the workplace coordinator who is right across the one geographic area. It is something that works particularly all round.

My colleagues and I are continually impressed by the commitment of the VET teachers in schools and TAFE. Teaching VET has not been easy for some teachers. It has required retraining to meet industry standards and has increased demands on them to meet requirements of registered training organisations. But it has provided exciting opportunities for a lot of them to increase their skills. You would all be surprised at the extent to which this opportunity has drawn out the creativity and entrepreneurial skills of teachers, who just love it.

New South Wales has involved industry at every stage of the development of VET in Schools. By requiring school districts to become RTAs, we have sought to ensure that our VET in Schools programs are at least equivalent to post school VET programs. Coming from a situation of having industry representatives on our boards, we are very conscious of the need to ensure industry confidence in the VET in Schools programs. I have seen that in particular in relation to industry with the VET in Schools programs.

Through working with the department and TAFE New South Wales, Toyota has developed a T3 program that is attracting young people to employment in the automotive industry. As an old manufacturing man, I can say that automotive is a success story. It is one of the real success stories in Australia. The industry exports all over the world, with highly paid jobs and great careers. Ford, Toyota, Mitsubishi and Holden put a massive amount of resources into schools through a forum I chair. It is called the national automotive industry skills forum. In cooperation with the department and TAFE, we put a massive amount into getting the best kids, the best students. That is what we are after in this particular industry. These are young people who come out and get \$80,000 to \$88,000 a year as technicians. It is no longer about greasy overalls and dirty boots; this is high-tech stuff. The VET courses attract them—as you will see in the brochure that I have tabled for you, with people from Toyota speaking about them from the heart, because they mean it.

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I want to say something about how we see the potential for VET in Schools and about how it makes a difference for young Aboriginal students. At schools such as Kadina High School in Lismore we have spoken to the young people completing their higher school certificate as to how they were motivated by having done quality VET in Schools. Wherever we go, we seek out the community leaders in the Indigenous communities and we talk about the importance to us and to them of VET in Schools. We as a board receive the overwhelming message that for Indigenous students there has to be a lot more imagination about VET in Schools. It is not much use having it all in years 11 and 12 if so many of them have left school, so we are looking at pilot programs which we will have to negotiate through the Board of Studies and the government. But as far as our board members are concerned, we are committed to making it more innovative and more interesting for Indigenous students to stay at work. There is this imperative as a community, as an economy and as a nation that we do that. Our submission is that the cost in economic terms of the Indigenous students dropping out is absolutely mind-boggling; we can do better in that area.

Finally, we say we must continue to improve our quality as to the outcomes the students are achieving. This will require ongoing support from industry and will also require increased investment, but funding the sustained growth of VET in Schools is one of the best investments we could make as a nation. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Bert, for that and thank you for the obvious passion that you have for this whole area. You mentioned right at the end the issue of funding. Since we only got this document a few minutes ago, I have not had a chance to go through it in detail.

**Mr Evans**—We apologise for its lateness.

**CHAIR**—I just want to ask Leslie this: given the rapid increase in VET—and you mentioned 64,500 students—and given that a little bit of this document that I did have a chance to read said that New South Wales has integrated VET into school and systems budgets as far as possible, is there any dedicated VET funding within the New South Wales education budget? If so, what has been the percentage increase in that over the past five years?

**Ms Loble**—You have hit on the major emphasis that we have, which is that it is very much integrated into senior secondary provision for, as Bert outlined, students from across the range, whether they want to go to university, go straight into work or are interested in VET in Schools. It is very much an integral part. Overall, of course, the budget for school education has increased significantly; combined with VET and school education, it is now about \$8 billion, which has been put in by New South Wales. That said, as you also know, the dedicated component that is targeted for VET in Schools out of the Commonwealth budget has remained stable at a little less than \$6 million for New South Wales, and that has been continual. But the effort really has been to integrate it into our provision. We do not have dedicated VET in Schools or such teachers in TAFE and in the high schools in the sense that they have come from a separate pile of money. BVET does make recommendations to the minister for allocations across VET in Schools, and that has steadily increased over the years.

**CHAIR**—Do you have any figures for that?

**Ms Loble**—Bob, do you recall those? If not, we can certainly put them on notice and give them to you. We have aimed to increase the efficiencies as much as possible through integrated

provision in the department and across TAFE in New South Wales in curriculum development and professional development. Having all those systemically provided is one way to try to increase the reach.

**CHAIR**—But, as you indicated in here, the VET component is perhaps more expensive to run than general education.

**Ms Loble**—That is correct and, overall, as the quality factors increase, that will increase as well.

**CHAIR**—So there is no dedicated funding for VET?

**Ms Loble**—It is hard to separate it out exactly. We will get you our overall allocations for VET in Schools, but I want to stress that our effort here is to see this as an important part of enriching provision for high school students. We do not see it as a segregated activity that is somehow separate and apart from either high schools or TAFE.

**Mr Evans**—But there is a cost. Wherever we go, teachers and principals are at pains to point out that VET has to work. There is a spotlight on it, so there is a lot more attention put onto VET in these early years to make sure it is not open to ill-conceived criticism.

**CHAIR**—While we are on the finances, given that there is increased participation in TAFE from students who drop out of school—due to the change to Youth Allowance and the fact they have to participate—to what extent is VET in Schools adding to the pressure on the TAFE system as a whole? This is an indirect issue that we have to confront in terms of resources. I am basically giving you an opportunity to also talk about the nature of VET in terms of the increased costs of capital provision, let alone employer provision of facilities and the appropriate level of training to make sure that quality is there.

**Ms Loble**—I will make some general comments and then Gary can speak specifically about the TAFE impact. The Youth Allowance has had a very significant impact. As you may know, we have attempted to at least cost that by using Centrelink data. The impact has been less on VET in Schools, to be perfectly honest, and more in terms of general education provision.

**CHAIR**—I am interested in that costing. If you could get that for us, that would be great.

**Ms Loble**—I am happy to provide that. It has grown quite significantly. There has been an increase in general education students enrolling at TAFE, which is different from VET in Schools as a provision; and, of course, the funding is different. It is not a demand based formula in terms of federal funding. It does not have the cost indexation that the schools budget does. In that sense, it has placed pressure on the VET budgets.

**Dr Willmott**—I have a couple of comments to make. In terms of the VET in Schools component of TAFE enrolments involving young people in the HSC program, about 17,000 of the students who are doing VET in Schools programs are attending TAFE colleges to do all or part of those programs. That is, again, a result of the partnership, which we see as fairly central to the VET in Schools strategy, where schools and TAFE are working together to best use their resources to meet the demand for VET in Schools programs.

As far as that relates to overall TAFE profiling of VET in Schools delivery as part of the general profile of TAFE delivery—as Leslie has said—there are not dedicated VET in Schools TAFE teachers, but there are TAFE teachers, both full time and part time, who may well be undertaking a VET in Schools course doing an HSC framework as part of their overall timetable or program of delivery.

There is an arrangement with the VET in Schools directorate which Bob runs in relation to the flow of funds to support those dedicated enrolments in TAFE undertaking HSC framework courses. Generally speaking, TAFE strongly supports the involvement of HSC and high school young people in TAFE programs associated with their HSC framework courses. As I said, we see that as part of the partnership arrangement. It is the best overall use of resources in New South Wales, and it maximises the balance between schools and TAFE in achieving high-quality and best use of resources in achieving these outcomes.

**CHAIR**—I have one question on notice with regard to funding. Could you provide for us, please, the actual expenditure on schools—total school spending over, say, the past five years.

**Ms Loble**—We are happy to do that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is good to see that, as for manufacturing, you are a very strong advocate for TAFE. As Kerry has acknowledged, that is a good thing from all of our points of view. It is good to see and catch up with you again. My first question is a question of clarification to you, Leslie. Did you say a third of New South Wales secondary school students were doing VET?

**Ms Loble**—Doing VET in Schools, yes—over a third.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I have a hearing problem.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—Over a third of year 11 and 12 students or over a third of the total?

**Ms Loble**—Year 11 and 12. Since the university recognition, the year 12 participation has gone up significantly.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It probably ought to be two-thirds, shouldn't it? What is your comment on that? Only a third go to university.

**Ms Loble**—We see it as an exciting part of the provision. The trend is certainly upward. As to whether we reach two-thirds or not, students will make that choice.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you think that is a viable aim?

**Ms Loble**—I realise you have not had a chance to see our statement because we have only just got it over here. We were guided very much by the principles the government enunciated following the review by Barry McGaw. Those principles really go to the opportunities of combined experiential and theoretical learning, which VET in Schools incorporates. We see those as a very exciting part of educational provision generally. In that sense, it can go as wide as 100 per cent if that is what students want and if we are offering the sorts of courses they are interested in.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In looking at the spin and the propaganda—I cannot think of a more polite word to use—

**Mr Evans**—You have been a politician too long, Ron.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is right. Perhaps that is a question, too. This is only the second public hearing we have had, but the same issue came up at the first one. People use the words ‘diversity’ in terms of a policy approach and ‘integration’ almost in the same sentence. Sorry, but they are quite different. If you integrate, you contain; you narrow. That is what integration does. If you are diverse, you open it up; you expand it all. Can you see the contradiction? It is in here in the executive summary. I am sorry I have not got through the other part. There is a reference here on page 4 of the executive summary where it says:

VET in schools is meeting a clear demand from students for greater diversity of curriculum and opportunities.

I totally agree with that. But then in some of the introductory comments there is the move—this language comes in—about integrating. That does exactly the opposite. Would you like to comment?

**Ms Loble**—My colleagues may want to add to this. I suppose when we speak of integration we speak of it in a different way than some other states and territories have pursued. Some states and territories have taken small components and embedded them in lots of different courses. New South Wales has pursued a different path. When I say ‘integrated’, I mean integrated in the full range of courses that students may choose from in pursuing their HSC and integrated in the sense that they will get an HSC and a vocational qualification. We have not chosen to—

**Mr SAWFORD**—So the word basically should be ‘accommodated’ rather than ‘integrated’? Is that a more correct term?

**Ms Loble**—I can only repeat what I was saying in that it is fully integrated in the range of choices available to an HSC student, it counts fully towards an HSC and indeed it counts towards university. In that sense it is integrated. It is not integrated in the way—as I was saying—that some of the states and territories have chosen to do it, by taking smaller components. Most students will get a certificate II finishing a 240-hour course, and it may be one of five courses they are taking.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Does anyone else want to comment before I ask a question?

**Dr Willmott**—I would like to make one additional comment. Leslie is quite right about the way in which the curriculum is integrated in the HSC in terms of students being able to achieve an HSC result and also an accredited qualification. One of the things that I think is important about the integration concept is that both the Board of Studies, as the secondary accrediting and certifying body, and the VET sector are applying their stamp of accreditation and approval to this particular qualification, so the student is getting an HSC subject which is both approved by the board and approved as a national vocational qualification. I think that is an important aspect of the integration process.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The impression I get at this stage—and we are very early into this; I might change my mind by the end of this inquiry—is that diversity is not really the aim. We went to Bradfield College this morning. That is one offer. Someone mentioned that there are, I think, 20 senior colleges in New South Wales. I would have thought that is limiting. That is sort of reinforcing the narrow view that one-third of students are taking VET in Schools, whereas I thought two-thirds would be the narrow view. With the structure of secondary schools—in fact, with most of them being comprehensive—I would have thought that is the narrowing view. People in the public arena sometimes have a vote of no confidence in the public secondary school system; their complaint is always the lack of diversity, the lack of difference, the sameness about the system. Do you understand where I am coming from? Basically, you may be saying one thing but people out there in the electorate are saying something completely different. That message is not getting across. In some ways, it is not the message. The message really is integration—I think that is right—but it is not diversity. Maybe we need to be looking forward to that.

I move on to one question on finance. In the resourcing recommendations—and, again, I have not really considered this, but it just stuck out for me—you mentioned increasing recurrent funding. You do not make any mention of capital funding. I would have thought the Commonwealth would be far better placed in terms of capital funding. I do not walk away from the Commonwealth needing to make a commitment to VET—I am not walking away from that at all—but why was it suggested to be recurrent, not both and not capital?

**Ms Loble**—As we have attempted to point out in our statement, we acknowledge that we see a number of costs as being embedded in our budget and we are not, we like to think, making ambit claims for cost shifting back to the Commonwealth. As we increase the number of students coming into VET in Schools, the provision of the recurrent cost is perhaps the biggest cost pressure on us. There is a small amount of ANTA funding available for capital as well. There is a program on a submission basis for what are called ‘skill centres for school students’. That is a small amount and is certainly helpful when we are successful in getting project funding for that. By far the biggest pressure is on the recurrent side as more students elect to take VET in Schools.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So there was no reason why you left it out? It might be somewhere else back there. Is there a reason why you left it out?

**Mr Smith**—The reason that we have not pursued the capital line is that, with the current infrastructure of schools and TAFE, there is already a capital facility to be able to deliver. As more and more students take up VET in Schools, it comes from two components: an increased retention of students—that is, more students at school—and some of the students at school making particular course choices as opposed to others. They may be undertaking a VET course as opposed to some other general education course. The capital infrastructure is there for delivery. It is the additional cost to deliver VET that goes to additional teacher training requirements, registration requirements, and so on, that is really the focus of the attention our growth in participation funding. Our submission is pretty much based on the recurrent nature following increased participation rather than having the capital structure which currently exists for the number of students in our state. That is our focus at this stage.

**CHAIR**—Some courses would have a greater capital component, though, wouldn't they?

**Mr Smith**—They do. Some of them are more resource intensive—automotive, for example, as opposed to perhaps business services.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Mr ALBANESE**—You have raised the issue of the ANTA funds. The whole ANTA agreement is currently being renegotiated. In what way is VET in Schools fitting into that? Has it just been forgotten in terms of those negotiations?

**Ms Loble**—It is still very early days in the negotiations. Ministers have not had the opportunity to engage fully on the issues. The New South Wales minister has made it clear in previous conversations in ANTA forums that his view of VET in Schools funding is that it needs to increase significantly. As you know, and as I think I stated at the beginning, the \$20 million that was set aside for VET in Schools has remained constant. We show on page 21 what from our point of view is an effective cost shift that that has meant to state governments as the per capita has declined as a result.

**Mr ALBANESE**—My second question is perhaps for Bert. I was talking to Kay Schofield last week and she was telling me about an example of Toyota—I am pretty sure it was Toyota, but a motor vehicle manufacturer—that had just had to import labour. They had to import 20 people to run a particular form of new technology. Parallel with this inquiry, as you would be aware, there is a Senate inquiry into skill shortages in Australia. In what way does VET have the potential—the answer to that is pretty obvious—and in what way is that being realised as to its performing a role as a labour market planning mechanism for future demand?

**Mr Evans**—Certainly you would know as well as anybody else the debate that has raged between old and new industries. As Rod knows, I have represented the so-called old industries all my life. I never had much time for the people who described it that way, I must say. You could not describe anything more modern, more new, than the automotive industry. But it is a hard sell. A lot of mums and dads still think manufacturing is old hat. It is a much maligned sort of industry. It is not easy. No matter how hard we try with Toyota and the other companies, some people just get the literature and throw it in the waste bin. There is no simple answer to that question. It is something that we have been going on about for years. Certainly, in providing high-quality VET, the program is really on about top line VET students who have gone to university going around the schools and talking about it, telling people what it has done for them and how it has benefited them. We have about 100 prongs as to how we are trying to get this message out. Anthony has used the word ‘potential’. The potential is huge for VET to do it for well-paid, meaningful careers.

**Mr ALBANESE**—There are two elements to the supply. One is getting young people to want to go into the careers. The second is the identification of those opportunities. Is that one of the tasks, if you like, that your board provides?

**Mr Evans**—It is certainly one of our tasks. One of our tasks is to promote in an honest way where the opportunities are—whether they are in tourism, hospitality or whatever. We promote all those opportunities. We are not just concentrating on emerging industries, for instance. There is a whole range of things. I have been at it, as you know, for a long while, and I have not found any magic formula. We keep at it.

**Mrs MAY**—My question is also to Bert, and it goes back to your opening statement. You focused on the success of VET in Schools in regional and rural areas. Just having a quick look through your submission, I can see that the examples you have used—Ballina High School and Warialda—are in regional areas. We have heard through the committee hearings that VET in Schools is very successful within communities. It is building out there; it can identify in a community where there are shortfalls, as Anthony has just touched on, and where you need the training. Are the cities behind? Where is there room here to grow? Why is it so successful out there? Is it just because of communities working together and identifying those employers within a community? How can we build on it in the cities when we hear that kids are dropping out of school and not going on to tertiary education? This is an option. It is a choice for them. How can we build on it here? Have we built on it here and we are not hearing about it?

**Mr Evans**—The latter. We are not hearing about it.

**Mrs MAY**—You have not used any example in here that is not regional.

**Mr Evans**—We have not. We made a deliberate political choice, if you like, to do that. Cromer High School down in the northern part of Sydney was one of the first with VET in Schools. It was an outstanding program, way ahead of its time. That was largely due to the principal and a couple of teachers who were really dedicated and leading out in front. They were the sorts of things that alerted us to what is going on. You would find one here and one there and all over the place. Then there would be nothing. In our school centres program that Leslie talked about before, there was quite a lot of money being devoted to school centres in schools. It is growing. We just are looking at what is best for a nation, if you like. We elected not to neglect the bush and regional areas. There is a lot of it going on. There are a lot of innovative things going on. In Cleveland high school—we call it something else now—around Redfern, for Aboriginal students, sport is the thing. If you can get kids to go to school because it is going to be satisfying, they are going to do it. It is far better than having them hang around Redfern station. There is a diversity of things that we are looking at. Certainly it is very active. Bob, whose job it is, can reel off the schools where it is really very active. With our work placements, of course, the large numbers are in the city when they are actually getting the work placement jobs.

**Mrs MAY**—I would also like to throw you a question on teachers and the resources and training needed. Through a lot of submissions, we see that the resources are not there—the training for teachers, attracting the right teachers and attracting those teachers who can teach VET in Schools. Leslie, do you have a comment on that and where it is going with your staff?

**Ms Loble**—A number of activities are under way to address that. First of all, we are working to get more preservice training for teachers specifically on VET and particularly on how to deal with the assessments and the competency based nature of that compared with traditional school provision. That is one. We certainly have worked hard to try to attract people who have been working in industry into schools and provide them with retraining opportunities. Everybody has to have at least a certificate for workplace assessment, working with teachers and getting training, both at TAFE and in industry, and keeping that current. It is a significant focus of our professional development; we do recognise the unique characteristics that VET in Schools has.

**Mrs MAY**—Would you say there is a shortfall there?

**Mr Smith**—I would not say there is a shortfall. The delivery of VET in Schools occurs across potentially three environments. One, as Gary has mentioned, is through TAFE itself, where the students actually attend TAFE. It is delivered by TAFE teachers. The second is in schools. There is a tight structure in New South Wales to ensure that each of the delivering schoolteachers attains the qualification that has been set by a committee which comprises TAFE, the accrediting authority, VETAB, industry and the education sector. The benchmarks are set and teachers are retrained to be able to deliver. That retraining includes the attainment of certificate IV.

We also have an industrial arrangement whereby TAFE teachers are able to come into the school environment. That was negotiated in the 2000 salaries agreement—the terms and conditions of employment. TAFE teachers can be timetabled as part of their TAFE delivery through that TAFE organisation to attend a school to deliver VET. There are degrees of opportunity to include qualified VET teachers to be able to deliver. All schoolteachers that are retrained must maintain industry currency. There are various opportunities for that to occur. In some instances, we have set up a teachers-in-business program to facilitate teachers coming out of the school environment, which is problematic in itself. As Gary said, our schoolteachers are not dedicated VET schoolteachers. They teach across a range of other subjects, including other higher school certificate subjects. To take teachers out, for example, during term time, is problematic in that they are then not in front of their other classes as well.

Systemically, we are addressing those things. Let me go to what Anthony was saying earlier about the ANTA agreement and our capacity to deliver against ANTA. The funds that come out of ANTA are in potentially three forms to us: part of the \$20 million; part of the BVET funds that Bert's committee makes available for work placement, currently at about \$3 million; and some additional funds that BVET has provided to us over several years. That currently is nowhere near supporting the cost of our delivery to 64,000 students. In New South Wales we look at other funding sources. Obviously, some of that is internal to, or integrated within, school budgets. But also, to pay for the TAFE component, where students actually leave the school and go to TAFE, the school's staffing and salary structure is reduced by an equivalent of the time that students are not in school and is paid to TAFE. If a student is at school for eight of 10 units, the school receives only eight of 10 units and the two units are taken from the salary centrally and paid to TAFE.

There are a lot of ways we embrace what ANTA is able to provide to us, but recognising always that it has been insufficient. New South Wales in particular—as well as many other states—has built around a structure of costs and finance to enable the growth that we have experienced in the last few years. If I can go back to what Rob was saying—why not have 66 per cent or two-thirds—that is admirable and achievable, but what we have in New South Wales is separate courses for VET with nine industry frameworks which can add to students' university entrance and 52 other courses. To me, that is a diversity in the higher school certificate curriculum—that students can choose from among 61 VET courses as part of their HSC.

What it also means is that the students themselves, when they undertake these courses, are undertaking entry level training to certificate II level. What we have not done is integrate competencies into all of our courses so that perhaps 62 per cent or 66 per cent of our students are doing some VET. What our 36 per cent are doing is entry level certificate II VET. There is a slight difference in the way we perceive it.

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**Ms PLIBERSEK**—I noticed, flicking through this submission, that you mentioned several times a program for Indigenous students called New South Wales Learning Works. It is a pilot project. I would like you to tell the committee a bit more about that. Also, you mention in a couple of places that some Indigenous communities have suggested that vocational courses should be extended to younger students from as early as year 8. I wonder if you want to expand a bit about that.

**Mr Evans**—I can answer the first part of that. This is a strong view of my board members. It is not yet the official view of the Board of Studies. The President of the Board of Studies is one of the members of the accreditation board. He is not quite convinced yet that we are right. But we are convinced. The parents are convinced.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That was the view of 50 years ago, wasn't it.

**Mr Evans**—We are convinced of that. We have to work that through the government by way of negotiation with the Board of Studies and the government.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—Is one of the sticking points that it is hard to ask kids who are 14 years old to make decisions about what their future careers are?

**Mr Evans**—We argue that a bit in the submission. Perhaps David could talk to that in a moment. VET in Schools has a number of purposes or pathways. You could take a narrow view that it is only about keeping Aboriginal kids in school, but what is wrong with that? Some of the academic or economic purists like Jim might have a different academic view about it; we are more brutal about that and simply say that, if its purpose is to keep kids in Bourke at school for another three or four years, it serves its purpose. The debate is not resolved within New South Wales yet, but we do not propose to let go. David or Leslie could talk more about Learning Works.

**Mr Collins**—In the views that have been coming through in the BVET consultations with Indigenous communities, there has been a very strong message to bring VET back into years 7 to 10. I think often that has been wanting to look at an applied approach to learning and wanting to look at employment related or vocational learning rather than looking at fully accredited VET being transported into the curriculum.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—So you are talking about more job skills rather than developing particular competencies in specific areas.

**Mr Collins**—I am talking about more job skills, a better understanding of the world of work—that sort of cultural issue around the world of work. I am also talking about a different and more practical approach to learning that is promoted by a number of the communities as being very appealing and about what they want for their young people. I think there is also a strong view that comes through about community involvement with schools and broadening the nature of the provision within schools. There is a real challenge for a number of the remote communities, in particular, about identifying the labour market and about Indigenous students being able to engage with it. There are also a number of issues that we have seen for students, such as building up their confidence and their ability to consider the work placement aspects of vocational courses and that sort of relationship with local employers. The Learning Works program is one avenue we have used to look at vocational learning—not for the accredited VET

but more for general approaches to developing an understanding of work and exposure to workplace activities.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—What does a kid do in Learning Works? How long is the course and what does it involve?

**Mr Collins**—It may involve a work experience type program; it may involve a classroom activity and some engagement with employers as well. Certainly it is not structured in the same way as a VET in Schools course. There is a reasonable amount of flexibility within the program to shape the sorts of activities they engage in and to build that into the broader school curriculum. One of the problems is that it is program based; it is not an ongoing program—or a source of resources—to support young people. It is a means of attracting people to VET, and we like to see it as an opportunity to enable young people to make the transition into accredited VET programs.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—Does it depend on the coordinator or teacher at the school working with individual kids to see what would be beneficial to them? How do you decide whether a young person does a work placement or something more classroom based in this pilot program? How you make those distinctions?

**Mr Collins**—The program operates on a local basis, so local decisions are made according to the needs of the student group, the needs of individuals and the relationship the school has within its community.

**Ms PLIBERSEK**—Do you find that work placement is a difficulty in smaller communities where you do not have as many employers?

**Mr Collins**—For Indigenous students, particularly, it is an issue. There may not be the range of employers but, as well, the responses that the board has had from its consultations are that there are barriers in certain communities to young Indigenous people working, particularly in retail areas. These things need to be overcome. There are personal barriers that students have about feeling that they are welcome in a workplace and in those sorts of employment arrangements. They are some of the challenges that our coordinators have to deal with to build up the confidence of the students to undertake a workplace training opportunity.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Earlier on you mentioned that there are no dedicated VET teachers and that teachers are not VET trained in preservice training. They do not come through trained as VET teachers. Do you think that is possibly something that might occur in the future, given that one of the themes from a lot of the industry and employer groups is this whole issue of industrial experience and the need to be constantly upgraded in terms of what is going on in industry? Do you think that is possibly a direction we might go where we have specialist VET teachers with industry experience who, for their preservice training, specialise in VET issues and are constantly updated with industry experience as postgraduation professional development?

**Mr Smith**—As the delivery of VET becomes more sophisticated, we may move in that direction. New South Wales, however, has a number of limiting factors to that. One of them is that the teachers in our schools currently teach across the range of years 7 to 12. Very few of those teachers would have sufficient classes or students in simply years 11 and 12 to fill the

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total time available to deliver. We could move to part-time teachers or we could move to teachers across schools.

**CHAIR**—Given the growing percentage of students undertaking VET courses and the extension of that into years 9 and 10, say, through school based apprenticeships and so on—

**Mr Smith**—Yes. As we move into senior colleges where the critical mass of students becomes more apparent, you will find more and more teachers becoming closer to full-time deliverers. New South Wales, however, does not have dedicated VET schools. VET is part of the comprehensive agenda even though we now have 20 senior colleges and VET is a key component. If we go to the senior campus at Oatley, for example, about 50 per cent of delivery there is in VET. You have teachers pretty well full time delivering. As the delivery becomes more sophisticated and as the structures of our schools in New South Wales evolve, we will be moving in that direction. But under current circumstances with full-time teachers it is not possible within schools, and even across schools, in a geographic context.

**CHAIR**—Do you think a move in that direction would be desirable in terms of helping to raise industry confidence in the sorts of teachers who are teaching VET in Schools?

**Mr Smith**—I can see how it could, but that is not necessarily to say that it could occur in the short term, because there are a whole range of other circumstances—industrial circumstances, the costs of travel and all sorts of things.

**Ms Loble**—As I mentioned earlier, we do actively seek people who have been working in industry to come in to teach in schools. One of the advantages of being one department is that it allows us to take up TAFE teachers who have industry experience. The work placement component is an important part of ensuring the industry relevance for a student, as well as the preservice training that we are increasingly trying to integrate into teacher education. There are a variety of strategies that will help ensure the relevance, we hope, so that the confidence remains high in industry.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I will put this to Bert, because I know it is difficult for bureaucrats to answer this question honestly.

**Mr Evans**—It is not hard for me.

**Mr SAWFORD**—We have a comprehensive system of high schools in this country, and not just in New South Wales. You have a bit more diversity in New South Wales than most other states, to be quite honest. In terms of VET in Schools, I am amazed that a place like Bradfield College—and we only went to it this morning—which seems so successful, is not duplicated. I am surprised that the senior college concept has not been expanded more in this country, and even in New South Wales. I am surprised that we are running away from the question the chairman asked about dedicated VET schools and that no-one wants to actually talk about it.

**Mr ALBANESE**—We will bring you to one of the public meetings in favour of comprehensive schools that went on last year.

**Mr SAWFORD**—If you look at VET in the comprehensive school system—you mentioned a principal in South Australia; I have forgotten his name—they have had to climb against the

system. When you talk to those people off the record, you find that they have had enormous difficulty in their school communities in terms of focusing on or having a high focus on VET. They have struggled to get that known. It seems to me that Peter Turner at the Salisbury school has got into all sorts of problems—you might remember this, Gary, from South Australia; I am not talking about his other problems—in trying to battle against the system. In actual fact, what he did was very successful, but it was against everything the bureaucrats said. I imagine that there are a few people in this state too who have taken VET very seriously. They have always been principals, because they are the only ones who can wear the system and buck it all. Is the current system that we have in this country going to grow the VET sector as you acknowledge that it should be growing?

**Mr Evans**—I think it will. There are all those perception problems and everybody has their own ideas about it, but there is very much a commitment in New South Wales to do it. These things have never been easy. There is an outstanding example on the television nearly every night now of Plumpton High School, where a principal has young mothers going to the school. It is fantastic. It is the same in South Australia. From where I sit as an outsider, not fully paid, I see a total commitment across New South Wales to making it work from people from different branches of the bureaucracy. It comes from the director-general, from the minister and from right across the board. I think we are making absolutely huge advances in the commitment to making it work. But there is a very long way to go on the perception issue to convince mums and dads that not everybody should go to university.

**Mr Smith**—I will go back to when I was leaving primary school. At that stage I had to make a decision to go into a vocational school—they were called tech colleges—and to move towards the intermediate certificate. There was no opportunity in those schools to go on to a leaving certificate in those days. The process was to get the intermediate certificate, to leave school at age 15 and on you go. The alternative was to go to one of the academic stream schools, and there were a number throughout Sydney. The tech schools were of two types; there were the home science schools and the tech schools themselves. I was 12 years old and had to make that decision: will I follow a vocational path or a more academic path? I made a decision, but it was not easy, and I am not retracting from that decision.

Now we have an opportunity for students to come through school, to enter into years 11 and 12 and continue with their studies towards an HSC—including VET—and, on exit at year 12, at 18 years of age, to make pure decisions about an academic or vocational path. I think they are in a much better position to make those decisions because of their whole-of-life experiences. But, more importantly, if they leave at the end of year 12 now and go to a TAFE college for VET study, if they have undertaken VET study during years 11 and 12 they enter TAFE with advanced standing. They can enter at the start of, and can work towards, certificate III. It was only about five years ago that, if they left at year 12, albeit having undertaken VET courses under the JSST program, they reverted to entry level TAFE and started all over again.

I think we are much more sophisticated in what we do. Our structure has mapped, and has facilitated students to undertake, pathways that were not necessarily available. Students still choose at age 15 to go to vocational or academic TAFE or to go on to years 11 and 12. But now it is not that purist view of leaving school. People can stay at school, continue with vocational and other studies, and end up with vocational training but with advanced standing. I think we are sophisticated enough to do it.

**Mr Evans**—In relation to universities, VET was a no-no not so many years ago. Universities were putting up the shutters; they did not want to know about VET in Schools. Leslie, to her credit, has done an amazing job. She has 22 or 23 universities signed up to accept the university index. That is another huge advance. We have advances on any number of fronts.

**CHAIR**—Twenty-two universities, but what percentage of VET in Schools courses account for UAI, roughly? Do you have a ballpark figure?

**Ms Loble**—In New South Wales all eight will accept roughly one course out of five.

**CHAIR**—Sure, but not all VET courses qualify for that.

**Ms Loble**—No, but we have seven industry curriculum frameworks and an additional one that will come on board soon. All of those are recognised. We also have quite a wide range of courses—TAFE provided, by and large—that are VET in Schools but are not the industry curriculum frameworks. We negotiated with the universities in New South Wales to recognise a course, and I would suggest that students are voting with their feet. As I mentioned before, year 12 participation in VET in Schools has gone up enormously given that recognition. Last year nearly 80 per cent of VET in Schools students elected to take an optional exam so that their VET in Schools marks would count towards university recognition. They may not have gone on to apply but they wanted that option.

Nationally, which is what Bert is referring to, our work here has led to all the states and territories, the Commonwealth and four national industry bodies coming together to attempt in a variety of ways to enhance the choices for students by getting 20 universities around Australia to say they are interested in enhancing that recognition. We are now engaged in a process of trying to deal with assessment in a way that will allow us to draw out not only competency but also the underpinning knowledge that a student has, because that is one of the barriers, I would suggest, not only for universities but also in effect for industry. Industry, almost more than universities, wants to know what is underneath that competency.

**Dr Willmott**—Rod, as somebody who actually did come from another state, I would have to agree with your comment earlier that there is probably more diversity here than there is in other states. There are lots of different models in New South Wales—senior highs, the Bradfield model and various others—and it seems to me that that is a healthy aspect of our system.

**Mr SAWFORD**—There are not enough of them, Gary, but some.

**Dr Willmott**—I support Bob's comment in relation to the importance of our not going back to a model which in the past drew a very sharp divide between vocational, technical and academic studies. The key to the growth and success of VET in secondary schools is the way in which it is closely related to, and integrated with, the rest of the curriculum. Speaking from a TAFE perspective, entry to TAFE is becoming more and more competitive. Rightly or wrongly, we had a preferential application and selection system for TAFE in New South Wales this year which was almost as large as the process employed by universities. It operated not on the basis of the UAI but on a range of other criteria, but it shows that competition for entry into TAFE courses is significant. It is no longer a case of just walking up on the day of enrolment and getting into anything you like. More and more, if somebody has done a vocation certificate II, that is of great assistance in giving them a leg-up and advanced standing in a certificate III or IV

or whatever. Having a balance in their HSC or year 12 result—increasingly HSC—of studies across various areas is important in terms of underpinning knowledge and a broad range of studies, because many TAFE students do go on to joint programs and so forth in universities and other areas.

**Mr SAWFORD**—For the public record, if you go back to the Karmel report—and it is there in the Karmel report even though people like to hide it—despite the reason for comprehensive high schools being based on an argument for egalitarianism, it had to do with cost. That is what it had to do with. It also had to do with the increasing ability of the VET schools—the old technical schools—to compete both in an academic and a vocational way. The technical schools in Australia at that time were forced to change; they started winning the academic prizes and the high schools started to feel a bit irrelevant. The move then came from the universities, and that is also acknowledged in the Karmel report. So this idea that the technical schools were a second-grade education is simply not true and never was.

**CHAIR**—Thanks, Rod. The time has gone, I am afraid. Thank you very much for your contribution to date. We may at some time down the track either want to put some further questions to you on notice or perhaps have another hearing after we have absorbed your submission. We will contact you about that. Thank you again for your sincere help today.

[3.32 p.m.]

**TAYAR, Mrs Margaret, Executive Officer and Secretary, National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council Ltd**

**CHAIR**—As a formality, I remind you that the proceedings of this committee are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the house. Would you like to make some introductory remarks?

**Mrs Tayar**—Thank you. I am the executive officer of the National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council Ltd trading as MINTRAC. The meat industry is a major industry in Australia. We are primarily located in regional and rural Australia. We have 25,000 employees in meat processing plants, 7,000 in smallgoods, 5,000 in meat wholesaling and the food services area, which is an expanding area, and about 20,000 in retailing. Perhaps the single biggest problem we have is labour shortages. We have a centralisation of some of the industry where we have large plants, with up to 1,000 employees, wanting to recruit large numbers in regional locations. We are fighting an uphill battle due to the negative perception of meat in the community and of meat as a career option. We share that negative community perception with the manufacturing sector and food processing, where we are seen as a dirty industry. The community does not necessarily see us as a career option for its children. We are very keen to utilise the local pool of workers, of which the schools are a significant part. We see VET in Schools as a career option to extend the career paths that we already have in the industry. We see VET in Schools as a progression of our existing career paths.

Looking at the situation for the range of options that are available for VET in Schools, we have vocational guidance and careers nights. We have increasing involvement in that area but school councillors often do not put forward the meat industry as a career option. That is a problem for us. We have work experience and work placement, except in New South Wales, where schoolchildren are banned from entry into meat processing plants. If anyone goes into a meat processing plant, they need Q fever vaccination and OH&S, because safety is a major issue for us. They need induction training, supervision guidelines and specific areas to work in, because some of our machinery and areas are quite dangerous, and they need to be trained and supervised.

In terms of vocational courses in schools, we do not really have any programs specifically for meat but we are participating and, because our plants have a range of jobs in marketing and a diversity of jobs, that is an option. Some of them in business services or IT come into the plants but it is often too theoretical. We question the competency of schoolteachers to deliver and assess it, because they are not familiar with the industry. We have issues such as with a cookery teacher teaching occupational health and safety and not knowing about zoonotic diseases—and not mentioning them at all—and not understanding machinery. It has consequences for safety. The vocational courses have the advantage of counting towards the final exams, which we think is important.

Perhaps the most important area for us is the part-time traineeships. They suit the industry. What we are keen to have, and what we do have in the few examples that we have, is the situation where they do real tasks in a real work environment in work hours. All of those are

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problems in some of the areas. For example, they often come in only in school hours and not work hours. Another problem in some of our plants is that there are only small numbers. If you look at rural areas in particular, there may be small numbers of employees, but if, for example, they lose their meat inspector they may be forced to close down. We need to keep replacing with recruiting and career progression. The small numbers cause a problem in terms of training providers. It is not financially viable for them to commit the time needed for the supervision and off-job training.

In terms of the school, if they are the registered training organisation we think it is important that they have the industry experience. We question the validity of the assessment and, in particular, who does the assessment. Again, with the on-job component, you have all the issues that I talked about before: the need for the Q fever vaccination, induction, safety, and all of those issues. It is really important that the traineeship be counted as well for their final exams and not just for the vocational side of it.

We need students to be exposed to the meat industry. We believe there are real career options and a real diversity of jobs in the industry. We are also very keen that they actually gain experience with the real jobs in a work environment, because we want them to be work ready. In these regional locations, we often play a role in the work hardening of local people so that they come into the plant and they work hard. There is lots of competition in some of those areas with other employers like mines, power stations and those sorts of things. We get them work ready and they may go in and out of the industry into other competing local industries. The problems for us are safety, the real jobs and the teachers being familiar with the industry. We find that some of the schools are unwilling to enter into programs because the schoolteachers cannot deliver them. They have to use TAFE and the school loses hours so they are not interested in undertaking the program. The small number of students makes it less viable for providers, and we grapple always with the different rules and outcomes in different states, with the different funding options and having to go through the same bureaucratic processes over and over again from state to state.

In terms of outcomes, the industry wants the opportunity to have VET in Schools and wants to be able to expose students to industry, but it needs to be real tasks in real work situations and part of the career progression in the industry. I would like to talk about the Indigenous side, too, in view of what you were talking about with the last speaker. We have had a number of successful programs in some of our plants with Indigenous students but it has been more about pre-employment than the VET in Schools program. Three of our plants—Fletchers International at Dubbo and near Albany in WA, Australian Meat Holdings in Ipswich, Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Townsville, and Bindaree Beef in Orange, Murgon and Inverell—have all had very successful Indigenous programs. I think AMH, Australian Meat Holdings, had about an 87 per cent retention rate. I cannot tell you the numbers but I think they were quite significant.

With the sorts of programs we have there, the companies work really closely with an Indigenous employment service. They match the needs of the company with the local Indigenous community. They go through the normal recruiting processes and the medicals—Q fever vaccination and so on. They do a cross-cultural awareness program with our supervisors. Then the proposed Indigenous workers do a pre-employment course which gives them exposure to the industry and makes them work ready—they get used to the hours and the type of job. That has been highly successful because that allows us to test with these people whether they

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want to work in the industry and want to continue. All those who complete the pre-employment course are employed in traineeships in the company and we are getting good retention rates with that. We are currently undertaking a feasibility study for an industry approach to that with DEWR. At the moment we are grappling with the question of at what level we should introduce that into the industry—whether we keep it local or whether we can have an industry approach to that and virtually manage it at an industry level.

**CHAIR**—Is that Indigenous program through an Indigenous employment organisation? It is not actually through schools; it is not VET in Schools for Indigenous students.

**Mrs Tayar**—It is actually a large partnership, because it is the Indigenous employment service, the companies, who play a significant role, the RTOs and the New Apprenticeship centres. There is a huge range involved. It is largely driven by the companies.

**CHAIR**—One of the issues you mentioned in your submission is the lack of industry experience for teachers of VET in Schools, because not many teachers have had experience in the meat industry. Have you got any programs by which you are trying to overcome that problem?

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes. They can use TAFE as the RTO, or we have a lot of private providers. Some of our companies are enterprise based providers. In New South Wales, we are involved at the moment in trying just to get work experience and work placements in schools. They will train their district or regional VET in Schools coordinators to evaluate individual plants. We are developing a safety audit so that they can go in and measure whether that company has an OH&S management system and is implementing it, and we are developing guidelines and putting all the processes in place to make sure that it is safe, that there is proper supervision and proper training, that areas that they can work in have been identified and so on. We are hoping that that will be a model for other states and other industries. But the problem in New South Wales is that, at the moment, school students are banned.

**CHAIR**—What are the main growth areas in terms of employment opportunities, particularly with regard to traineeships and apprenticeships? Is it in meat processing, IT or retail, say?

**Mrs Tayar**—It is meat processing.

**CHAIR**—It is processing.

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes. We have about 7,000 workers per year enrolled in the New Apprenticeships scheme and we have progressed from entry level right up to the diploma level, so we are moving up the scale to level III, level IV and level V.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are the 25,000 people you mentioned in rural areas largely in abattoirs?

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes, there are 25,000 in abattoirs. Over half of the whole industry is in regional and rural areas.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The 7,000 in smallgoods manufacturing would be mostly urban?

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The 20,000 in retailing are butchers, are they?

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Have you got any information on the age profile of each of those three groups?

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes. In meat processing the age is slightly higher. We have an ageing population—it is slightly higher than in manufacturing in general—but it is a very physically demanding job so we need to replace those people. In smallgoods—in all the sectors—we have an ageing population that needs to be replaced. Our major problem is the unattractiveness of the industry, or the perception that does not make it a career choice for a lot of students.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I have a couple of these smallgoods manufacturing places in my electorate and they are always complaining about the difficulty of getting and holding on to staff. They pay \$1,000 or \$1,200 a week; it is not as if they are not earning big money. As you were saying in your introduction, there is a perception that needs to be overcome. Going back to your submission, when you talk about restricting VET in Schools participants to particular jobs, I assume that you mean in abattoirs rather than in smallgoods production and retail.

**Mrs Tayar**—No, it could be all of them.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you need Q fever vaccination for all of them? You only need it for abattoirs, don't you?

**Mrs Tayar**—That is right. But for retail we would not, for example, have them on a mincer or a bandsaw. In smallgoods a lot of the machinery is unsuitable, so it would be more semiskilled jobs. In the abattoirs, for example, we would not have the work experience people on the slaughter floor.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I can understand that, but there are plenty of secondary kids who will use bandsaws in other areas. Bandsaws are dangerous, and so are lathes, but kids use them; if they are well supervised, it is not a problem.

**Mrs Tayar**—That is right; we agree with that. But the main types of courses that the students are doing are part-time traineeships; they are only there for a couple of days a week. It takes quite a while for them to get the skill to use a bandsaw. They need to be closely supervised, and that may not be possible. We would rather give them exposure to a range of jobs in diverse areas of the plant. We have actually developed a kit to teach them how to use the bandsaw.

**Mr SAWFORD**—To teach butchers?

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What about the schools themselves? Are there any meat traineeships happening?

**Mrs Tayar**—In schools?

**Mr SAWFORD**—In Sydney.

**Mrs Tayar**—No, not with school students in New South Wales, because of the ban.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Anywhere else?

**Mrs Tayar**—In Queensland there are limited numbers.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can you give some examples?

**Mrs Tayar**—There is Gleeson meats in more of a rural location in Queensland. They have one trainee. Teys Bros at Beenleigh—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are these abattoirs?

**Mrs Tayar**—Gleeson is more of a retailer. Teys Bros is a meat processor, and they have a number of students. There have been others in the past at Murgon as well, but there are not a lot. Queensland is really the only one that has a meat processing traineeship. New South Wales has a retail one. We tried to get a part-time traineeship for school students up last year at AJ Bush—they have about 50 retail outlets—but we only got one student interested.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I have one last question, which sounds pedantic and probably is pedantic, so forgive me for it. In your submission, when referring to monitoring kids doing dangerous work—I understand all of that—you keep using the word ‘restricted’. It sort of sounds a bit defensive, in the sense of accommodating VET. Was there a reason you use the word ‘restricted’, rather than keep it to ‘supervised’, or whatever?

**Mrs Tayar**—Not really, no.

**Mr FARMER**—I know that the emphasis right across the board in many industries is to try and change public perception, in particular parents’ perception of where their children might end up if they move into a particular line of business—specifically trades, and in this case the meat industry. How many marketing and management positions within the meat industry are filled by people who actually worked in the industry originally—who kicked off in the industry right from the very basics and served their apprenticeship there? Or does the meat industry hire these people? For instance, they might need a manager or a marketing person and they advertise for this position. I would like to hear your response first and then I will tell you the reasons for my question.

**Mrs Tayar**—In meat processing in general, the majority of our managers have come up through the system. That is extremely common. Most of them would not have had any formal qualifications. It is only since 1995 that we have introduced any formal qualifications for meat processing.

**Mr FARMER**—My reason for that question was that, in order to make all of the industries more appealing to the school leavers and to the VET system for progression thereafter, the

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students need to understand—and the parents need to understand for their children—that they have a future in the industry and they have the opportunity to progress their careers. I think that it is a great thing to hear that management positions are filled by people who have worked their way through the ranks, because it is not just a matter of getting to absolute basics and then just leaving it at that. However, I think that is something that definitely needs to be advertised a lot more. It is certainly something we need to address with this inquiry as well, because the message is certainly not getting out there. That perception is still very much as it was: if you work in the meat industry, you work in a slaughterhouse and that is as far as it goes. You might get a great pay packet but, as far as a future is concerned, young people, and more importantly their parents, are more interested in their future and the prestige of their job—even more than the pay packet.

**Mrs Tayar**—The meat industry is putting its money where its mouth is in terms of training. It contributes over \$2 million per year to MINTRAC for its operation, which comes from the levy on the industry matched by the R&D dollar. The industry has committed a large amount of funding. This year \$700,000 has been committed towards the diploma in meat processing and \$365,000 towards scholarships to upgrade the skills of workers who are largely already in the industry. We have taken our HR people through a program of identifying their existing skills and gaining them credit towards getting a formal qualification recognising their experience. We have scholarships for families of meat workers and to upgrade the skills of workers already in there. A tradesperson might upgrade to, say, an engineer. The industry is doing everything in its power. We have the whole industry, from entry level right through to management, communicating to the local areas that there are career options, that the industry values its people and that the industry is committing real dollars to upgrading the skills of its existing workers.

**CHAIR**—If there was any key message that you would like to give to us or to the government in terms of how we could help in that process, what would it be?

**Mrs Tayar**—It would be to simplify the processes and to make it as easy as possible. We need one national consistent approach to VET in Schools, and for it to be as easy as possible for us to get part-time traineeships up and operating in schools.

**CHAIR**—Given that the problems are more on the perception side, and given some of those OH&S issues in the workplace, how does simplifying it help?

**Mrs Tayar**—We have a lot of companies that want to participate in VET in Schools but cannot. That is one area. What we are doing in New South Wales with DET is important because we are familiarising the VET in Schools coordinators and the local high schools with the local meat processing plants. It is an education process. Using that as a model would be useful around Australia so that we get the vocational counsellors and the schools counsellors on side to get them familiar with the industry. It is all those sorts of issues.

**Mrs MAY**—There are obviously barriers to participation in your industry. You talk about flexibility with the schools, school hours and lack of teachers in VET training in schools. There is a partnership there really. Obviously the meat industry is specialised. How do we get those VET teachers in schools? We have heard from people before, and maybe we need to look at your industry people to have them skilled up to teach. Is that something you would advocate? Is that where you are coming from as well?

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes, absolutely. With 7,000 of our workers enrolled, and with all of the training conducted on the site, our meat processing plants are highly skilled to manage training. To be able to use them to supervise is the best combination for us.

**Mrs MAY**—You have talked about your commitment to training within the industry itself, and you are obviously doing a fantastic job. You have scholarships and there are all sorts of things. Do you need VET in Schools? Is there still a shortfall of skilled young people to go into the industry?

**Mrs Tayar**—Absolutely.

**Mrs MAY**—There is?

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes.

**Mrs MAY**—So there is still a wealth of jobs out there to be had?

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes. Our biggest problem is labour shortage and labour turnover.

**Mrs MAY**—Are you marketing into those local communities where those processing plants are and where the industry is very vibrant?

**Mrs Tayar**—As much as we can. The local companies take huge responsibilities for that. We have developed a little interactive CD, and some of our companies have as well. They sponsor cricket—

**Mrs MAY**—At the community level?

**Mrs Tayar**—Yes. They are being seen as good corporate citizens. There is no fat in the system in our companies and it is incredibly labour intensive to do this. Our company people are out there in the schools at night for vocational counselling and all of those things. There is a shortage of resources to be able to do that.

**Mrs MAY**—Thank you.

**CHAIR**—If there are no other questions, thank you very much. It has been very helpful.

[4.01 p.m.]

**GHOST, Mr Stephen, General Manager, Education and Training, Australian Industry Group**

**WRIGHT, Mr Douglas Thomas, Special Representative, Australian Industry Group**

**CHAIR**—Could you please state the capacity in which you appear before the committee.

**Mr Wright**—I am the former director of the Metal Trades Industry Association and I work in a special representative capacity for the AI Group, particularly in the training area. I am also chairman of the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Industries ITAB, representing the AI Group.

**CHAIR**—As a formality, I need to remind you that proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. We would prefer that you give any evidence or make any comments on the public record. If for some reason you do want to make a private comment, we can arrange that if you let us know. Perhaps to begin with you might like to make some introductory comments; then we will hand over to questions.

**Mr Ghost**—The submission that we prepared and submitted last year was made on the basis of the Australian Industry Group and its representative members. The Australian Industry Group is the largest direct-membership organisation of employers in Australia, largely representing the manufacturing, construction and engineering service sectors, although we do have membership across quite a diverse range of industry sectors these days. Our surveys of industry for this particular submission were exclusively drawn from the manufacturing sector; all the responses from our members were from that sector. We put together this submission around a range of issues that we thought were important with regard to the manufacturing industry. We think that VET in Schools is one of the most important aspects of vocational skill formation in this country today, and that there are some issues that need to be looked at over the next period. We would hope that this inquiry would go some way in identifying those issues that can be dealt with over a period of time. I think that we would not say much more than that, other than to represent our submission through the questioning process.

**CHAIR**—I might get the ball rolling. In your submission you made a lot of the issue of the changing nature of the work force—and I think we would all agree with that—and the fact that generic skills—such as an employee's ability to adapt to new technology, work practices and so on—are becoming critical to companies, perhaps rather than specific skills. On page 5, you even said:

This approach would also minimise the requirement for occupationally specific access to the workplace ...

On page 3 you said:

The current focus on using AQF programs and competency standards designed for delivery in the workplace may not be the most suitable vehicle for achieving employment skills outside of an apprenticeship ...

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Am I misreading it, or are you suggesting that perhaps the emphasis on VET in schools is a bit wrong, and that instead of focusing on, say, school based apprenticeships and traineeships or specific industry related VET courses we ought to be putting more focus on generic workplace skills?

**Mr Ghost**—Can I separate that out slightly in terms of the response. I think there are differences between VET in Schools and school based apprenticeships and training. We would not have the same concerns about that issue with young people who are in contracts of training under apprenticeships and traineeships because we believe that that process obliges young people to be in the workplace for a reasonable amount of time. The concern is probably more with the mainstream VET in Schools, particularly in the post-compulsory years where access to the workplace is often not adequate and the teachers who are responsible for those programs have no currency in terms of industry requirements.

In one of our reports in 1999, which was titled *Training to compete*, there were references from employers who were suggesting that we can teach people how to use a lathe but that we want the school system to instil in young people the underpinning knowledge and skills that allow us to teach those people to use a lathe. Unfortunately, but not deliberately, the way training packages have been constructed is very much around industry contexts that do not lend themselves well to the school context or the school environment. A recent report that we produced on emerging industries would suggest that some of those technical skills have not been invented yet. How do you actually facilitate the uptake of those? You do that through a range of generic skills that we tend to call employability skills, which underpin how people acquire those skills in the future.

If those employability or generic skills are dealt with more overtly within the school system, it then perhaps diminishes the requirement for workplace access, although there has to be a context for that. We think it diminishes it in the sense that we are not measuring against competency outcomes; we are measuring more against industry outcomes in terms of awareness and so on. We saw that as a way of dealing with the issue of the training package and AQF framework being used in the schools by having something else that deals with it in a different way.

**CHAIR**—To do that you would still need—perhaps even more—your teachers spending time in industry, developing those skills to pass on to their students.

**Mr Ghost**—It does not take away from the issue of currency of the workplace for school teachers—certainly not. In a hard technical sense it does, but in an awareness of how industry operates and what the future of industry is, it certainly does not. We would see that being dealt with, firstly, through teacher training. As somebody who has been through teacher training and has dealt with universities in the education sectors in recent times, the issue of vocational skill formation and the currency of the workplace at the VET level is not dealt with well at all, as far as I can see. So there is the issue of the initial exposure to the workplace through vocational issues in teacher training and then there is the currency issue through professional development. We understand these things are difficult but, if a teacher is responsible for vocational training in an industry sector, they need to have currency in the same way we would expect a teacher or an educator in the VET sector to have it.

**Mr Wright**—It is a major problem through the TAFE system as well. It is not just at school level.

**CHAIR**—How do we address it? Could we have a system, for instance, with preservice teacher training whereby for one year or six months out of that the trainee teacher spent time in a range of different industries to get industry currency.

**Mr Ghost**—The problem is that there is no clear destination in terms of vocational training for teachers at that early stage, so the exposure has to be very generic. I am not sure that that is particularly satisfactory, in the sense that in the manufacturing industry the requirements and expectations for skills are vastly different from maybe tourism or retail. Perhaps there needs to be some decisions made in terms of what industry sector a teacher might likely go to at that early stage—not in a specific sense but in a general sense. Manufacturing is a very big industry in its widest sense, and so is retail; but there are some significant differences, and perhaps some thought should be put to making trainee teachers make decisions about where they might ultimately go at that stage.

**CHAIR**—I am not sure that there is a capacity to do that under the current system, because it is far more generic at the moment.

**Mr Ghost**—No, not at all.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can I just go to your actual submission. I want to refer to a number of issues that you raised. The first one is on mathematics. Basically, the report that I have anecdotally is that a lot of people who are conducting the VET program in schools remark on the lack of mathematical and language skills. You make mention of that as well. Then you talk about the PISA results. I wonder if, in fact, that is a good example when you think that in this country, where we had 50,000 people doing higher mathematics 10 years ago, we now have 15,000 people doing higher mathematics. That raises some big problems for down the track, and even currently, in terms of replacing those people. The current mathematicians are in their 50s.

**Mr Ghost**—Fifty is not old!

**Mr SAWFORD**—But they retire.

**Mr Ghost**—I happened to be in Germany when the PISA results were produced. The German educators were devastated by the fact that they were not ranked very highly in terms of their structured system and so on, so I took particular note of it. As a result of that, the words were constructed quite carefully around the fact that employers still perceive that there is a problem with mathematics, but that was qualified by ‘The dissatisfaction is felt to be a reflection of the decreasing quality of the applicant pool being experienced in the manufacturing sector.’

We are not saying that everybody has a problem with the level of maths that kids have when they come from school; what we are saying is that some employers in the manufacturing sector have a perception that the mathematics is not adequate in the young people who come into the sector. But that is by virtue of the decreasing quality of the applicant pool, which is determined by the image of the industry in the schools, by the way the industry is sold by careers counsellors and by the fact that there is not an aggressive culture of training in the industry in the sense of working closely with education sectors to alter that image, and thereby increasing

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the quality of the applicant pool anyway. In essence, it was not a general problem with mathematics coming from schools.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Maybe the Germans are right in the sense that the PISA results are often an assessment of an unstructured mathematics system, whereas the Germans have a structured mathematics system.

**Mr Ghost**—If I might finish that off, I do not think there is a very good understanding of how mathematics is used in industry, generally speaking, and particularly in new manufacturing where technology is complex.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And highly structured.

**Mr Ghost**—And highly structured. Computers control most things these days, and a lot of the design issues are very complex.

**Mr SAWFORD**—On page 3 of your statement, under the heading of ‘Training packages and other VET pathways’, you make mention of difficulties with curriculum and school timetabling. We visited Bradfield College this morning, and they had a view about timetabling as well. What sort of timetabling are you favouring?

**Mr Ghost**—We would not put forward a particular timetable except to say that, in terms of hard technical skill formation, there needs to be some significant time in the workplace—certainly at least days on end. That is always going to be difficult in the school context.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are you suggesting a week at a time, or are you suggesting a regular day at a time?

**Mr Ghost**—We are suggesting more than a day. It may be less than a week, but it needs to be more than a day. I refer back to what I was saying before in terms of the use of competencies in training packages. In manufacturing, in the training package there is a range of competencies associated with machining, lathe work and so on. In the evidence guide, they talk about being able to work to an industry standard or an industry specification in accordance with time frames relevant to that industry sector, which means that you need to be able to produce a product on a lathe within a certain amount of time, with an adjusted time factor for the fact that it is a learning context. You do not get that in one day a week; you perhaps do not get that in two days a week. So there are aspects of training and skill formation within training packages that require more significant times. We accept that timetabling is an issue and we are not proposing any solutions to that, except to say that, in terms of skill formation expectations of employers, it is always going to be difficult.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You use an interesting turn of phrase ‘parity of esteem’. Under parity of esteem, you made a point that ANTA funds should be provided only to those schools which integrate VET into mainstream schooling. If I were in your shoes, I would be changing that around; I would be saying ANTA funds should be provided only to those schools that separate out quality VET programs. Would you like to comment on my differentiation?

**Mr Ghost**—We might change our submission to pick up your point! What we were trying to say was that historically there has been a separation of higher education and vocational

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education and that leads to parity of esteem issues, whereby schools favour the higher quality young person for higher education as opposed to vocational training. The reason we made a reference to ANTA funds was that we believe that, while there is a separation of funding and that funding is not on an ongoing basis but on an annual basis, schools will never mainstream VET; they will see it as an add-on and not as part of their core business, which greatly affects parity of esteem. It is not treated in a strategic way and, in an industry like manufacturing, we suffer the consequences of that in terms of the quality and quantum of young people that come into it. So that was the reference to the funding issues.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What do you think of the idea I just put to you: that you fund quality VET programs?

**Mr Ghost**—We only made a reference to the fact that they should only be funded in the sense of some strategic labour market forecasting. Our submission is probably deficient in the sense that we did not articulate that, because I agree with you that quality should be supported and non-quality should not be. I just have difficulties with how you measure quality in that sense. We would only support quality and we only support strategic skill formation in schools. Perhaps neither of those things exist in some circumstances.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I am asking only for an opinion on this: what is your view of the ability of the comprehensive high school system in Australia to accommodate VET? It seems to me that ‘comprehensive high schools’ is a convenient name but most comprehensive high schools are no different from the academic high schools of years gone by; whereas there were vocational technical schools, that seem to have been lost, that were able to accommodate both the academic and the extracurricular activities—the very good ones. Do you think the comprehensive high school system is a good model?

**Mr Ghost**—It is perhaps not the best model for having a focus on vocational training. I think the problem of having technical high schools is probably the threat of or the potential for separation—even more so—between academic preparation and vocational preparation. I think there are some very good examples of how it works. We often use an example from the Gold Coast of Riviera Marine, which has an arrangement with the local TAFE provider and a number of high schools. That company now only recruits through traineeships and apprenticeship training for young people. It does not recruit outside of that and currently it has 140 apprentices. So there is obviously the capacity for the comprehensive system to accommodate VET, and I think the examples that we know of around the place confirm that to be the case. I think that it is often a matter of whether schools are fair dinkum about it or not.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In a previous discussion with the Education Department of New South Wales, mention was made of a school principal who had taken on VET very seriously—and there are other examples that this committee has become familiar with over the years and over a range of inquiries. But those principals, when they tell their own stories, have had huge battles with their education departments in order to do what they have had to do. They have had huge battles with their local communities and with their teaching staff in order to accommodate VET at a quality level in academic programs and in extracurricular programs. It can be done but it is the exception rather than the rule. Would you agree with that?

**Mr Ghost**—Yes, I would agree that it is the exception rather than the rule. And I agree with the comments about having battles with staff and parents and so on to accommodate it. But that

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goes back to the issue of the culture of this country where, despite the fact that probably less than 30 per cent of young people go to university and a good number of those drop out shortly afterwards and go into VET, we still do not accept the fact that VET is a viable option for young people. Parents are the same. I have young children who are coming up to the end of high school in a couple of years, and I will have to make the same sorts of decisions. I can understand it. But I think by separating it, by putting it somewhere else, I do not know that that serves any particular purpose. We have to have the battles in the schools with our staff and with parents, and we have to continually suggest to them that careers that translate out of vocational training are attractive and viable and, in terms of remuneration, they are often much better careers than those available from the university pathway. We need to continually chip away at that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I have been trying for 25 years.

**Mr Ghost**—I think we have made some gains; there are some examples that were not there a long time ago. I become frustrated as much as anybody as to how we get there. I do not think that, in a general sense, we would support separating out vocational training from the current high school system, although some examples by setting up technical high schools as a demonstration model may serve some useful purpose. I do not think we are convinced that we would go all the way at this stage.

**Mr ALBANESE**—I took up the issue of labour market forecasting earlier with Bert who was here wearing a different hat from where I have been used to seeing him. You would be aware that there is to be a Senate inquiry into skill shortages. I am aware that that particularly affects your membership. I note that in your submission you have a proposal, which I personally find attractive, suggesting delegating this responsibility to ANTA as perhaps the appropriate body to coordinate this happening. I think that is an optimistic proposal, given the lack of security for ANTA at the moment. Nonetheless, I think it is a good proposition as long as there is a bit of funding to make that happen.

In terms of skill shortages, I have used examples of car manufacturers having to import labour to be able to operate some of the new technology. The aviation industry is an area that I am acutely aware of due to the nature of my electorate. I think the average age of aviation engineers is around the young-50s. I do not want to denigrate that but given that training an aviation engineer takes seven years I do not think any of us would want to fly on a plane that was fixed up by someone who had a seven week so-called new apprenticeship or something from the scams that are around at the moment. In what way can your members identify the shortages that are out there? How can you get some input into fixing that at the moment?

**Mr Ghost**—We will be making a deal of this issue with our submission to the Senate inquiry into skill shortages because it is high on our agenda. We have also made an issue of this with the ANTA review of industry advisory arrangements. That primarily is one of our principles: that whatever advisory arrangements we have in this country, if we do not have a sophisticated labour market forecasting system we will only ever train people for yesterday. We take some comfort in the fact that, notwithstanding your comments about ANTA, they are taking on board the idea of putting in place a new process. Our difficulties are particularly in the emerging industries where currently they use ABS trend data—there is no trend data for emerging industry—and gathering evidence by using as a basis ASCO classifications, which do not describe a lot of new and reforming industries anyway. We do not know what the outcome of

that would be but, in the sense of how a labour market forecasting would relate back to the issue of VET in Schools, it goes back to a previous comment about schools being more strategically planned. You should only fund those sorts of things if they take notice of it. The reason we have not made more of that issue until now is that I do not think it is fair to criticise the education sector for not using labour market forecasting data when it really does not make a lot of sense in most cases anyway. I am not sure I have answered your question.

**Mr ALBANESE**—You have roughly. I will put it back to you another way. In response to the need for labour market forecasting, one of the arguments that has been put to me is that industry should do that itself. The argument against that is that industry itself has a natural disposition towards what is to its strategic market advantage. That is not necessarily the same as emerging industry or the changes in what is a competitive manufacturing market, where new manufacturing might be or where those shortages might be. A shortage, say, in aviation probably is a bad example because it is almost monopolistic in this country, but in other areas there might be a shortage of labour coming through that you can see and can identify but it is not business A's responsibility. It is global; it is everyone's responsibility. How do you get around that? I like the ANTA proposal because it is a bit removed; you need to remove that forecasting and that planning from any individual operator in the market.

**Mr Ghost**—We think it should be industry led in the sense that the information, at least in terms of the raw data, should come from industry. But we accept that there would be a particular preoccupation with a particular industry sector if you happen to be there. We would then suggest that that data should be refined through some sort of national process. That is why we tend to support the current proposal where ANTA would refine that information in conjunction with the state authorities and then take that to a national industry forum, which would meet two or three times a year as a validation process. I do not think you can realistically expect every industry sector to provide data in such a way that it is meaningful in a national way. But that raw data can be translated into meaningful data in a national sense as long as you have got a good process. The current process, where that information is gathered through state industry training advisory boards and annual training plans and then clearly not recognised to the extent it needs to be by state training agencies, does nothing for strategic forecasting.

**CHAIR**—Stephen, you mentioned earlier problems with the applicant pool—I think that was the phrase you used. You said that was partly the problem of perception, which is the same issue that was raised by a previous witness in the meat industry. I suspect it is not quite as severe in manufacturing. What is the industry doing to try and address that perception problem? Given that there are difficulties in finding enough work placements for VET in Schools participants, is there a capacity to use that and to provide more work placement opportunities to change that perception problem?

**Mr Ghost**—What we have done—and still are doing—is recognise that that is a major issue in terms of the quality of the applicant pool and also the quantum. There are often insufficient young people applying for jobs in manufacturing. We have been working with the Commonwealth through the National Industry Skills Initiative to develop a range of marketing materials. We have produced what we call a zoom CD-ROM which looks at new manufacturing in a high-technology sense. It provides a very good view of what industry is like now in manufacturing, into the future. We have also produced a web site that mirrors that compact disc and produced a range of printed materials to go with it. We have distributed that to all high schools, libraries and Centrelink offices in Australia over the last two years. We have also

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provided about 5,000 copies to our members, because, interestingly enough, although it was designed for young people and careers counsellors, our members often find it a useful aid when they have to talk at industry nights at schools, because a lot of our members are not comfortable doing that and this provides a good aid. We are producing one at the moment for the aviation sector, so we are actually working quite aggressively in that area to change that image.

We have some staff who constantly interact between industry and schools. We have staff who appear at careers nights and so on. We are about to enter into an alliance with the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation for the next 27 months, which will allow us to work even more closely in the automotive and marine industries and also in aviation, to some extent, in engaging schools and particular enterprises in that sort of training and that connection between school and work.

We find that one of the single most difficult things to do is to change that image. It does relate a lot back to the fact that not only is a problem with producing information that shows the true story about an industry; it goes back to the issue of how school teachers are prepared and their awareness of those industries in general. It has a lot to do with peer pressure, and it has a lot to do with how parents perceive an industry and where they would like their children to go. It is quite a difficult issue, so we address it on several fronts through dealing with careers counsellors, with parents at careers nights and young people in a variety of ways.

**CHAIR**—Is there opportunity there in providing more industry experience for VET teachers? Obviously, because they are at the interface with students, if they have a very positive view of manufacturing industry then that is conveyed to the students. Is there opportunity to provide greater work industry experience for VET teachers, partly in the hope that they will present that positive image to their students?

**Mr Ghost**—I think there are some good opportunities and I do not think we work to the extent we need to in that area. Certainly we would reach a point, if we were successful, where we would be able to have sufficient workplaces they could access. It is difficult, sometimes, in some sectors of manufacturing to have access because of the way they work—there are safety issues and a range of different things. A lot of industries are working 24-hour rotations and so on as well, so there would have to be a degree of flexibility from the school side in terms of when that access could take place. But I certainly think there is room for improvement in the way we work with schools to provide that opportunity.

**Mr Wright**—I think it is fair to say that we have a big challenge still ahead of us in terms of convincing companies. They used to sit there and wait for the flood of applicants to come through the door. They have really got to be a lot more aggressive and get out there. The new program we are looking at now will hopefully facilitate a lot of that. Companies and schools have to get a lot closer together, as do companies and TAFEs.

**Mr Ghost**—We suffer from the problem that industry has not generally realised that, during the past few years, as government instrumentalities are either privatised or corporatised, training goes on the bottom line. In the old days state rail employed 700 apprentices and then put them on to the market. Those things do not happen anymore. We are still in a lag period between when that stopped happening and when the general manufacturing industry realises that that contribution to the skill pool there. Recruitment is still a major way of resolving skill shortages but the skill pool is almost empty.

**CHAIR**—Just further on that issue of cooperation between industry and schoolteachers, given that one of the difficulties for teachers and for education departments is finding that release time for teachers to get work experience, and that part of that problem is a budgetary problem for schools and education authorities, is there the possibility somehow of cost sharing on that so that industry would pick up some of the cost if the teacher is released for a number of months for work experience? If industry picks up some of the bill for that, that would certainly encourage education departments to release teachers, because there would not be a strain on the school budget. The teachers would get the experience and come back with a much more positive message to sell their students.

**Mr Ghost**—In the sense of industry's contribution to vocational education and training, it is well known that, in terms of the billions of dollars that are contributed by governments, industry generally matches that in a dollar-for-dollar sense. There would be some resistance in terms of additional impost on the enterprise. However, having said that, if the teacher was to have some significant release which might translate into some productive activity in the workplace, that would probably be seen in a more positive light.

**CHAIR**—So for six months, a year or whatever, they could spend time productively adding to that enterprise and not lose salary as a result.

**Mr Ghost**—There are some examples, particularly in the TAFE sector, where that already happens to some extent. The issue there is probably not going to be in terms of the cost so much as in terms of the resistance by schoolteachers to do that in that that environment would be a threatening environment in the sense that it is new. They may not have much contact with that environment. They might say, 'What am I to expect when I get there?'

**CHAIR**—Surely that is one of the objectives of industry experience—to address those issues.

**Mr Ghost**—I think so, and the experiences over the years with TAFE teachers may go some way to minimising that issue. But there has to be that engagement between the school and the TAFE to have that happen.

**Mr Wright**—I think what you have raised is an essential issue. It is one of the key elements in this—having TAFE teachers and schoolteachers out there in industry for a period so they can learn what is going on. Without that, all this fails. It is a key issue.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Isn't all this a matter of a little bit softly, softly for too long? New South Wales, among the states, has a better record in VET than most other states. Yet, in 25 years, it has managed to get one-third of its students involved in some accredited VET programs. On analysis, that is appalling. Maybe TAFE, the government, the state education department and the industry involved—and maybe even the unions—need a bit of a rocket. We have had 25 years of going softly, softly, of being non-threatening and non-confrontational, of trying to engender something. We have had a lot of genuine people in all of those areas, from unions and others, who tried to actually bring the thing together. But after 25 years, only one-third have got there. That is a pretty poor record, isn't it?

**Mr Ghost**—It is our view that the issue of VET in Schools has not been such a critical issue over the years in the sense that there have never been significant skill shortages. People have generally had jobs. I refer back to my comment about instrumentalities getting out of train and

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the school pool being empty. I think it is now a critical issue. If we had had the foresight, we probably could have dealt with it, but we did not and we have not. So we have this problem. It is our view that there are so many problems with the current trade training system, particularly in manufacturing, that we would be looking at quite different ways of dealing with that issue. That issue would necessarily have to closely involve the schools, in the sense of how we form skills for trade outcomes. We are probably at a point where we are going to be more aggressive in the sense that we will have to deal with industrial relations issues associated with that as well as everything else.

**CHAIR**—It is not just developing skills, though; as you said, it is actually developing an interest.

**Mr Ghost**—Yes. As I say, there are also some industrial relations issues we have to overcome along the way. We will be prepared to take those on into the future.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do agree that we have been a bit too gentle on all this?

**Mr Ghost**—We all have the wisdom of Solomon in hindsight.

**Mr FARMER**—One of the things that this committee keeps hearing loud and clear—

**Mr SAWFORD**—You are firming my view. You are not prepared to take a point of view. But let me go on. With that attitude, really what I am criticising is that people from all sources are being too gentle in their assessment of what has occurred. Have we lost the ability in this country to call a spade a bloody spade?

**Mr Ghost**—I can remember back to when we first introduced traineeships as a method of dealing with skill shortage issues. I remember when we went back and introduced the Australian vocational training system. I can remember talking to schools about some of those issues. But in those days they were not important issues in the sense that we did not really know the ramifications of not involving schools in VET in a way that we needed to and of dealing with it in an aggressive way. It is probably only in the last couple of years that we have realised that we have such a problem. We did not have in our minds the fact that government instrumentalities were going to get out of training, for instance. It did not connect in the sense that that was over there and—

**Mr ALBANESE**—Or get out of government.

**Mr Ghost**—Whatever, yes. But, in the sense of those things that create that major impact, we did not make the connection; therefore, we did not have the imperative to the extent that we should have done.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Sorry, I did not mean to cut you off.

**Mr FARMER**—You have brought up a very valid point and one that I feel strongly about as well. We need to cut through all the ill feeling out there, stop worrying about treading on people's toes and just get straight to the point. One of the things that we on this committee keep hearing loud and clear is that public perception is that most people are not interested in pushing

their kids into a job in industry. We are hearing that loud and clear through the teacher sector as well. You can look at that from all sorts of different angles as far as promotion by the industry out there is concerned—to the general public, the students, the parents and the teachers. But, if we are looking at a long-term solution to this problem, would you agree—maybe this is something that you could ponder, and I would be interested in your opinion on it—that we really need to look at the education system for the teachers when they take the step of going into the teaching sector and they are looking at their education at the universities, at appropriate education in universities? Maybe we need to look at them and say, ‘You want to become a sports teacher or you want to specialise in mathematics, science or home science—whatever.’ Maybe we need to look at the teachers being specialised in VET studies so that we are breeding a new breed of teachers out there that are becoming job ready for the position in order to be able to change the whole landscape of education out there and provide this future for the kids as they come through.

**Mr Ghost**—I refer back to something I said before in terms of teacher education in the sense that it is difficult to make a decision about VET in a specific sense if you are entering into teacher training and asking, ‘What area do I go into?’ Certainly we would support some generic VET preparation. One of the difficulties is this. If you are a young person exiting high school and you go to university and do teacher education, you come out of teacher education and go back into the school, so your exposure to industry or VET in a general sense is not there. Perhaps a requirement of that process should be to spend some time in industry, irrespective of what your specialisation is going to be. If you are going into sports or mathematics as an area, those things are applied in industry anyway. Sports is an industry. Maths is a generic underpinning for most industries. Perhaps, irrespective of where you go and whether or not there is any VET component, there should be a requirement to be in industry for some particular time, either at the front end or in the middle of teacher training.

**Mr FARMER**—So a strong recommendation towards teacher education could be VET programs for the teachers, basically to get the teachers, while they are at college, out into the work force to experience what they need to teach about later on when they become fully fledged teachers.

**Mr Ghost**—Less than 18 months ago, I happened to have the occasion to speak to a teacher education faculty at a university. I was speaking about VET issues and training packages. I was surprised at the lack of knowledge of training packages and competencies—what they were, how they were to be used and so on. Even in the sense of the educators of the teachers, perhaps there are some opportunities to get more exposure. We would certainly support some requirement that there is some exposure to industry in a general sense as part of teacher training.

**CHAIR**—As one of the earlier witnesses from the department indicated, one of the problems has been that, up until now, most of the VET teachers in schools also teach other subjects; VET has been almost a secondary role for them. They are mainly maths teachers, science teachers or whatever, with a little bit of VET added on. Now that VET is growing so solidly, perhaps we need to rethink that whole training area, with a greater degree of specialty in vocational education rather than seeing it just as an add-on.

**Mr Ghost**—We would suggest that, when teachers do VET as a second option because there is nobody else to do it, even if they have another specialisation, that does nothing for VET and just exacerbates the whole problem.

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**CHAIR**—I think that is a fair point. I am afraid our time has gone, Rod, unless you have one final burning question.

**Mr SAWFORD**—No.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. That has been very helpful. We appreciate your time.

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

That the committee receive as evidence and authorise the publication of the submissions received from the New South Wales Department of Education and Training to the inquiry into vocational education and training in schools.

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

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

**Committee adjourned at 4.48 p.m.**