



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Vocational education in schools

THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2003

CANBERRA

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

INTERNET

The Proof and Official Hansard transcripts of Senate committee hearings, some House of Representatives committee hearings and some joint committee hearings are available on the Internet. Some House of Representatives committees and some joint committees make available only Official Hansard transcripts.

The Internet address is: **<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard>**

To search the parliamentary database, go to: **<http://search.aph.gov.au>**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING
Thursday, 13 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, Ms Gambaro, Mr Johnson, Mrs May, Mr Pearce, 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.

WITNESSES

**LLOYD, Ms Carolyn Ann, National Treasurer and Committee Member, VETnetwork Australia
Inc..... 1**

SAMUELS-GREEN, Ms Julie Anne, Executive Officer, VETnetwork Australia Inc. 1

Committee met at 9.04 a.m.**LLOYD, Ms Carolyn Ann, National Treasurer and Committee Member, VETnetwork Australia Inc.****SAMUELS-GREEN, Ms Julie Anne, Executive Officer, VETnetwork Australia Inc.**

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into vocational education in schools. I would like to welcome Ms Samuels-Green and Ms Lloyd from VETnetwork Australia. Thanks for coming along and sharing your expertise with us today. I need to remind you that proceedings here today are formal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. The committee does prefer that all evidence be given in public, but if at any stage you wish to give evidence in private, please ask the committee and we can arrange that. You might like to make some introductory comments and then we will proceed with questioning.

Ms Samuels-Green—I might start off and I will keep it quite brief. Our submission was based on survey evidence from our members. We are the national peak association supporting VET, vocational education and training, in schools. There are a couple of points that are not in the submission that I would like to make, which you should be aware of.

One is that this organisation was envisaged, started and driven by teachers themselves. That is a very important point as to the membership of and loyalty to the organisation. A point I would like to make in relation to any initiatives is that they should be driven from the ground up, preferably by teachers or coordinators, with support, to get ownership. We have ownership by our members. So they are willing to talk with us.

Our main strength is as a conduit. We have strategic alliances with DEST at the moment which have been working exceedingly well over the past 18 months with exchange of information. We can pass on this sort of information direct to the department and they can keep us updated on initiatives. I have brought along a copy of our publication *VETnetworker*, which I will refer to later. One of the things that we do for DEST is that, with the information they provide on policy, we have a very simple summary and also draw out the benefits on the ground. Our members do not get time to read policy in the format and language it is usually in, so we regard this as a very positive service that we provide. It also lets teachers know that there is support out there in a real way.

We are not a funded body. We run as a business—just. We have been self-supporting for two years and we are very proud of that. We have no political affiliations and we exist purely to serve the needs of the members, and 80 per cent of those are VET teachers and coordinators in schools nationally. I have brought along some additional information, which I have passed on to James. Since our submission was written, we have had our national biennial conference at which we took the opportunity to do some further information gathering.

There are approximately 700 VET in schools professionals and associated VET professionals. The scope of our membership also includes any group that can impact on the quality delivery of VET in schools. As an example, we sit on the national advisory board of the Australian Network of Practice Firms, which provides an alternative work placement model given the limited amount of places out there for teachers. We also liaise with TAFEs and universities on teacher

training. We look at the best ways to facilitate change and educational leadership. We cover quite a wide scope. We liaise in quite a diverse area.

I have provided the committee with some more information on professional development research. I would like to draw out a couple of key points from that. About 98 per cent of teachers responded to the survey. We asked them what was the best way we could support teachers, and about 98 per cent said professional development and time release to attend. That last one is significant, because we also asked them about different options and accessibility in attending each of those options.

If you look at page 2—the second heading should read ‘Comparison of accessibility’—you will see that there is only one option out of five that over 50 per cent could access. That should be of significant concern because, whatever we provide in terms of professional development—and I reiterate teachers themselves say that is the best way we can support them—they cannot get the time release. This actually works back in the schools to money to replace them to deliver classes.

I would also like to highlight the comments on the effectiveness of online delivery. With the technology and information-rich environment that our students are now in and with the online access to knowledge, there is a push to become e-organisations. We do not have any problem with that but we do feel that online delivery is not the be-all and end-all, particularly in professional development terms. One of the things from the statistics is that the teachers rated online delivery—and we included a follow-up workshop for the face to face in each state as a professional development option—as the least effective in their opinion. We really need to consider learning styles when we offer professional development, and teachers themselves are saying, ‘Please do not give us online delivery only.’ It should be part of a delivery mode.

As I mentioned, I have brought along a copy of our quarterly publication *VETnetworker*. This is the conference edition. There are a few key points that I would like to make. On page 4 there is an overview of the conference. I do not know whether you will have time to read this down the track, but if you look at the headings on page 5, they are ‘Embracing change’, ‘Achieving success’, ‘Exploring innovation’ and ‘Celebrating enterprise’. These are key phrases in advancing the VET in schools agenda. This is what made the conference so relevant and so well received.

On page 7 there is an article by Carolyn—and she may wish to speak on that later—on one of our keynote speakers, Margo Cairnes. She spoke of the relevance of education in the future. You will find the concepts in there absolutely spot on. If you read nothing else, I suggest you read that article to get a good overview. A key phrase which Carolyn has highlighted is that we need to teach students and teachers to ‘learn, relearn and unlearn’. That is a skill that they need in the sort of work environment and labour market they are going to be moving into. As many of us grew up 20 years ago, it is very much a different world. It is a more dynamic, flexible, changing world that they need to exist in. Also on page 11 there is a profile of the national winner of our inaugural excellence awards. If you want a profile of a VET professional doing an excellent job and some background on what she is doing, there is your case study. Finally, if you want some sort of insight into how it was received by the people who participated, there is feedback printed on page 15. I will hand over to Carolyn.

Ms Lloyd—I will mention a little about where I have come from with the VET agenda. I have been involved in VET since it was a pilot project back in the late 1990s. I have seen it through a number of acronyms from AVTS and initially pilots to VET. I have continued to be involved in VET because I see so much benefit for the kids. What we are looking at is over 50 per cent of students who do not go on to universities and what we can give them as a start from colleges or from high school into college and then into their next training or their next profession.

I suppose I have been very passionate about what I do because I have stayed with it, with all the time that has been involved with it. I have been involved in our local organisation, ACTTIVE, which is ACT Teachers in Vocational Education, since its inception. I have been on VETnetwork as an ACT representative for the past seven years. So I am constantly trying to push what we can do for these kids.

I have expanded my teaching credentials because I have had requirements placed on me, such as I must have workplace assessor training and I must have a certificate IV in business administration to be able to teach it. So I am constantly upgrading my skills and a lot of this has been done in my own time. I have been lucky because I have been the first into some things and have been able to get funding, or the initial project has been funded and then it has been a matter of either the schools or individuals supporting themselves to do those things.

I am a teacher. I am understudying our VET coordinator, so I am finding out what he does this year. I am a grounds person. I teach two vocational courses and I also teach the traditional courses in information technology—things like programming and information systems. Most teachers in the colleges teach not only vocational education but also a number of other subjects. So they have the normal teaching load and then they have the VET on top of that.

I suppose if I have to name a couple of concerns that I am very keen to see resolved or assisted with, it would be time for teachers. VET teachers in particular seem to have so many demands on our time, with the additional training that we have to do, return to industry, as well as going and visiting our students in their work placements. It is essential to be able to see our students in the workplace, because we get a phenomenal amount of feedback from that. We like to do that and we do that during release time or after hours. So time is a prime concern.

As I said, I have been involved in this for quite some years. In the business administration moderation group, I am noticing that there are a lot of teachers going out—people are retiring or moving interstate—but there are very few young teachers coming in to replace us. VET has continued for so many years on the enthusiasm and passion of the people that started it. And some of us are getting older, although I do not like to admit that; some of us are getting more tired or are retiring, as I said. There just is not the wave of new teachers or people changing to VET coming along to replace us.

I have also acted as a level 2 as the staffing officer at my college. When I have tried to find someone to take a VET course when teachers have been absent either on extended leave or just on a daily or weekly basis, it has been impossible to find anyone in the auto area, in any of the trades areas or in the hospitality area. To find someone in business admin, someone that teaches computing can probably come in and take it for a day. However, in areas such as auto, trades and hospitality, where there is a very high emphasis on occupational health and safety, we cannot just let a relief teacher come in and take a class. So, unfortunately, in many cases classes

will get cancelled or their actual hands-on training part of the course will be postponed and they will be required to do paperwork until their actual teacher can come back.

As I said, with training in universities and institutes of technology, they do have partnerships. I rang up Canberra University the other day to find out what was happening with any sort of qualification in vocational education. They have a partnership with CIT, the Canberra Institute of Technology—the equivalent of TAFE—where CIT delivers the actual hands-on training to do with sports administration and a range of design and technology courses. They work with Canberra University, which also delivers part of the Bachelor of Education so that students can receive that qualification.

I have also had a number of preservice teachers over the years and, unfortunately, I have not seen anyone who has been a vocational preservice teacher. I did not have time to find out the numbers of people doing this course or courses, so I do not know whether there are any preservice teachers coming into any of the colleges around the ACT but, as I said, I have not seen any and we need quite a few—

Mr ALBANESE—What do you mean by ‘preservice teachers’?

Ms Lloyd—Practice teachers. We have been asked to call it ‘preservice’ these days rather than ‘practice’, particularly when you are introducing the teachers to our students. They do a practical block of teaching as part of their qualification.

The other thing I would like to see happen is these partnerships. A lot of effort goes into getting people together for a range of things. People come up with ideas, and then that is where a lot of them tend to stay. Some people—it tends to go more to individuals—follow up those ideas. However, with respect to bodies such as industry training advisory boards, student-to-industry programs, colleges or the department of education—a lot of these groups could create some very worthwhile partnerships but it tends to just disappear a bit or into the never-never land sort of thing. It does not seem to actually become concrete.

CHAIR—Thank you. I am sure we have a lot of questions. I will get the ball rolling with a couple of questions regarding perceptions of standards. As you said, the rapid growth of VET in schools has been terrific for those students not going on to university. Is it your view that this is leading to a dual system within our schools, a perception that there is an A-grade band and a B-grade band regarding those who are aiming at university and those who are doing VET courses? Do you think it is a problem?

Ms Lloyd—I do not see it as a problem. I know there are different systems around Australia as to how students do the traditional programs and the VET programs. At some places, every student does a VET course. The one place I can think of is Nudgee College up in Queensland where every student does a VET course. In my college, I can speak definitely about that, and across a number of ACT colleges we tend to have the traditional student and the VET student. I do not see it as a problem. I see kids thinking about, ‘What do I want to do and where do I want to go?’ They are starting to think about it before they get to college, before they start making their selections. They are saying, ‘Okay, I am not really a person who wants to go to university, so I am going to do a VET course and maybe get into that at CIT/TAFE.’

CHAIR—What about moves to incorporate a couple of VET course units as part of the tertiary entrance score, the UAI? Do you think that is a positive move—to try and bring those two groups together and give greater flexibility?

Ms Lloyd—Definitely. While the students themselves are choosing one way or the other, by being able to merge them both, we might end up going more towards some of the practices where every student has to do a VET course.

CHAIR—Is there much of a perception from your understanding of the different degree of acceptance of qualifications coming from VET in schools versus VET, say, through TAFE or other providers? I was thinking particularly about the training and the background of teachers. Is there much of a perception by employers that VET qualifications gained in schools, particularly where the school is the RTO and they run the whole show, is somehow inferior or less acceptable than those going through TAFE, for instance?

Ms Samuels-Green—Perhaps I could address that one and also make a few comments on your earlier questions. It is very much on an individual basis. Schools operate as a local entity, and the decision maker is usually the principal. Of course, he has his restrictions as well. But it will vary enormously. One of the things we find with the national view is that the state differences make quite a difference. There are not always dedicated VET positions. People in the positions do not often have training. And that will change from state to state. It will also change through independent, Catholic and government sectors within the schools sector.

It is interesting that in the research from the conference—and that is not mentioned in this submission—teachers identified that the top issue they faced in delivering VET in schools was trying to change the negative image of VET in schools. So that was a very strong comment to come in as the top option.

From visiting states and from various case studies and from talking to practitioners nationally, yes, there is a gap. As Carolyn said, there is an academic stream and there is a VET stream. It is changing but, as I said, it will depend on the school. It needs more work. There is no national model for VET teacher training. There are a number of universities and teacher training institutions working on that at the moment. That needs to change to get the credibility. You talked about school qualifications being recognised: yes, I think they are rated lower because of the diversity in quality within the different schools.

I have worked with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to look at things like this. Their feedback is that there is a lower perception, because the VET teachers are not trained and they do not have dedicated positions. The whole role has changed with the expansion of VET, and VET teachers are now called on for skills that they were not employed for. We need professional development to bring them up to speed and we need to give them time.

I have worked across public, private and nonprofit sectors. I have been the national training manager in a registered training organisation that was not school based. We had areas that marketed new apprenticeships; we had a national training manager; we had people developing resources. The thing that really hits me when I look at how VET is run in the private sector or nonprofit sector and how it is run in schools, particularly those that are registered training organisations, is that there is not adequate human resourcing for it. It is a glaring problem.

Those VET coordinators are often doing what three or four people would do in a non-school based organisation delivering the same thing.

CHAIR—That is the core problem.

Mr SAWFORD—Just continuing on with that theme, for 20 years in Australia we have had basically a comprehensive high school system. It seems to me that, since we have had that system, VET in schools has struggled even more.

In our previous inquiry on boys education, we had a principal of a school here in Canberra state quite clearly that you need to make a decision when you are running a school: you run an academic school or you run a VET school. The best VET school in Australia is probably Salisbury High School in South Australia, which made a deliberate decision to run vocational education to get on the front foot; in other words, to negate the negative feeling about it. There are other examples of what Salisbury High School is doing around Australia, where the key person seems to be the principal.

The current structure of secondary education, particularly in the public arena, in just having comprehensive high schools seems to me to be a big mistake in the sense that parents and children respond accordingly by simply saying, 'You do not provide the choice in secondary education in this country,' so it creates all sorts of problems. Many principals have said to this committee over many years that you have to make a decision about what sort of school you are going to run. A number of people who work in VET simply say that they get outvoted by the faculty people, that they do not get their views heard or their share of the money spent effectively in a lot of secondary schools, so they get run over. Unless the principal is promoting VET, you have a huge problem.

Ms Samuels-Green—Absolutely.

Mr SAWFORD—What is your view in terms of the structure in which VET operates in schools, which are really comprehensive high schools perhaps with some minor exceptions in New South Wales? And, in a sense, is VET better in another situation, such as TAFE, rather than schools?

Ms Samuels-Green—I might start off and then Carolyn can talk about her personal experience in her school. I think schools need to come back to the common purpose: why are they there; what are they doing? My view is that they are preparing students for a productive life. That includes work but it includes other education as well. The difference that the school has from the other sectors is that they have a duty of care for social education and ethics—pastoral care, if you like—which the TAFEs do not like. Now at that age I think that is appropriate.

I also think that if you are preparing students for a world that is constantly changing and a world that is dynamic and integrated, you must have an integrated system. Nothing exists in isolation. You cannot pigeonhole VET and pigeonhole academics because their life is not going to be like that. I think an integrated system is required. There is a push to introduce it earlier—is it about year 8 up?

Ms Lloyd—Year 8 or 9.

Ms Samuels-Green—But it does not have to be a skills acquisition. It can be general knowledge integrated into studies of society and the environment where you talk about the workplace, talk about ethics and talk about different sectors. That is to me appropriate integration at an early stage. When they are older and more mature and looking towards what they are going to do, then you look at some of the work placements and some of the more technical skills that they do with the qualifications in the school based new apprenticeships.

With moving into TAFE, I think the change has been made and schools are now the first point of contact for vocational education. I do not think you can go backwards. It just will not happen. So the way to go forward is to break down those barriers between the sectors—schools, TAFEs, universities and private institutions—to get them working efficiently as a flow-through model. It is not just high school to year 12 or college to year 12 and blocked off there; and then TAFE, blocked off there; and then maybe I get credit for half a degree and blocked off there—it should be a flow-through system. There is a lot of ownership particularly around resources that are creating blockages. There are state differences that are creating blockages. And there are vested interests, past histories, with each sector—

Mr SAWFORD—Why is it that some of the very best principals in this country say, ‘You cannot run an excellent VET system in a school and an excellent academic system; you have to choose’? Why do they keep saying that? It is both sides, remember, who keep saying it. Are they silly?

Ms Samuels-Green—No, I would say they are probably informed. But they are talking about the resources and structures they have now, and I think that does need to be reviewed. As I pointed out, human resourcing needs looking at with the expansion. Funding, which is always a sore point having regard to limited budgets, does need to be looked at. No, I do not think they are silly; I think they are people who know exactly what they are doing but they are also operating under current constraints.

Mr SAWFORD—They are also the very best people, they are the very best schools—they are saying it.

Ms Samuels-Green—You talk about the best areas. My experience is there are a lot of principals that are the very best also that we never hear about and who just do their job quietly. So my experience would differ just from feedback nationally through the organisation. There are some very innovative schools that are promoting integration of VET in schools. With the nonintegration, I think that is part of the reason why the qualifications for VET in schools are not regarded so highly, because it is seen as second rate. Those who cannot go to uni go to VET courses, but that is changing.

Mr SAWFORD—I would be more confident if you were saying they were promoting diversity rather than integration. But I will finish on that comment.

Ms GAMBARO—You talked about Nudgee College, and I want to follow on from what Mr Sawford was saying. I have a son there. Nudgee College takes a lot of country boarders and a lot of kids that will probably never go on to university education; they go back to the farm, properties or whatever. They were one of the first to develop that particular program. Do you think it was systematic—the fact that they looked at their student composition and said, ‘Well, we are going to have to put a stronger emphasis on this sector,’ and that it was more of a

situational thing that occurred? I guess in that case it has been very successful. How do you get schools to look at the overall picture and introduce a good VET training program? You might expand a bit more about Nudgee and why they have been successful. Is it the level of teacher qualifications or have they just had this ethos that it is going to work regardless?

Ms Lloyd—I have known Sandra Harrington for quite some years. She was on VETnetwork when it first started. With Nudgee, I think one of the driving forces there was Sandra Harrington. She did not see any obstacles to introducing VET; she saw challenges along the way; and she just had the drive and enthusiasm to take on board all those challenges.

If I can mention some of the things that have happened in the past, we are only ‘allowed’ to deliver to certificate II level in my college at present. However, as a registered training organisation, we can now apply to extend our scope. But Sandra said, ‘If we can only go to II, we have kids that can go to III and IV; why not do that?’ She kept pushing the barriers all the time. I think Nudgee is an exception. It is a model. A lot of us strive to be able to do some of the things that they do at Nudgee, but a lot of it is coming back to Sandra. I am afraid I cannot think of the person that she works with up there, but the two of them together—

Ms GAMBARO—So you would say Nudgee is leading the way in that area? I am not asking because my son goes to school there.

Ms Lloyd—I have known Sandra for years.

Ms GAMBARO—I thought I should declare my interest!

Ms Lloyd—It is leading the way a lot. The vocational college in South Australia is absolutely phenomenal as well.

Ms Samuels-Green—Yes.

Ms Lloyd—Those types of colleges tend to be up here; the rest of us are down around here; and we kind of move up and down a bit. I see my college as being very good. I certainly do not want to move from there because I enjoy it there so much. There is a difference between the academic and VET programs. However, we are getting more and more students choosing to combine, diversify and integrate their courses.

I think a lot of our perception problems come back to the parents. It is a matter of educating parents as to the idea that university is not the be-all and end-all of everything. Their kids have not failed if they have not gone to university. A lot of people think just for them to get a job is great these days, but they still see university as the goal.

Ms Samuels-Green—I would absolutely reinforce the point that it is the passion and often the individual drive that make the difference. The case study in the magazine I gave you from a school in South Australia will tell you exactly the same thing. The other thing about Nudgee is that they are very strong in their networks. They have used their network systems.

Ms GAMBARO—The old boy network?

Ms Samuels-Green—With other colleges in the same sector and, yes, the old boy network. I constantly find when I deal with the Catholic school system that they have a very strong network under that common interest and they will often band together regionally to produce resources to maximise the money they have. And Nudgee has been involved with other like-minded schools quite strongly.

Ms GAMBARO—The next question is about the work placements. You have identified in your submission on the third page that ‘student training, work placements and employment outcomes’ are 23 per cent and that the areas of concern were travel and insurance costs of work placements. Are there any other difficulties that arise from the workplace in terms of, for example, employers who are willing to take on the scheme and then have a change of heart or sell their business? Do most employer firms that log into it pretty much stick to it?

Ms Lloyd—I was also work experience coordinator for 2½ years, so I had a couple of hats on at the same time trying to find work placements and vocational placements. Just speaking from the ACT point of view, we have year 10 students and year 9 students trying to find work experience; we have college students trying to find work experience and vocational placements; we have CIT students trying to find vocational placements for their particular courses; and we have universities trying to find work experience placements, whether it is short term or long term. And there are a limited number of places.

The number of people prepared to take on students is fixed. We do not seem to have an ever-increasing business base. To take on a VET student does require a lot more work in that the student is required to learn and practise the skills that they have been doing as part of their course so that they are getting on-the-job training in that work placement. It requires effort by the employer to set up with his staff conditions that are appropriate for that particular student at that particular level so that they can come in and get a worthwhile on-the-job training experience. It is difficult and I would say that the numbers are not increasing regarding people prepared to take on new—

Ms GAMBARO—Is that a lack of education, lack of information about how the program works or is it related to those indemnity type issues?

Ms Lloyd—There are concerns like that. However, there are insurance policies to cover students for the time that they are actually on the employer’s premises and going to and from those premises. So there is an insurance policy as far as that is concerned. I think it comes down to a lot of employers being strapped for time. They are trying to minimise their costs, their overheads and maybe they have cut down on their staff a bit as well. A whole range of issues comes in.

Mrs MAY—Just taking it a bit further: Carolyn, you were talking about partnerships and why they fall down. In my electorate, I have a state high school. These colleges that you are talking about, are they private or state?

Ms Lloyd—No. High schools go from years 7 to 10 and then we have senior colleges, which are on a completely different campus. They are years 11 and 12.

Mrs MAY—A public high school in my electorate tells me that at the moment they have 110 traineeships working with VET in schools. But I have to say this is being driven by a principal

who is just so committed to it—a new principal who has gone out into the community. You talked about these partnerships. I imagine that is the partnerships with community and with business, building that recognition that this can work with both getting in and working together. Why are you saying that is falling down when the ideas are coming? In your opening address you were talking about how they go so far and then drop and nothing would happen.

Ms Lloyd—There are a couple of different types of partnerships. There are the school based new apprenticeships. The number of those associated with each of our senior colleges, whether it is government or non-government, tends to vary. It tends to vary based on the support of the principal, how committed they are. But it also depends on the VET coordinator who is the person who has to go out and drive those apprenticeships, find the people to take them on and do all the paperwork associated with those.

The other type of partnerships I alluded to was training partnerships. We have a number of VET courses at our college that are delivered in conjunction with CIT. Veterinary nursing is actually delivered at CIT. The students come back and complete other units of their year 12 certificate at the college but they go in to CIT to do the veterinary nursing. We have partnerships like that so that we jointly provide students with the opportunities to complete a year 12 certificate.

I think business could come on board as well. We could gather so much from their experiences, their knowledge and their expertise in their particular areas—whether it is people visiting rather than having students go to them. I think partnerships like that could work very well.

Mrs MAY—Just one more question: the shortage of teachers.

Ms Lloyd—Oh, yes.

Mrs MAY—With new teachers going into teaching after they finish year 12 and go off to university, are they not being made aware of VET or is VET just not attractive? You focused a lot on retraining for your teachers now; what about your new ones coming through? Is there maybe an avenue for mature age unemployed skilled people who have special skills, the sort of skills you are looking for? Is there a group of people out there that we could attract back and retrain?

Ms Samuels-Green—Yes, there definitely is an avenue for that. I know one of the Queensland teacher training institutions is recruiting industry people and then training them with the teacher skills, which I think is a very positive lateral thinking move. It makes perfect sense so, yes, definitely.

The other point is that it is not that they are not interested or aware; there is no national model for teaching VET. There are pilots being run. However, there are only a handful of VET teaching qualifications offered at present, so that needs to be expanded as well as publicised more.

If I can just make one point about your previous question on work placement: you asked why some of them were falling through or why employers would not take them on. The research shows that the sector that takes on most placements is the micro business sector of less than five

people in the business. They are there in business; they have really stretched time and money. There was an article recently from the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research which talked about thinking of work placement as a business transaction. Both sides have to get something. The bottom line for employers is that they are in business to make money to financially stay afloat, and that is their top priority. The school has been traditionally a very different and more isolated system that does not have the same goals. So there is a gap there.

Mr ALBANESE—I have a question for Ms Samuels-Green. You have spoken about problems in terms of state and territory boundaries and said that there is also no national model. If you were TAFE teachers, they would be saying the same thing in terms of quality checking et cetera. How do you get over that hump? Obviously that is one of the things that this committee should consider, but in practice how could that occur given that you are talking about separate education systems as well?

Ms Samuels-Green—It is very difficult to get over, because money has been invested to set up those systems and they are already established. So it would take substantial resources to move to a national system. I personally have my hopes pinned on the ministerial council. At this stage I would see that as the only avenue to get national consistency within the systems—by all of the state ministers talking to each other. They have already made a commitment to take a consistent approach on certain issues. Now, that is advancing a little bit at a time, but that is the only initiative I can see that has a decision making power to implement a national approach in certain areas.

Mr ALBANESE—But on balance you think that is worthwhile given that one of the problems you have spoken about in your submission is that people are sick of changing systems all the time with the disruption that occurs there.

Ms Samuels-Green—I think the changing systems is something they are going to have to get used to, because that is what the world is becoming. It is not a static world. These skills need to be taught not only to the students but also to the teachers. Similarly, the structures within the schools have to become more flexible as well.

If we are looking at a post-industrial model of how a school is set up and we are looking at an e-world in the future, there are different skills in order to survive. If you are teaching in an old way for an old world, you are not equipping people and you will not be as effective. The constant change is a problem because things are changing. Just having the time to keep updated, on top of all these other things, which is where our organisation comes in, is difficult but it is the reality and it is not going to change.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I just point out a contradiction. I agree with what you just said. But when you integrate, you go back to what is; when you diversify, you go forward to what can be.

Ms Samuels-Green—I wanted to come back to your point, because I thought it was a very good one, about integration and diversity—

Mr SAWFORD—I think your description, by the way, is accurate. I am not saying it is not accurate but I am just saying it is wrong.

Ms Samuels-Green—To put integration into context, as I said, nothing exists in isolation. Diversity has to be there because the bottom line of what we are offering and what we have to offer is choice as to paths but we have to show them what is available. I think we need to address the second-rate perception of VET in schools. VET is another choice, not a second choice, not a lesser choice. In fields like electro-technology, where students need very high scores in maths and science to do well. In IT, it is becoming more complex, is it not?

Ms Lloyd—Definitely.

Ms Samuels-Green—They need to perform academically. There is this old perception, ‘Well, if you are not bright enough, you do a vocational course,’ and that is still alive and well.

Ms Lloyd—Can I add to that—because we do it ourselves. When we introduce ourselves, we tend to say, ‘We are a teacher and we teach VET courses.’ We do not tend to introduce ourselves as a VET teacher who also teaches other courses. We tend to do it the other way around.

Mr ALBANESE—One of the issues in TAFE is capital funding in terms of equipment, because it can be quite expensive keeping up with the pace of change. Ms Lloyd spoke about how some of the courses offered at her college are basically done off-campus at the institute of technology. To what extent are there economies of scale to be achieved? I know that schools in my area are complaining about lack of equipment to offer proper VET in schools and TAFEs are complaining as well. Is there an argument essentially that VET in schools as a concept can be delivered better in a physical sense, if you like, by having VET while at school in TAFE—that sort of structure?

Ms Samuels-Green—This comes back to the partnership. I know of a perfect example in Queensland that I hope will receive initial funding for a pilot, where the local school, the TAFE and the university are using an old power station that is no longer in use.

Mr ALBANESE—Whereabouts is that?

Ms Samuels-Green—Gladstone—it is Toolooa State High School. This is what I am talking about with your seamless boundaries and your flow-through where you have three sectors cooperating. Delivery is at the NRG Power Station, which supplies 60 per cent of Queensland’s power. The unused apprenticeship training section will become a campus of Toolooa High School. The money is needed to upgrade to current machinery, and staff from each sector—school, TAFE and university—are involved. So I would say yes, please, we need economies of scale, but that is a contribution from school, TAFE, university, policy makers for funding to get it started and also industry. That, to me, is the ideal. There are your seamless boundaries; there is your flow-through. Economies of scale should be pursued, absolutely.

Mr PEARCE—We have heard a lot this morning about what teachers think about VET, what principals might think about VET and what organisations might think about VET and you have this survey from teachers. Have you ever done any surveys from students about what they think about VET and what they think needs to be done to improve VET and the marketing of VET to them as prospective customers of programs?

Ms Samuels-Green—Our organisation has not but other organisations have. I am thinking in particular of the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation, ECEF. They have done

substantial research, part of which I heard and had comments from students. Interestingly, the comment from students that stuck in my mind was that, with the change and the new skills, I think they said something along the lines that you would have to put a bomb under some of the teachers if you want change in schools.

What they meant is that some of the teachers are not modelling those skills. Modelling is a legitimate way to teach, which is why we are talking about professional development for teachers in things like change management, online delivery and innovative teaching. There are initiatives by the Australian College of Educators and ECEF in that area. They are all very positive and they will make a difference. Yes, there is teacher comment out there and there is student comment out there. I cannot give you specifics, though.

Ms PLIBERSEK—My first question is for Ms Lloyd. You mentioned that you were lucky enough to be first into some areas and that helped you get funding. Can you tell me a bit about the areas that you were first into and what you see as emerging areas for vocational education in schools?

Ms Lloyd—One of the first funded areas was that, for teachers to be able to assess students doing a vocational course, they had to have a certificate as a workplace assessor. When I did that, I managed to get into the funding for that. There were 12 others, I think. We used to go to CIT to do that every Wednesday night for three hours for 18 months.

Ms PLIBERSEK—Who taught you to become good workplace assessors?

Ms Lloyd—It was a CIT delivered course for us to do that.

Ms PLIBERSEK—They based it on the capacities that workplace assessors for TAFE students needed? How did they deliver the course to you?

Ms Lloyd—They delivered the workplace assessor course not just to teachers like me but also to industry, to those people assessing people in their own workplaces and to anyone else who wanted to have that particular qualification to be able to assess people in a given workplace—or, for that matter, in any workplace—so that they could have a professional come in to assist them if they were assessing outside their area of expertise.

That course was funded for me, because we were the first lot of teachers in the ACT to do that. People in that group were from both government and non-government schools. They have since modified that course. It has now become a three-day course for people to do and any teacher in the ACT system who wants to deliver a VET course has to complete that. That is one of my little bugbears because they did not recognise the years of experience that I have had and they did not recognise my teacher qualifications. I also had to do this other certificate to say that I could assess, yet that had been my core business at that time for 15 years.

Ms Samuels-Green—However, each of the states dealt with that differently. That was how the ACT dealt with having to have that qualification. Queensland and South Australia had quite an extensive recognition of prior learning process and then just had training in the gaps they identified between the systems. But workplace assessor is a national standard. While it is a bugbear, I think its positive aspect is that it helps to bring up the perception of the standards in the schools because it is now applied to the schools as it is to everyone else in Australia that

issues that qualification. It was not always well received but, in terms of image of VET in school qualifications, it was a good thing.

CHAIR—Do you think that is working? Is that effective?

Ms Samuels-Green—It is a step in the right direction, yes.

Ms Lloyd—People can now apply for RPL or RCC and go through quite an intensive recognition process. That came in last year for the first time.

Ms PLIBERSEK—Okay. That actually makes me realise that perhaps I misunderstood you during your speech. I thought when you were referring to going into new areas, you were actually talking about new vocational areas and so on.

Ms Lloyd—I have done that too.

Ms PLIBERSEK—My follow-on question is: what sort of new areas were you involved in and what do you see as the future new areas that schools should be going into?

Ms Lloyd—I started out as a maths teacher and, when you say that, everyone says, ‘I hated maths,’ but I started out as a maths teacher and then I changed over to business administration. I did a number of short courses along the way for that. I also teach information technology and I started doing a course on software development to give me the background skills to be able to deliver that course. I am currently doing a certificate IV in business administration to be able to deliver to certificate II level. It has come down from the Industry Training Advisory Board that teachers who want to deliver that credential have to have the next level up from it. So there is constant retraining—the learning, unlearning, relearning sort of cycle.

Ms PLIBERSEK—In terms of the information technology stuff that you are doing, do you see a lot more emphasis on, say, web site design and those practical applications?

Ms Lloyd—Two new streams that have come into the ACT course have been the multimedia section, which is your web based stuff, and also the Cisco credential, which is your networking credential.

CHAIR—Before Mr Johnson asks the next question, can I excuse myself because I have another meeting that I must attend. I will hand over to Rod Sawford, our deputy chair.

ACTING CHAIR (Mr Sawford)—There will be a division in the House in seven or eight minutes, so we will move towards a conclusion.

Mr JOHNSON—I have a very quick question to either of you. I am very interested in the relationship between applications for work experience and placements. Do you have any feedback on the percentage of those who in the applications for placements actually get permanent opportunities?

Ms Samuels-Green—Each organisation would try to keep those sorts of statistics on successful outcomes in permanent employment. There are longitudinal studies that are specifically devoted to that, usually run by—is it ANTA?

Ms Lloyd—I do not know.

Mr JOHNSON—I assume there will be some—

Ms Samuels-Green—There are statistics.

Mr JOHNSON—Not necessarily industry specific but generally applying to particular employers, and how many of them would then go on to give opportunities afterwards.

Ms Samuels-Green—Do you have any from your school?

Ms Lloyd—I cannot give you statistics on it; I can just give you my experience.

Mr JOHNSON—I was not after specific numbers but could you give me a flavour because I am trying to do this in my own electorate. Apart from the University of Queensland, a lot of the schools in my electorate actually have this sort of program within their schools. I am trying to reach out to the business community to assist with placements.

Ms Samuels-Green—The only comment I would make is to reiterate that most of them are micro businesses and very small. While they can afford to pay an apprenticeship wage for one person with employer incentives provided, they may not be able to afford to employ someone at a full wage at the end of the new apprenticeship. So it might come down to finances. I have been reading a study recently by the IT ITAB where they have put up 12 work placement models and part of their research confirms it is mainly the micro businesses. But the one sector that has not been involved to any great extent in work placements is the public sector.

Mr JOHNSON—I agree with that. The feedback I am getting just from my own electorate is that the smaller businesses in terms of attitude are more responsive.

Ms Lloyd—Actually, we have had a number of students who have successfully got traineeships, cadetships and things like that with government departments. ACTEW is one I can think of. There are a number.

Ms Samuels-Green—The other point I would make is that there are large organisations like Woolworths that have actually become a registered training organisation in their own right. Now, right from day one when you start with them at the bottom, they show you a career path and that is something we really have not touched on.

Mr SAWFORD—And a great contrast to Coles Myer.

Ms Samuels-Green—They are not only offering you an apprenticeship for 12 months or whatever; they are saying, ‘When you do this, you can stay with us and do this,’ right up to a master’s degree. I think if you are looking at employment at the end of it, they have to see their career paths and it comes down to affordability. There obviously is recruiting and training—

Mr JOHNSON—They have more fat to play with, I suppose. I do not want to labour the point.

ACTING CHAIR—I am conscious of the time. Are there any other questions? If not, Julie and Carolyn, thank you very much for coming this morning. Thank you also for preparing the information for us. We appreciate the time and effort it takes to do that. If there is any further information that you think would be useful for this committee in its inquiry, we would welcome it.

Ms Samuels-Green—We have some substantial research from the conference but not the human resources. It is the raw data. Does the committee have the capacity for someone to evaluate that and just analyse it?

Mr SAWFORD—Why don't you send it to us and we will see whether we can do it.

Ms Samuels-Green—Okay. It is very valuable grass-roots based information.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much indeed.

Ms Samuels-Green—Thank you for the opportunity.

Ms Lloyd—Thank you very much.

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

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

Committee adjourned at 10.07 a.m.