



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Factors influencing the employment of young people

MT ISA

Thursday, 3 April 1997

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Members

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mr Baldwin	Mrs Gash
Mr Barresi	Mr Marek
Mr Bradford	Mr Mossfield
Mr Brough	Mr Neville
Mr Dargavel	Mr Pyne
Mrs Elson	Mr Sawford
Mr Martin Ferguson	

Matter referred for inquiry into and report on:

Factors influencing the employment of young people.

WITNESSES

BARWICK, Mr Phillip Maurice, Manager, Mount Isa Skills Association Inc., 66 West Street, Mount Isa, Queensland 4825	977
BRIEN, Mr Ian Phillip, Vice Chairperson, Mount Isa Group Apprenticeship, Traineeship and Employment, PO Box 1726, Mount Isa, Queensland 4825	966
De SATGE, Mr John, Assistant Coordinator, Puttatama Aboriginal Corporation, PO Box 2082, Mount Isa, Queensland 4825	956
MARSHALL, Mrs Joan, Youth Worker, Youth and Community Combined Action, PO Box 2082, Mount Isa, Queensland 4825	956
O'CONNELL, Mr Reginald Patrick, Recruitment and Employee Development Manager, Mount Isa Mines Ltd, PMB Mount Isa, Queensland 4825	939
ROBERTS, Mr Scott, General Manager—Human Resources, Mount Isa Mines Ltd, PMB Mount Isa, Queensland 4825	939
WILKINSON, Mr Rodney Bruce, Managing Director, Mount Isa Group Apprenticeship, Traineeship and Employment, PO Box 1726, Mount Isa, Queensland 4825	966

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Factors influencing the employment of young people

MOUNT ISA

Thursday, 3 April 1997

Present

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mr Brough

Mr Mossfield

Mrs Gash

Mr Sawford

Mr Marek

The committee met at 2.03 p.m.

Mr Charles took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open the public hearing on the inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people. The purpose of this inquiry is to consult widely and produce recommendations for government action that will help promote the employment prospects of our youth.

The committee has received over 100 submissions and has conducted public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Hobart. The committee has also conducted school forums in Sydney, Brisbane and Hobart in which young people have discussed their views and opinions with the committee.

The committee is now conducting public hearings in rural and regional centres in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. This meeting is one of a series in Roma, Charleville, Longreach, Mount Isa and Alice Springs which will give Australians outside the capital cities an opportunity to put their views and concerns to the committee.

This is a very broad ranging inquiry. Matters raised in submissions so far include: the attitudes of young people; the work ethic of young people and their familiarity with the requirements of the workplace; the adequacy and relevance of the education and training systems; the importance of developing better linkages between schools and the business sector; the need for a more flexible industrial relations system; and the effectiveness and efficiency of government programs to assist young people to find employment.

That is not meant to be an exhaustive list of issues which the committee will consider or which might be raised. We are entirely open to the views of everyone who wishes to make an input to the inquiry. We are here to listen, to learn and to help to improve the prospects of young Australians.

[2.05 p.m.]

O'CONNELL, Mr Reginald Patrick, Recruitment and Employee Development Manager, Mount Isa Mines Ltd, PMB Mount Isa, Queensland 4825

ROBERTS, Mr Scott, General Manager—Human Resources, Mount Isa Mines Ltd, PMB Mount Isa, Queensland 4825

CHAIR—I note that you have now given us a submission. We will formally record that later. Would you like to make a few brief opening remarks to the committee before we ask you questions about what is happening in Mount Isa.

Mr Roberts—Yes, if I may. We were approached by James to come along today. We are happy to respond and present the views of Mount Isa Mines to this inquiry. Our company's employment and recruitment activities are driven by our business needs and the job fit of the individual to the vacancies that are available. Over the years though, wherever we have had the opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to youth in the community, we have taken it to promote long-term employment for people and hence employment opportunities for their children, to get a stable community. However, over the years, with the competitive nature of our business developing the way that it has, our opportunities have been restricted somewhat from the past to today where our emphasis really is on business needs and getting the right people for the right job.

At this point in time, we have a number of programs, which are in the documents that I have presented to you today, which specifically deal with youth issues. Our apprenticeships, our traineeship programs, our skills and industry link program—it is mentioned here as the North-West Skills and Industry Link Program, which had as a precursor the Mount Isa Secondary Schools and Industry Link program, and was in operation eight years ago—our high school work experience, our prevocational experience and our youth employment promotion are detailed in the document and we are happy to answer questions about those today.

I have also brought along with me Reg, who is, as he indicated, our recruitment and employee development manager and therefore is accountable for a lot of the activities that involve the types of people we have talked about in these programs. With that we are at your disposal.

CHAIR—In 1997, you had 208 applicants and you hired 36 for apprenticeships. Firstly, do you also have any traineeships?

Mr Roberts—Yes, we do have traineeships. We are currently looking at instituting very clearly defined traineeships for operating work in the mines and in the concentrators. At the moment, it is at the formulation stage, not in existence. It is on our books.

CHAIR—You employed 36 out of 208 applicants. On what basis did you reject those who were not successful?

Mr Roberts—The recruitment criteria—and I will get Reg to go into the detail—cover a number of factors. We use psychological assessment at Mount Isa Mines. We have used psychological assessment here

since the early 1970s. This is one of the few industrial psychology units that has ever existed in our country. The purpose of the assessment is to get a measure that is equitable across all people who have come from different backgrounds and different schooling systems. It has been well developed in our area with a lot of normative studies and research that relate performance to subsequent success on our apprenticeship programs.

In addition to that profile, we look at their academic performance and we use targeted selection methodology which is about identifying behaviours, related to dimensions of behaviour, which we think go to making good employees and we gain this from life experiences that the youths have had. They may not have had any work experience but they have had life experiences. It taps into their behaviour—and behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour—and that is the assumption underlying the technique. That information is added to that as well. We also pick up references on the individuals.

Mr O'Connell—The original applications all went through the local CES. We utilise them for screening and advertising and the opportunity to draw in people who are on their books who may possibly suit a future vocation in the apprenticeship area. The process of interviewing is important. The psychological testing is really important. Take mechanical trades. If someone has no mechanical aptitude coming up in a test, it is going to be very difficult to get them to develop skills. So we are trying to look for best job-person fit.

A number of people also get through and then withdraw. You have the initial application and there are those who then get an opportunity to go to university. They are all inclusive. They have taken on other opportunities, other employment, or they have withdrawn because they have decided that an apprenticeship is not for them. That number is an all inclusive number, not the final number.

CHAIR—How many of the 208 were rejected because of poor literacy or numeracy skills?

Mr O'Connell—None.

CHAIR—None?

Mr O'Connell—It was not one of the primary criteria we were recruiting them for. The primary test of their ability to have appropriate literacy and numeracy was their ability to be involved in completing application with the CES. All of those applications which came through the CES met their criteria. That was their first screening.

Mr BROUGH—They could have been screened out at that first stage? Five hundred could have gone through the CES?

Mr O'Connell—There could have been. The CES themselves had not kept a count of how many were screened out.

Mr Roberts—We additionally do apply a reading test as one of the assessment tools. We will pick up people who have reading deficits where we can. We use it for our current employees. When we pick up that deficit, we then usually link in with our local TAFE to get remedial programs to bring the person back into contention for employment. We have been working on that for about six years, to my knowledge. We do not

let that drop someone from employment if the other characteristics are there.

CHAIR—Mount Isa is a pretty closed town and has been for a long time. To what extent do the young people know what careers are available at the mine?

Mr O'Connell—It is not a one-shot wonder. Every year we have a program of going out to all the high schools, talking to the students and the teachers, explaining what we have got. We are involved in careers markets. We are involved in Skillshare presentations. These programs happen every year and continually occur. We are always going to be involved in that. It involves going out to the schools, developing relationships with the schools. It is having years 10, 11 and 12 students come on site and learn some industrial based skills associated with what they think is their future career. There is a lot happening and there is a lot of contact, as well as with the local TAFE, who do a range of activities. We have prevocational students. They do so much at TAFE but there must be a work component. We have these individuals, and they come and also do work on site. There are a number of programs that are tied together and happen continually.

Mr Roberts—Some years ago, probably six years ago, we identified that the number of applications from town was going down. We have put in a comprehensive effort since then to really market employment opportunities, limited though they are, in the apprenticeship fields and so on in the mine. In addition to what is mentioned in this document, every year—we have done this for decades—we bring in all the new teachers to the region to what we call a teachers seminar. We take the teachers through all aspects of our operation and opportunities. It is often the teacher that the student will talk to about opportunities that exist.

It concerned us that, although the mine has such a dominating presence on the town from a skyline perspective, so few actually wanted to have their career with us. Having lived here for eight years and having spoken to many of the young people here, I know that generally has not changed. A lot of the young people want to move on and go and have a look at the coast, if they have been brought up here. They tend to, therefore, see going away as the desired thing rather than employment here. That is my experience. They look for the university options. They look for opportunities elsewhere. I would be thrilled if we could get more applicants, because we did not fill our quota this year for apprenticeships.

CHAIR—Two hundred and eight was not enough?

Mr Roberts—No, it was not, because we do have standards about job fit. As Reg indicated, a number of these students also are often the ones that apply for university. When they get to the final choice, they choose university. I guess as a parent I would not step in the way of that either. Reg and I, like all of our employees, live here. A lot of us have been here a long time and have our own children here. So it is a big personal drive, as well as an industry drive, to give opportunities to our children here. Quite genuinely, they do not seem to want jobs in town. They want to go away.

CHAIR—How many more would you have put on if you had the right fit?

Mr O'Connell—We could have taken on a total of 70. We concentrated our effort on individuals who were in the local community.

CHAIR—So you essentially took half of what you had a potential to take because you didn't find people who met your criteria?

Mr O'Connell—Or who had taken alternative offers. We had 41 or 42 originally who were given offers and then they took other alternatives. Then there were some others in the other group who took offers before they rang up and said, 'I don't need an offer. I am going to this university.'

Mr SAWFORD—Why did you reject another 30? What were some of the clear things that came out that you rejected?

Mr O'Connell—Some of the individuals were taking an apprenticeship because that was all they could see as a career. We are looking at people who are going to maintain and improve our business. We need to have people who are committed to the trade. Tradespeople are hard to find on a good day and there are not a lot of good days now. We have to develop quality tradespeople. If you start off with an individual who is only half keen, there is a very good chance you are not going to end up with a quality tradesperson. We need to develop quality individuals for our future and for their own. It becomes a shared learning and shared growing.

Mr SAWFORD—What about some of the young kids who are not sure about their future careers? All of us at that age were not terribly sure what our future career was going to be. Often, it is not because those kids lack confidence or skill. They are not sure what their future career is. How many 17-year-olds actually know they are going to have their future in the mines or whatever? In that middle group you will often find some of the most talented and most innovative, yet they are quiet, subdued and introverted rather than being extroverted. How do you make sure in your criteria that you do not miss out on those people?

Mr Roberts—I think they are the ones that you get coming back in at 18 or 19.

Mr SAWFORD—They come back later?

Mr Roberts—That is where our larger proportion is in fact occurring these days. The number of people coming at the latter part of their youth is increasing. A number of adult apprentices are coming back. A number of employees again this year came in.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you guarantee employment for the apprentices when they finish?

Mr Roberts—No, we don't. In our business vision—it is driven by Vision 2000—we are looking to produce two-thirds of our tradesperson needs in the year 2000 from the intake four years prior. About a third will not want to work for us because they want to go overseas now that they have done their four years post-school. They want a break. We also want to have some tradespersons that come in as tradespersons with other experiences so that we do not get locked into our own culture all the time, so that we do in fact have people coming with other life experiences to bolster our work force.

Mr SAWFORD—Did I hear you correctly in your introduction that your link with schools has been for eight years?

Mr Roberts—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—I read here that the north-west schools industry link was initiated only last year.

Mr Roberts—That is correct. We had a precursor to that, which was the Mount Isa Secondary Schools and Industry Link. It was called MISSAIL. It was something that I was involved in with the north-west director of education in the two high schools. It was early days. It was about eight years ago. Its purpose was to get the two schools to talk to each other and us. At that time the level of cooperation you find today was not there. It is markedly different today.

Mr SAWFORD—Who initiated that?

Mr Roberts—It was initiated by the Mount Isa High School headmaster at the time, Paul Bland. He spoke to me, and we worked on it from there.

Mr SAWFORD—What about the CES? I gather that your relationship with the CES is fairly solid as well. Is that correct?

Mr Roberts—Yes, it is.

Mr SAWFORD—So the three bits of the trinity have been working cooperatively for a fair while?

Mr Roberts—In recent years more so than ever before. We used to do it all ourselves. We had our own much larger recruitment department. We would screen every person who applied. We would deal with everyone. That is done very efficiently for us through the CES today. Therefore, the links are much greater—

Mr SAWFORD—And you are quite happy with that?

Mr Roberts—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—No problems?

Mr Roberts—We always have small nagging ones, but nothing that would warrant a concern. Everything is manageable at the local level.

CHAIR—Do you pay them to do it?

Mr Roberts—It is a service provided by the CES to us. Payment, to my knowledge, is only there if we go to an extra length, where we take people where there might be a search for a particular trade. So, when a normal person walks in the door and says, 'I am unemployed. I would like to find a job,' there is no payment for that service.

Mr SAWFORD—With you in human services and Reg in recruitment, what is your view of the education system here in Mount Isa?

Mr Roberts—I guess my best answer to that—Reg, I will start—is that of my three children have all done their education here right through the high school system. That is the best endorsement I can give. The education is only as good as the parents put in anyway, and that is from my perspective. The school system here and the cooperation I have had in this town in secondary education has been pretty well first class.

Mr SAWFORD—That is a refreshing point of view to be given.

Mr BROUGH—Are you only recruiting for your apprentices locally? When I say locally, I mean in Mount Isa and the surrounding districts?

Mr O’Connell—This time is the first time, yes.

Mr BROUGH—So in the past you have gone further afield and advertised in the capital cities or whatever?

Mr Roberts—Absolutely.

Mr BROUGH—And this time you have made a deliberate attempt to—

Mr O’Connell—Keep it local, yes. That is primarily associated with the lack of accommodation. We could not provide local accommodation. So, if an individual applied and they had a relative or someone where they had guaranteed accommodation—because we did not want youths wandering around getting thrown out of flats and stuff like that—then they were considered. Primarily it was based on accommodation.

Mr BROUGH—You have moved away from the single man’s accommodation, haven’t you?

Mr Roberts—That is correct.

Mr BROUGH—Have you used any of the Irish Club’s accommodation, which used to be yours but has been rebuilt?

Mr Roberts—We use the Irish Club accommodation now; that is true. We do not use it for apprentices at the moment. As you are probably aware, the development there is in anticipation of the massive capital expansion of the Isa. Really from the end of May through for the next two years you will not get a room in this town because of the number of contractors who will be brought in for the construction work.

We also do not have our barracks, as is correctly stated. Therefore, we try to recruit locally. We did take some people from outside. There were two individuals in particular. In the old days we used to have intakes of 100-odd, and 50 or 60 would have been from outside and 40 would have been local.

Mr BROUGH—So the only reason you did not top up your quota to 70 from outside was the accommodation factor and you did not really want young people left to their own devices?

Mr Roberts—We could not guarantee them accommodation.

Mr O'Connell—We could not guarantee them accommodation and their living arrangements.

Mr Roberts—We were hopeful of getting our members locally in the first instance.

Mr BROUGH—Just from what I have read there, I think it is a blueprint for what everyone should be doing. As Rod said, you have basically put the three areas together, even if it has come together only recently. From everything I have heard so far in the inquiry, this is the sort of thing that needs to be done far more widespread at every level if we are going to achieve the best outcomes for young people. So thank you very much for your efforts. I appreciate it.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What is the level of youth unemployment in your area? Do you have any idea?

Mr O'Connell—I am really not sure.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I suppose it is high, the same as everywhere else.

Mr O'Connell—I really could not comment. I am not sure.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Most of what you have said has cut across the idea that I was going to put, but would the company be prepared to employ additional apprentices with the view to it being a community contribution to youth unemployment? You said you do not guarantee everyone a job anyhow, so obviously a number of people do leave you after they have completed their apprenticeship. A number of major companies through different parts of Australia have actually done this at periods of high unemployment, particularly when it is a large company that has the facilities to train people.

Mr O'Connell—We have the facilities. There is also a very high cost in terms of apprenticeships. The CRAFT scheme, for example, is petering out. So the amount of support is minimised. We really have to concentrate on our business and being a successful enterprise. It makes it very difficult to be terribly community minded, to enable you to do that, and keep competitive, because our competitors are really doing a pretty good job against us. If we begin too much down the track of developing people for purposes other than our own around the future, we might not have a good future. I have an attachment to the future, because I work here. It is attached to my job.

Mr MOSSFIELD—If there were some financial incentive put to you, supported by governments or whatever—

Mr Roberts—We would have to consider it. We certainly would consider it.

Mr BROUGH—Say you have 200 applicants and you knock them on the head. So you are not going to lower your standards to—

Mr Roberts—We are not going to lower standards. We are not going to put someone's health and safety at risk because their mind is not on the job and they want to be elsewhere. We have to realise that they are apprentices in a heavy industrial environment. It is something that is on our mind all the time. This is not

the place to be playing games in the least. The people there and the training we put into it is very extensive and intensive for that purpose.

Mrs GASH—I want to come in there on the subject of training? Both of you have said that you use training groups. You mentioned Skillshare just very quickly—

Mr O'Connell—We have an involvement with them.

Mrs GASH—Yes. Yet your rejection rate is quite high? How does this work? Are they not training them? Are they not advising them? Why is it so?

Mr O'Connell—The involvement primarily with Skillshare, for example, is that I have been by to give presentations in two groups about how they can make themselves more attractive for recruitment by an organisation. I run through an understanding of what the recruitment process is and what they should do in terms of their resumes and interviews. We are trying to bring the group of people up.

The biggest group I have had is seven people. None of them were interested in apprenticeships or traineeships. They were primarily interested in getting into engineering firms. At least two of the ladies who were involved have found employment. One is working part time and one is working full time. So I might have done some good. Our involvement with Skillshare is to give the opportunity for people to come and gain true experience in the work environment through a work release program or to try to help them become more attractive in recruitment. That is our involvement with those people.

Mr Roberts—I will just add to that. The positive side of this is that, if we look at the people we employed in 1996, we placed 18 students. Of them, how many were successful in gaining apprenticeships? Was it a dozen?

Mr O'Connell—Yes, 12.

Mr Roberts—So that was our first time of actually placing them. So the students are at Mount Isa High. They do their trade work in our workshops under our supervision with their teachers. Eighteen went for experience. A number applied. Twelve are now apprentices. That is getting where we need to get with intensive training. It has to get a result. We are not going to drop off our efforts to make that result. We have 20 places this year. We would like to think that there is such a good experience that they will apply and they will be successful. A lot of the other stuff is ad hoc. An advertising campaign is just that. It is just a promotional campaign. It is not targeted at people who really have a genuine interest.

Mrs GASH—How much work does the TAFE do for you?

Mr Roberts—TAFE does a huge variety of work. It has been in the past our provider of a lot of our block training, but we share the block training now.

Mr O'Connell—They are providing a lot of the training modules in all of the trades, electrical, instrument, et cetera. We have expertise in some of the modules which they do not. So we have a share

arrangement. Sometimes they will come to our workshops and their teachers might present, and other times it might be on their premises and our teachers present. So it is not a clear-cut who does what type of thing.

Mr Roberts—It is one of the problems with TAFE. I can understand. We have the facilities here. If we use their teachers in our facilities, why go and put the infrastructure in there? It is empty for two-thirds of every day—not used. Sometimes they cannot get the expertise that we have in our staff. They cannot attract them to work in the Isa.

Mrs GASH—I have another quick question. What is your turnover of young people? How long do they stay with you?

Mr Roberts—I have never looked at turnover by age. I am prepared to do an analysis for you and supply that information.

Mrs GASH—I am just interested to see whether they stay after their training is finished.

Mr Roberts—In terms of apprenticeships?

Mrs GASH—Not necessarily even apprenticeships. Young people who might work for you anyway. Do you put people on without an apprenticeship?

Mr Roberts—Yes.

Mrs GASH—What is your turnover rate for that?

Mr Roberts—We do not analyse our people by age. That is the point I am making. Once they are employed, we have their age information and we can do the analysis. It is not a factor in our decision to employ but, in terms of the apprenticeships, we could certainly give the details.

Mrs GASH—Length of stay is not a factor of employment?

Mr Roberts—No.

Mrs GASH—Do you mean to say that you would spend—

Mr Roberts—That is not the answer I gave.

Mrs GASH—Can I get it back again?

Mr Roberts—It is that their age is not a factor in their employment. If you apply for a job with us—

Mrs GASH—No, I did not mean that.

Mr Roberts—That is what I answered.

Mrs GASH—All right, so you are prepared to spend the money on the training, and you are not concerned whether the turnover rate is high or not at this stage?

Mr Roberts—We are very concerned, but we do not look at it by age categories. We look at it by area. So we look at the number of people who came in.

Mr SAWFORD—How many Aboriginal youth were employed by Mount Isa Mines?

Mr Roberts—I do not have a breakdown on that. I am not sure that I could even find that. I am not sure that we keep a record of ethnicity. It is something that we have not done in the past.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have Aboriginal employees?

Mr Roberts—Yes.

Mr MAREK—How often do you roll your apprentices? Do you have a group set up where you let them go every four years? Do you have some on those schemes or are they for the term of the whatever? A lot of mines and those sorts of things—particularly coal—purposely take on apprentices: you have a four-year term, you finish your apprenticeship, you go. Do you run those schemes here?

Mr Roberts—As we indicated earlier, the intention is that two-thirds of the tradesperson numbers we predict we need in the year 2000 would be out of the 1996 intake. So, whilst no guarantee is made for any job for any one person, our intention is to have the training success to employ two-thirds. A third tend to leave us because they want to go elsewhere.

Mr MAREK—Have you also looked at some of the other schemes, like those they have opened up in the coal industry now. They have group trainee people that might grab 60 apprentices or trainees or whatever they are. They will have them working in the town doing everything from hairdressing to motor mechanics and those sorts of things, but they are also attached to the mines. Have you seen those schemes that are now going?

Mr Roberts—Yes. We have had some discussions with MIGATE—the Mount Isa group apprentice training and education scheme—but we have not sponsored anything outside our business needs at this point in time.

Mr MAREK—You have not looked at it?

CHAIR—As I said, this is an inquiry about employment, not about unemployment, but have you got any idea what the youth unemployment rate is in Mount Isa?

Mr Roberts—No, I do not have a figure. I feel that it would be around 13 per cent.

Mr SAWFORD—Thirteen?

Mr Roberts—It is that sort of figure. But that figure I am referring to is unemployment, not youth

unemployment. I do not have a good feel for that.

CHAIR—So adult unemployment is high?

Mr Roberts—Yes, it is quite high.

CHAIR—The expansion will not alleviate that?

Mr Roberts—We are talking about skilled employment in the main. But, yes, it will alleviate it to a degree. There will be opportunities, but they are often for short-term, not permanent, employment.

CHAIR—Where do you get your operators from?

Mr Roberts—Locally.

CHAIR—But where do they come from? Are they adults who have other skills that encourage—

Mr Roberts—Our operators either have experience as operators elsewhere, and people come here looking for work, or they have the job fit—the characteristics—and we train them. There is a number of people that come into our operations at all levels that have not been a concentrator person or a smelter or a miner. But a lot of people come here looking for work, and those skills are valuable.

CHAIR—Do you put young people into operating positions?

Mr Roberts—Yes, we do.

CHAIR—How many?

Mr Roberts—I could not tell you the number.

CHAIR—Your submission is just about—

Mr Roberts—The traineeships. The rest are taken on as normal employees to operate.

CHAIR—With respect, we do not care what kids get hired as. What we are concerned with is employment opportunities for young people.

Mr Roberts—I have not got the information for you. I am quite happy to do an analysis of people by age and submit it for your information. I do not have it here today.

CHAIR—If you hire young people in either your clerical staff or some other area of executive work or even training work or—

Mr Roberts—We employ them as operators and as clerks.

CHAIR—You do. Do you have different selection criteria for them than you do for apprentices?

Mr Roberts—We have different selection criteria for different roles, yes.

CHAIR—Let us go back now to my original questions. When you go to put on operators, and you are interviewing a range of ages, are there single characteristics that apply to the young people that make them more unsuitable than adults for those jobs?

Mr Roberts—More unsuitable?

CHAIR—Why do you reject the ones you do?

Mr Roberts—I would have to look at every individual case. I cannot give you a generic answer without doing the research, to be honest. I have not analysed the people we have rejected into that category. It is a worthy question and I think one that we should look at further, but I cannot invent an answer.

CHAIR—Is there ever the opportunity to move from maintenance work, the skilled trades area, into operations?

Mr Roberts—Yes, the opportunity exists.

CHAIR—To go from being a mechanic, fitter or carpenter to being a driller, truck driver or whatever?

Mr Roberts—It happens.

Mr O'Connell—And you review against the same criteria.

CHAIR—But you make no effort to make that a pathway into the higher paying jobs?

Mr Roberts—I'm not sure what you consider higher paying jobs.

CHAIR—Well, you make a heck of a lot more money as a miner or a driller than you do as a fitter, do you not?

Mr O'Connell—It depends where you are located. If you are underground as a fitter, you are paid similar allowances.

Mr Roberts—We have three area agreements at Mount Isa Mines. One covers our surface plant, where people are employed into our surface operations. They do no transfer from surface to underground. That is a part of the EBA that is in place until the year 2000. In the mining operations, there is a similar arrangement and our services area covers our power stations and our ancillary areas.

There are three EBAs in place until the year 2000. There is no transfer between them unless there is a business requirement to transfer between them. People who have been here since prior to the EBA have the

opportunity to transfer once. That has been put in place to stop the drift of skilled persons into what traditionally were higher paid jobs in the Isa some years ago.

Since the EBA, that differential has changed dramatically. They are now benchmarking on the surface metallurgical plants relative to met plants across Australia and in the mines, across mines. You can still argue that these people that you call the drillers and the miners at the front end earn exceptional money, but they are small in number. They are not large cadres of people at all any more.

CHAIR—If you could structure the ideal industrial relations arrangement—I am not talking about suppressing wages but about the ideal arrangement—in order to encourage people to fulfil their potential so that you get the most out of them so that they work the hardest for you, particularly where it has the most benefit for you, how would you structure the progression?

Mr O’Connell—First, you have to assume that everyone can reach the same level and that they are all starting from the same basis—that everything is equal. And people are not equal; they are different, thank God. Otherwise we would be in trouble. The theoretical model is really not feasible.

Mr BROUGH—Didn’t you just recently restructure your industrial relations and have up to 100 per cent improvement in some areas of your productivity? What have you done that has resulted in those increases in productivity?

Mr Roberts—Three EBAs in place gives us a very flexible work force.

Mr BROUGH—So what changed that gave you those massive increases in productivity in some areas?

Mr Roberts—Firstly, the significant increase in salary for the people that are working in the surface plants relative to the mines, where the differential was huge historically but is no longer the case. Secondly, the genuine career progression that people have on the surface as perceived to stay within their skills so that they do not have to leave their skilled trades. Also, there is the sense of belonging to that area and, on our side, the drop of any job protection demarcation issues that used to hinder everything we did, which really dissipated totally.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What level of contracting do you have at the plant? Does that affect the employment or the training of young people?

Mr Roberts—Contracting is an area that over the next few years is going to be abnormal with the massive capital expansion, but in the norm a large number of contractors work for us.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Is that in the production side of things?

Mr Roberts—We have some contractors working in development-mining type operations, but most are in the maintenance and support areas.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Does that have an impact on the employment of young people?

Mr Roberts—I would imagine it would because a number of their people are drawn from the community, and they have apprentices.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So it improves employment, would you say?

Mr Roberts—Absolutely, yes. If we did not have this we would be employing them ourselves—as we did many years ago.

CHAIR—Isn't there some benefit in a person who is going to be a driller having some mechanic experience?

Mr Roberts—Yes.

CHAIR—Would you get a better driller if you promoted somebody who is a mechanic to be a driller or is it rather their personal attributes, as long as you can give them enough mechanical skills along the way to do the job satisfactorily?

Mr Roberts—Drilling is a very boring job.

CHAIR—I know.

Mr Roberts—Whereas being a maintenance tradesperson does have distinct personal characteristics. With respect to your first point, there is no doubt that having some mechanical skills adds value as a driller because you can do basic maintenance on your drills. But the—

CHAIR—If something is going wrong or not working properly.

Mr Roberts—That is right, and you take care with your equipment. There are a few tradesmen who are drillers, but most tradesmen cannot stand it; they will do it for a while for a dollar, but they cannot keep it up.

CHAIR—I accept that.

Mr SAWFORD—I have a couple of quick personal questions. What was your background before coming into Mount Isa Mines? Where were you educated? Where did you come from?

Mr Roberts—Okay. I am a Victorian—I am from Melbourne. The Caulfield Institute of Technology is where I did my tertiary education—Bachelor of Applied Psychology and Applied Sociology. I then worked for the Papua New Guinea government in the Public Service as their psychologist. I was head of the psych services in PNG. I then did my Masters in Industrial Psychology in the UK, and joined Bougainville Copper as Superintendent, Industrial Psychology. I have been here as Personnel Development Manager for eight years. I was Safety Manager for 18 months. I was Training Manager—Reg's job—for a year or so. I was the HR manager for McArthur River—we have started a new mine up there—for 11 months. I came back in November.

Mr O'Connell—I was educated in Wollongong, New South Wales. My background is that I have an Associate Diploma in Metallurgy. I worked with BHP in Port Kembla for 11 years through a range of

technical and management roles. I was then recruited by Alcoa to Western Australia to start on the alumina refinery—again in a supervisory role. After two years I was invited to be involved in the commissioning of the Portland Aluminium Smelter, in a metallurgy based thing in Alcoa. Then Boyne Island smelters offered me a role in Gladstone as a Senior Training Adviser across the site. Then I was National Training Manager with ANI Bradken based in Brisbane. I had two years with Peak Gold Mines in Cobar, New South Wales. I came up here last year, originally as the Employee Development Manager. I am now in Recruitment and Employee Development.

Mr SAWFORD—You are in an excellent position to answer the next two really quick ones.

CHAIR—You had better be quick!

Mr SAWFORD—What is your view of the careers advisory services that are available to young people in this town? What is your view of the vocational curriculum that is offered to young people in this town? In a sentence.

Mr Roberts—I can give you a word for the career guidance: I think it is near-on pathetic.

Mr SAWFORD—Pathetic?

Mr Roberts—In my view—having teenage children and having had that background myself. In the other area, vocation, I feel less definitive. There has been a lot of work done to try to get vocational fits between the high schools in some of the computer areas, hairdressing areas and other trade areas. I think the efforts need applauding. But they are usually driven by individuals, not by any system.

CHAIR—Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming to talk to us. It is an important topic, as I am sure you realise. If you can follow up a couple of the questions, we would be most appreciative, particularly the intake of young people into the plant, surface and mining operations compared to the number of technical people as apprentices. We will continue our tour around regional, rural and outback Australia. We will try to finish our deliberations in June and bring down a report in August or early September. We will certainly send you a copy.

Mr Roberts—Thanks, Mr Chairman. I will forward this information to you in due course.

CHAIR—Thank you.

[2.48 p.m.]

De SATGE, Mr John, Assistant Coordinator, Puttatama Aboriginal Corporation, PO Box 2082, Mount Isa, Queensland 4825

MARSHALL, Mrs Joan, Youth Worker, Youth and Community Combined Action, PO Box 2082, Mount Isa, Queensland 4825

CHAIR—Welcome to our inquiry into youth employment. Do you have something that you would like to say to the committee before we ask you questions about what you do, what the problems are, and where employment opportunities are and are not?

Mr De Satge—It would probably be better if you ask the questions and we can make some statements as we go along, because Joan is worried as this is her first appearance at something like this.

CHAIR—This is not meant to be intimidating. We only have the microphones here to record what is said because our memories are not all that crash hot. Why don't you tell us a bit about what your group does, how many young people you work with and the kinds of successes or, indeed, failures you have had?

Mr De Satge—Puttatama Aboriginal Corporation was set up as a result of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. We receive funding from ATSIC for a particular program called Inwork that attempts to address the issue of employment and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth because, as identified in the report, a large number of those people who had died had, in their early years, a lot of contact with the judicial system. So, as Puttatama was set up to do, we offer employment and training for a 12-month period; up to two years on the job and off-the-job training as well.

Currently, we have only got funding from the Commonwealth for a one-year program. We have something like 17 young people at the moment in employment with different agencies in both the public and private sector in and around the Mount Isa area.

Mr SAWFORD—How old are they and what sorts of things are they trained in?

Mr De Satge—The target group is 15 to 25 years of age. We are finding that one of the biggest issues with the job of training in our area is that of literacy and numeracy because, where we are situated, we tend to draw a lot of people from the Gulf area and also the Channel country area and across from the border. For those people, English is a second language and the culture is very different from what it is, say, on the east coast of Australia. For the Aboriginal people, there are other things more important than the culture there—Aboriginal culture is more important than, say, whatever happens on the east coast of Australia where they have a lot of activities, as well as educational ones, happening.

Mr SAWFORD—What sorts of training programs do you implement?

Mr De Satge—When we say 'training', it is on-the-job training.

Mr SAWFORD—Right.

Mr De Satge—We approach private sector employers and say to them, ‘We would like you to take some of our people on. We will pay their wages and on-costs as well. We want you to give them an opportunity, and to train them so that they have got some of those skills that will enable them to go out to offer themselves on the market later on.’

Mr SAWFORD—At the moment, in what sorts of areas have you got some of your young people placed?

Mr De Satge—We have one person at MIM.

Mr SAWFORD—What is MIM?

Mr De Satge—Mount Isa Mines.

Mr SAWFORD—Right.

Mr De Satge—We have got some people at the Mount Isa base hospital—it is actually employment with the regional health authority and we have got some people based at the hospital. We have four there. We have also got some down at a place called Boulia which is some three hours south of Mount Isa—they are also with the health authority. We have somebody with the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service here in Mount Isa, dealing with the animals. We have some people working in child care, and working with a number of Aboriginal organisations doing administration and also other duties, and also with a sporting organisation—they are setting up an oval and other facilities so we have got some of our people working there.

Mr SAWFORD—That’s certainly a wide variety.

Mr De Satge—Yes. We would like to extend it even more. We recently had contact with a local firm that was talking about wanting to take some people and maybe get them licences for trucks, backhoes and things like that. That is one of the things that limit a lot of people’s employment—they do not have the tickets. They have got the experience because it is really prevalent in the Aboriginal community that people know how to do whatever it is by sight and sound, but as for having that written thing, no.

Mrs GASH—Have you approached small business and hospitality?

Mr De Satge—I do not know if we have got anyone here like that.

Mrs GASH—You wouldn’t have?

Mr De Satge—Yes. As far as the chamber of commerce and that, we are thinking about approaching them but we know we are going to run into some hard times because in our area we have some hard attitudes and ideas that are going to take a while to change about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Mrs GASH—I wondered about that.

Mr De Satge—In fact, that is even to say that, looking at some of the industries around here—particularly some of the small businesses in town—until the advent of that seminar that small businesses undergo in the field of hospitality—

Mrs GASH—Aussie Host, or something like that?

Mr De Satge—That is it. When I have gone into shops here I have felt the situation is like, ‘Hurry up and spend your money here.’ There are limited choices here. I also note that there is a lack of Aboriginal people working in the small businesses here. When I do see someone who employs Aboriginal people, I am quite happy to go there again and again to spend my money there.

Mrs GASH—So you have not liaised with the chamber of commerce or anything like that in the towns at this stage?

Mr De Satge—It is a fairly new program. We have just been going out initially to those ones that we do know personally and just starting it off through there.

Mr BROUGH—Is your organisation looking after only Aboriginal young people or all young people?

Mrs Marshall—I am employed as an Aboriginal worker, but my workmate should deal with one side and I deal with another, but I do not see it like that. I do not see that I am there for this and I am there for that. I am there for the youth. Whoever comes: you are the worker. You are not an Aboriginal worker or a European worker; you are there for the kids.

Mr BROUGH—How many kids are involved?

Mrs Marshall—It is more or less like a drop-in centre where children come in. Say a child was expelled from school: instead of having him on the street we will pick him up and take him, instead of having him roam. The highest number of children we had in a day was 28. I think that was the highest. There are from 17 or whatever. They drop in. On a school day we usually go around and get the kids that are not at school or they come and they do all their stuff.

Mr BROUGH—What sorts of things do they do there?

Mrs Marshall—We do Aboriginal art. We do our bush trips for culture. You name it; whatever the kids want we will do it with them. They have tutoring; we do sewing. Whatever the kids really want we will try to do for them.

Mr BROUGH—Are there some skills there? At some of the drop-in centres they are playing with Nintendos and someone pointed out yesterday that that is what they do at home. So you are trying to provide them with something?

Mrs Marshall—Yes. We are not just there for them to drop in. If they are expelled from school—we have money to employ a tutor for 12 months. That tutor was picking up the kids who were missing out in school.

Mr BROUGH—Have you got any success stories from kids who have been expelled or whatever? Have you seen some of them go on to employment or get themselves out of that downward spiral that they perhaps were going into?

Mrs Marshall—Yes, with John's organisation. Some of those kids who are with us were handed over to John. He has worked very closely with us, because Murri children are very hard to understand. You would not just speak normally to a Murri. You need to communicate more on their level. John understands them. He communicates on their level and he gets them in to where they need to be fitted in. He would not just put them in any job. He matches the kid with the position, so everyone is benefiting.

Mr BROUGH—Is it ongoing support?

Mr De Satge—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Have any Aboriginal lads applied for apprenticeships at Mount Isa Mines?

Mr De Satge—From our agencies?

Mr MOSSFIELD—Yes.

Mrs Marshall—My children did. I have six boys.

Mr MOSSFIELD—They applied for apprenticeships, and what was the result?

Mrs Marshall—No interview—a letter came back to say no interview.

Mr MOSSFIELD—No interview at all?

Mr BROUGH—They went as far as the CES?

Mrs Marshall—They went themselves; they went down to the mines themselves.

Mr MOSSFIELD—They made their own approaches, did they?

Mr BROUGH—We should talk about the education system. How is that servicing your community? Are you happy with the local education system, and if you are not, what can be done to improve it?

Mr De Satge—We are not happy with the education system per se. There is a high level of literacy and numeracy skills which are missing. In my job I am finding when I go out and see the young people that literacy and numeracy is a big issue. Spelling, reading and writing in the young people are very poor.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Are the young people happy at school.

Mr De Satge—I do not think so.

Mrs Marshall—Not in the sense.

Mr De Satge—To me it has been reflected in their learning skills and their literacy and numeracy skills.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What can be done to improve that?

Mr De Satge—Some more culturally appropriate material. I know as a parent I sat down and taught my kids shapes, sizes, numbers and colours, using cards. Our education system seems to have an attitude of chalk and talk—‘I know everything. I am the teacher. I stand up here. You are the pupil, you do not know anything and you are lucky that I am up here to teach you.’ I reject that. I think all people know and can think for themselves and it is the way that the people are being taught that is an issue. If you are not in the normal range—whatever the normal range is; if you are too bright or too slow—then we are sorry but the education system—

Mr SAWFORD—Is there a difference between primary and secondary schools here in Mount Isa? Would that description of what is happening apply to both of those sections?

Mrs Marshall—Yes.

Mr De Satge—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—Any idea of what sorts of percentages, or even perception, of the Aboriginal population goes on and completes high school compared to the European population here?

Mrs Marshall—Very few.

Mr BROUGH—So very few are going through?

Mr De Satge—Yes.

Mrs Marshall—They are finding it very hard to get in, because once you get up there the kids are lost in the system. The other day a grade 8 kid came to me—and this is a grade 8 picking it up—and she said, ‘The teacher thinks the kids are dumb, but if she would tell the kids to do it they will get out and do it, but they cannot put it on paper.’ So what they need is more hands-on and, as John said, literacy and numeracy. They are not getting that before they get to high school. They are losing it down here and, once they get to high school, they have got nothing to build themselves up to go through high school. They are finding it very hard, especially if they are Murri.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Did you go through the high school system, John?

Mr De Satge—Yes; I went away to a private boarding school.

Mr MOSSFIELD—How did you find it?

Mr De Satge—It was hard at first, but my parents pushed me.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Is that an issue we should be looking at—parents taking more of an active role and encouraging their kids to continue?

Mr De Satge—I agree.

Mrs Marshall—Yes.

Mr De Satge—One of the other things that I have a comment on was in relation to what one of the previous speakers said about advertising. We would certainly like to see some more stuff that is culturally relevant and in a form that is acceptable to us. The statement was made that advertising is putting it on 4LM, the local radio station, or putting it in the *North West Star*, the local newspaper. But, as I said, we have literacy and numeracy problems. How many people are going to read the newspaper, particularly in Mount Isa or in some of the smaller communities outside Mount Isa where they do not have access to any newspaper. That is a big issue.

We have a community radio station here, but I know that we do not have any stuff there from MIM in terms of their advertising. While it is not a station that is seeking advertising, I would expect that they would come to the Aboriginal community and/or some source there to advertise that the jobs are available.

Mrs GASH—John, how many of your people are employed by the mines?

Mr De Satge—We have tried to get those kind of figures, but MIM say they do not keep statistics on racial background.

Mrs GASH—Yes I heard that. I am asking you now.

Mr De Satge—Small numbers—very small. We do not have an accurate number. We do know some of our own people who work over there, but we know it is fairly small.

Mrs GASH—How many of you people have applied to work at the mines?

Mr De Satge—Heaps; again, I do not have exact numbers. As Joan has said, her six children have applied. I have applied myself. I did time as a student over there. When I did come back and have a go as a labourer, or any job that was going over there, I could not even get up to the interview stage.

Mrs GASH—Would you like to comment on why you think that was? Or is it obvious?

Mr De Satge—I do not know. I would need to sit down and ask MIM for me to say anything else. It does not worry me that they are going to knock me back because of some reason, or whatever. I will get up

and have another go at them later on. Just because they have knocked me back the first time is no reason for me to sit back and take it. I will front back up there tomorrow morning and ask again for them to employ me. It does not matter.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Is attendance at, say, primary school a problem with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children here?

Mrs Marshall—When you say a ‘problem’ what do you mean?

Mr MOSSFIELD—Regular attendance at school.

Mrs Marshall—We have a big truancy problem. I can only speak for the area where I work. We have that problem because we have a lot of children who come from outlying areas, English is their second language and they communicate in their own way a lot. And we have a lot of young teachers who are coming out of university and do not know how to cope with the Murri. They do not know where they fit in or how to teach, and with some of them there is the way they talk to the kids or point the finger. So the kids just bail up and do not go back. It is a big thing to try and get them back to school.

I thought I would break that down by taking the teachers to the homes where these kids were coming from to show the teacher the living standard of our Murri children. That really did work, because she had been judging by the book cover and not looking inside. When she really found out it was an eye-opener for her too and the kids then started to come back. Once the teachers know where the kids are coming from, the kids then start to hook up with the teacher and the teacher hooks up with the kids, and it makes the teaching much better because they are both communicating on a level.

Mr MAREK—How long have you both lived here in Mount Isa?

Mrs Marshall—I come from a cattle station. I have very little education myself. That is probably why I am so nervous now.

Mr SAWFORD—You are doing very well.

Mrs Marshall—I am only outside Dajarra. More or less Mount Isa is our shopping centre and we just come here all the time. I had six children here. They all went to school here. I pushed and pushed for a grade 12 education, but I am still nowhere.

Mr MAREK—So how long have you lived here?

Mrs Marshall—Twenty-two years.

Mr MAREK—And you, John?

Mr De Satge—We moved here in 1969 or 1970.

Mr BROUGH—Have things improved or gone backwards for your community? For example, your opportunities. Is it easier for you to get work or harder for you to get work? Just in general, have things improved, stayed the same or deteriorated?

Mr De Satge—More or less stayed the same.

Mrs Marshall—I do not see any change. We are still the same.

Mr De Satge—The thing is that there is a high concentration of Aboriginal and Islander people in only certain sectors and very minimal in other areas. Like I say, small business has very little or no employment here of Aboriginal people. Once the cattle industries and the railways closed down—which employed a lot of Aboriginal and Islander people as labourers—you had to move into the big towns like Isa. That was what we had to do. If you were lucky enough to get a job in the mines or on the council, that was it. We have had people who have come in from the smaller areas like Camooweal, Dajarra and Boulia. They have been here on council and/or the mines for 20 to 30 years. But the opportunities for the young ones are not the same.

CHAIR—How many Aboriginal young people would there be in the Isa?

Mrs Marshall—We had a list of youth. We go from 25. The quick number we had on our list was 80 youth. That is only who John worked with. That is not picking up a lot who are not registered with the CES who have not been accounted for. That is only in the youth area where John works.

CHAIR—Is that 400 or 500 including those at school?

Mr De Satge—Up to 1,000 at the very most.

Mr MAREK—You spoke a little while ago about some sort of training scheme you wanted to get involved in where you actually got Murri people together and taught them how to operate machinery and that sort of thing. How do you envisage that will happen?

Mr De Satge—Unfortunately, here in Queensland the legislation says OH&S and you have to have your training logbook and that, so it has to be done that way. I understand in Victoria and the territory you can take driving tests orally. We cannot do that here in Queensland; we have to go and write them up. So it is a matter of people being able to help those people who have poor literacy and numeracy skills.

For the actual on-the-job stuff, operating machinery, what I have seen of local Aboriginal people is that that is fairly easy to master because it is just a matter of watching, talking and learning. That concept is something that is more readily accepted by Aboriginal and Islander people. It is just the writing part when you have to fill out your logbooks.

Mr MAREK—Where would you do that? Are we talking about doing that sort of thing here?

Mr De Satge—Yes, training would have to happen here. Local people are taking people away to other areas for training.

Mr MAREK—I guess the point I am trying to make is where they would end up. Would they be trained here and then moved somewhere else or would they get jobs here?

Mr De Satge—With the opening of the Carpentaria mineral province and the gas pipeline coming up

from down south, there are employment opportunities there. As I say, the people have the skills and the experience but they just do not have the ticket to go with it, which is what these mines and the gas pipeline people are looking for. That is one area. Maybe the mines over here could offer them some opportunities as well—for example, Century. We are a rural area and we have limited industries out here and we would have to go to those ones.

Mrs GASH—Have you got any funded CDEP programs?

Mr De Satge—Our ATSIC region goes from Mornington Island up in the Gulf of Carpentaria to Birdsville in the south. There are three CDEPs. One is at Mornington Island itself, one is at an Aboriginal community called Doomadjee and another one is at a rural town called Normanton. All three are in the gulf area.

Mrs GASH—Are they successful?

Mr De Satge—They are successful in that they help offer the opportunity for some work activities to be undertaken. The thing is that they tend to be tedious, repetitive and with no looking ahead; it tends to be the same old thing instead of, say, maybe looking at some economic related activities that could happen.

CHAIR—We had better move on. Thank you very much for coming today. We appreciate your input. We hear what you say. We hope to conclude this tour through rural and regional Australia and a few more discussions in Canberra by the end of June and with time to bring down a report in August or early September. We will certainly send you a copy of the report.

Mr De Satge—We can give this document here to the committee. It talks about some of the issues. We have discussed some of those also.

Mrs Marshall—A lot of the problems we have come up against are in there.

CHAIR—Okay. Well done.

[3.20 p.m.]

BRIEN, Mr Ian Phillip, Vice Chairperson, Mount Isa Group Apprenticeship, Traineeship and Employment, PO Box 1726, Mount Isa, Queensland 4825

WILKINSON, Mr Rodney Bruce, Managing Director, Mount Isa Group Apprenticeship, Traineeship and Employment, PO Box 1726, Mount Isa, Queensland 4825

CHAIR—Welcome. Our inquiry is essentially into employment for young people. We are not talking about unemployment. We are essentially looking at two things. The first is how we help young people to be more employable, and the second is how we encourage business, industry, commerce and the public sector to make more job opportunities available for our youth. Do you have a brief opening statement you would like to make to the committee about these issues?

Mr Wilkinson—Basically, I have one but it was more for me to get information from. I will give it to you on our completion. I will give a brief history on MIGATE, which is an incorporated non-profit group training company formed in September 1988. Since our inception, we have employed in excess of 720 apprentices and trainees in all trade areas available throughout the north-west Queensland region. To date more than 100 businesses and local authorities from within the region participate in group training. Administration costs are jointly subsidised by both state and federal governments.

CHAIR—One of the things that we have heard consistently, not only in the cities, but also in rural and regional Australia, is that too many of our youth today seem to have a lack of understanding of what jobs might be available, what career paths they might follow, and what sort of remuneration might be involved in these kinds of jobs and careers. Could you tell us your views on that issue from your understanding of the young people out in this wide and diverse area?

Mr Wilkinson—I would certainly agree with your summation of it. We talk to years 10, 11 and 12 students throughout the high schools in the region on average three to four times a year. The guidance officers, for whatever reasons, tend to look at everybody as going on to university and forget about the trade areas. With the school-to-work programs, we are presently running a pilot here and we are trying to address that through that issue. I think that the guidance officers need to spend more time in industry prior to going into the school and not go from school to university to teacher's training college and back to school.

Mr Brien—I think that the kids who come to you looking for an apprenticeship feel already, before they get into the system, that this is a second rung of a social ladder. When they were all at school, they were all geared up to be rocket scientists, brain surgeons and politicians, and then they come looking for a job as a tradesman. They really just want a job and it does not really matter whether they are fitters and turners, carpenters or butchers. It is just that someone told them to go and get a job. They really do not know where they want to be at the end of the thing when they finish their apprenticeship, because I do not think they get enough information at the start. This is a second string thing and, as long as they can get a job, they will be right.

Consequently, with an industry, and particularly the motor industry, most of them get three years into it

and say, 'This is not what I wanted.' And, when they come to the end of it, they are over the road here drilling holes in the ground, or driving a furniture truck.

CHAIR—In what towns are your apprentices and trainees employed and in what industries, professions or careers?

Mr Wilkinson—We are predominantly engineering out here, naturally. We do not have any apprentices or trainees employed with Mount Isa Mines. They wish to go their own way with that. However, we do provide the apprentices and trainees to the smaller engineering firms that do subcontract work or contract work directly for the mines. We are very much mining industry related. If there is a downturn in the mineral prices, there is a drop-off in our figures as well. We are presently 68 per cent engineering based—boilermakers, fitters, electricians, and so on. The remainder is made up of bread bakers, cooks—more the hospitality and service types of industries.

CHAIR—How about tourism or hairdressing?

Mr Wilkinson—We have one in hairdressing.

CHAIR—Carpentry?

Mr Wilkinson—There are seven.

CHAIR—Bricklayers?

Mr Wilkinson—There are no brickies. The building trades throughout this region have not, in my time, been very strongly involved with group training; it has been more the engineering fields. That is purely because of the area within which we live.

Mr Brien—There is very little building. To see four or five houses built here a year is a boom. So most of the builders are single-man operations. It is not like when you go to Alice Springs where there are shopping centres and things springing up everywhere. The town is virtually the size it is. Repairs and maintenance probably would be a bigger part of the building industry than new fabrication.

CHAIR—So all your employment is concentrated in the Isa?

Mr Wilkinson—No; we cover 470,000 square kilometres. We go from the Gulf of Carpentaria—

CHAIR—But where do you have jobs?

Mr Wilkinson—Presently we are employing 161 apprentices and trainees, of which we have about 120 employed directly in Mount Isa. We have people employed in Cloncurry, Normanton, Burketown, Doomadgee, Dajarra, Boulia, Winton and Longreach, and we have even snuck a couple across into Rockhampton's region, at Moranbah. We will go to place them wherever we can. If we have an employer ringing us up wanting assistance to employ an apprentice or trainee, that is what we are paid to do.

CHAIR—Do you chase them?

Mr Wilkinson—We chase them—very much so.

Mr SAWFORD—You have mentioned about the careers guidance being pretty pathetic. What are your views about the vocational curriculum in secondary schools today?

Mr Wilkinson—Excellent, with the implementation coming in lately with the school to work project, where you can do part-time apprenticeships or traineeships. It also gives the younger people a better grasp of what industry they are looking at getting into. As Ian said, if you get them in for one or two years and then they say, 'No, this is not for me,' and opt out of that, the money that has been invested in getting those people to whatever stage they are at is wasted.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you tell us a little about the selection processes that you use to grab hold of your own trainees and apprentices?

Mr Wilkinson—We visit the schools three to four times a year to talk to the students in years 10, 11 and 12. We do psychological testing on anybody who is interested in applying with us. We short-list them to see what vocational areas they are interested in. Then, depending on the numbers we have to fill, we will organise interviews with the various host employers for the final placement of those people.

Mr SAWFORD—Are literacy and numeracy skills a problem?

Mr Wilkinson—They are a very bad problem with the ATSI people, unfortunately. We find that within the outlying regions, such as Burketown, Normanton and places like that, it is very hard to get suitable candidates. You must remember that employers are in business first and foremost to make a dollar. They have to look at the standard of employee that is available, and naturally, with profit margins being so narrow, they will raise their sights.

Mr SAWFORD—What are your links like with education services in this area, and with business and employers? Are they strong?

Mr Wilkinson—I would say they are very strong with the small business sector, but not with the larger mining companies that tend, as I said, to run their own race. In terms of the education system, in the last six to 12 months the implementation of the school to work pilot project we are running has certainly taken us both ahead in leaps and bounds. Before, there was a real barrier between the educationalists and the employment side of it.

Mr SAWFORD—In the whole area that you service, how many Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander school teachers are employed?

Mr Wilkinson—I would be guessing; I have no idea.

Mr SAWFORD—Are there any?

Mr Brien—I think Camooweal has a couple.

Mr Wilkinson—There are quite a few, but more as teachers aides rather than direct teachers. Presently, 23 per cent of our apprentices and trainees are ATSI people.

Mr Brien—We had a fair percentage on our fence line project. They were nearly 100 per cent of those.

Mr MAREK—I found it great that you mentioned guidance officers. We have spoken to so many different people about guidance officers. You are the first people who have actually said, I think, that guidance officers are pushing people into university courses rather than pushing them towards vocational education and training.

Mr Wilkinson—It is an opinion of mine, but the guidance officers I have been involved with over the years have certainly looked at that. Whether it is related to funding of the various schools or not, I do not know. But the higher the pass rate they can get of their students attending the high schools, the better placed they are for funding in the future.

Mr MAREK—As I and a lot of people see it, we have a skill deficiency in the country, and it just seems to be getting worse. Maybe this is one of the reasons we are losing them. So many of these guidance officers are pushing students into university.

Mr Wilkinson—There is another point to that. I think we should be looking at raising the profile of the tradespeople of Australia. At present it is not high. Perhaps we could look at the master craftsman style of the German system, where they actually have to go on and do an additional year before they can go into their own businesses.

Mr MAREK—Have you seen any of those ads on TV advertising for young people to get involved in the armed forces? It is a real crazed way of advertising for people to go into the armed forces. Have you seen any of those ads?

Mr Wilkinson—No.

Mr MAREK—Thank God. They are absolutely hopeless. That is the sort of thing that I think would be half the problem as far as building people's confidence in relation to going into skilled trades. I want to ask you about group training schemes, which they actually implemented in the mines around Dysart and so on. They have got 60 or more kids from within the community getting involved in working in the mine and in hairdressing salons and everywhere. Would you like to expand on that?

Mr Wilkinson—It is just an extension of the group training type arrangement with the mining companies. We have made submissions to all of the mining companies throughout the region—Ernest Henry, Western Mining Phosphate, Osborn and Mount Isa Mines. To date, they have not taken us on board, but we are certainly hopeful of it. The problem we do have out here is the 'fly in, fly out' problem. A lot of the tradesmen are flying in and flying out of Townsville, Cairns, et cetera. They may just overnight here and then

either bus out or small plane it out to the mine site from here.

The mining companies are saying that they do not want to look at first and second years, naturally, because they do not want to take a 16- or 17-year-old person out to the mine site. So they would be looking at third or fourth years. We have put various proposals to them to try to get around that and, hopefully, we will get some success eventually.

Mount Isa Mines have always had a very good training centre and have been very proud of it. Their reluctance to come on with the group training concept is beyond me. There are certainly savings to be made from it and, with the rotational type arrangement of group training, it would turn out better tradespeople.

Mr Brien—A good tradesman now is virtually assured of employment for the rest of his life. We are that short of them. As an employer, I can never understand that to get tradesmen I really have to go and find them, train them and be mother, father, banker, loaner, adviser or whatever else to them to get them through their apprenticeship. But if they want to go to university, the community in general pays and they go and live a fairly good sort of life and at the end of it they do not really have any sort of guarantee. We do not seem to press that there would not be a qualified tradesman of any trade who could walk into this town with his toolbox and not have a start tomorrow.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you feel that Mount Isa Mines could employ more apprentices? Do you have a view on it?

Mr Wilkinson—Most definitely. If you look historically you find that they were the largest employer of apprentices throughout the region. Their intake last year I think was around the 30 to 40 mark. I did my apprenticeship over there and our intake in those years was 100 to 150 per year.

Mr MOSSFIELD—That is a big drop?

Mr Wilkinson—Yes, they are going back into their core business. For whatever reasons, they are looking at becoming more and more cost conscious, which businesses have had to become.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I will move off that. How many people actually apply for apprenticeships with your organisation and do you actually knock back a lot?

Mr Wilkinson—We do, unfortunately. We have a selection process. We employ our own psychologist and we do our testing on that. We will make a short selection of three or four candidates which we would be quite happy to employ and we then refer them to the employer to make the final selection. You have to give them some choice in part so they have a sense of ownership.

CHAIR—How many do you knock back?

Mr Wilkinson—Last year I think there were around 38 to 40 that missed out on positions that they had applied directly for. There would have been more than that on the training side. I am only talking apprentices at this stage.

CHAIR—Was that for a range of reasons?

Mr Wilkinson—It was more to do with the final choice. The problem we do have with young people coming and applying for jobs, and this probably harks back to the guidance officer, is that they do not really know what vocation they want to go into. We have a section on the application form and they will put down any apprenticeship or any traineeship. They will not stipulate exactly what they want. When the employer looks at that they say, 'This kid does not want a trade; he just wants a job.' This is one thing that can be taken up within our education system.

Mr MOSSFIELD—That gets back to the career advisers.

Mr Wilkinson—That is correct and getting them to teach them how to fill out application forms, how to dress for interviews, how to present themselves, how to answer questions, et cetera.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I gather from what you are saying that you in fact could place more apprentices if you had the right—

Mr Wilkinson—If we had more incentives we could. They sell themselves. It is just like selling motor cars.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So the positions are there provided you—

Mr BROUGH—What is the age breakdown of the 100 and whatever you have at the starting point?

Mr Wilkinson—We have very few year 10s, and the majority are year 12s. In saying that, we have 15 adult apprentices as well.

Mr BROUGH—Completed year 12s?

Mr Wilkinson—Yes, completed year 12s.

Mr BROUGH—So the average age is about 17?

Mr Wilkinson—It would be fair to assume that.

Mr BROUGH—How long has the school to work program been running here?

Mr Wilkinson—We did a pilot initially three years ago with only four students and we placed those four students one day a week with industry. Today, each of the four students are third year apprentices.

Mr BROUGH—Where are we up to now? How many students are involved?

Mr Wilkinson—We hope to this year be placing in excess of 200 school students throughout industry in Mount Isa and Cloncurry. That is the only area we can really comment on.

Mr BROUGH—Have you seen an improvement in the presentation rate? We talked about dress, interview techniques and presentation—

Mr Wilkinson—No, not at this stage. It is too early. We have only been going since January with this one.

Mr BROUGH—With the 200?

Mr Wilkinson—Yes, with the school group.

Mr BROUGH—How many did you have going last year?

Mr Wilkinson—Last year we were just getting it up.

Mr BROUGH—So you did a very small thing three years ago. I am of the belief that that will be a major improvement for them. Do you have any problems with people in the outlying areas, and even locally, not staying? What percentage are staying right through the four years? Does it differ much between, say, Cloncurry, Mount Isa and then up into the gulf?

Mr Wilkinson—We would be better off out here than the eastern seaboard side of it because we are a pretty well closed environment out here and there is nowhere else to go to get a job. I know the problems they have on the coast with their cooks who will waltz from establishment to establishment to gain experience or whatever. Out here we have not got the jobs for them to do that.

Mr BROUGH—Finally, what sort of percentage of the businesses that you could possibly attract into this scheme would not know about it and would not understand what it can offer them?

Mr Brien—The majority of small businesses in town would be aware of the program now, not only through MIGATE but through the service clubs and those of us who were involved in it. I was involved in the pilot scheme and still have those two kids. But, with the numbers that are involved, everyone is aware of it now, even around the schools and the mums and dads and everyone. It is a pretty well publicised thing at this stage, isn't it?

Mr Wilkinson—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—My concern is with the school system. It has been mentioned to us previously—and my own experience is—that school to work programs are very much dependent upon the strength or desire or whatever of the principal.

Mr Wilkinson—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—As you said, you now have 200. Say you have a change of principal: is there any mechanism that you can think of that we could instigate, or that could be put in place, to ensure that this thing continues on, presuming it is going to be successful?

Mr Wilkinson—Yes. You are right in what you say. One high school wanted absolutely nothing to do with the initial project we did. So what we did with the setting up of this new one was to grab someone from the education department, not associated with either school—an inspector.

Mr BROUGH—A regional person?

Mr Wilkinson—A regional guy. He is the Chairman of the School to Work Board. So we got around that problem like that.

Mr BROUGH—Presumably he was on side?

Mr Wilkinson—Very much so. He is also a director of MIGATE, which makes it very—

Mr Brien—I believe the success of it will then drive the principals to have to be involved. If we can prove that we can get employment for the kids who do not go on to university or whatever else, then they would be swimming against the tide with parents if they said, ‘This school is not going to be involved.’ So we have to make it a success, so that they have to be on board to provide a future for people. That is the way we see it.

Mrs GASH—What are the opportunities for young women in apprenticeships and traineeships here in Mount Isa?

Mr Wilkinson—Very good. We run a women in the workplace program which we have got up and going now. We have females involved in electricals. We have had motor mechanics go through. We have had one boilermaker. Naturally, we still have cooks and hairdressers but we are getting more and more females becoming interested. That has a lot to do with the promotion that has been going on throughout Queensland. I cannot speak for other states.

Mrs GASH—What is the ratio of men to girls?

Mr Wilkinson—I would be guessing. I would not like to say. But at present we have got seven females in non-traditional trades, which is what we call them.

Mrs GASH—You might have answered this while I was out, but how many school leavers would be looking for work at the end of each school year?

Mr Wilkinson—In excess of 100 would stay within the city and not go on to university.

Mrs GASH—How many of those would not find jobs?

Mr Wilkinson—You would have to ask the CES that. We had a problem at the final talks we gave last year. We were there with the Lorraine Martin College and the CES. The Lorraine Martin College and MIGATE were telling young people how to get jobs; the CES were showing the kids how to fill out unemployment benefit forms if they did not get jobs. That is waving a flag to the kids saying, ‘You will be

right. You will be looked after if you do not get a job.' It takes any incentive away from those kids who are bordering on—

Mr MOSSFIELD—The point there is that that was the CES doing that.

Mr Wilkinson—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Schoolteachers themselves have been getting the blame.

Mr Wilkinson—No, this was the CES.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I think it may well get back—

Mr BROUGH—They have to be invited in though, so it is a two-way street. It is both; it is not just the teachers.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Yes. But the blame was put on the schoolteachers and it appears that may not have been the case.

Mrs GASH—Rodney, how would work for the dole work here?

Mr Wilkinson—There are certain benefits to it. For a start, the dole is too high. The gap is too narrow between apprentice trainee wages and the dole. If work for the dole is structured training and there are job outcomes for it, it will work. But if it is such things as the labour market programs where there are no full-time positions as outcomes, we are wasting our time.

Mrs GASH—Thank you for that.

Mr MAREK—Another area you are talking about is the schools area. You half give off the impression that maybe the schools are trying to shut out work training organisations, or are being a little bit obstructive. Would that be fair comment?

Mr Wilkinson—It has not occurred here and I have not heard of it elsewhere, but no doubt with all the changes, or hopefully changes, that are going to be coming out with new apprenticeships, et cetera, and group training being looked upon as favourably as we hope it will be—

Mr MAREK—The PEPEs and those sorts of things.

Mr Wilkinson—Yes. There will be one bucket of money and everybody will be jumping in to get whatever they can out of it, so no doubt the competition will increase.

Mr SAWFORD—How many kids in this town are sent off to boarding schools away from town?

Mr Brien—I am guilty of that. Mine went.

Mr SAWFORD—Why?

Mr Brien—I guess that is a hard question to answer.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not want you to say on a personal basis.

Mr Brien—No, but some kids seem to grow up expecting that that is probably where they are going to go, for some reason. When mine went, personally the headmaster and I did not get along and they went off to another school, but a lot of kids do go away, particularly those whose parents want them to go on and do other things.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think that sends a signal to other kids in the town? Does it send any signal?

Mr Brien—I have never thought of that. No, they all seem to get along pretty well.

Mr Wilkinson—Yes.

Mr Brien—The difference is the kids we see are the ones who definitely did not get a chance to go to university or do whatever else. We are on what the schools tend to call the bottom of the barrel, and those kids, as I said earlier, believe they have already missed out, so we are seeing that sort of percentage down there. The ones up here—wherever they go and what they do and when they get to us—after they have learned from CES how to fill out the forms and things, are already half depressed before we get them. I believe, in a business such as mine, it was not too many years ago in the motor industry that you had a kid out the back with a broom in spare parts and a kid in the workshop, but the tax structure now is such that you cannot employ those people. The only people who come to me now looking for a job pushing a broom around are ex-army fitters and turners, about my age.

CHAIR—Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming today. We appreciate you talking to us. We have learned more, once again. We hope to finish the inquiry by the end of June. We have still got a long way to go around regional Australia, but we will try and bring our report down in late August or early September, and we will certainly send you a copy of the report. We thank you for your input on this most important topic.

[3.51 p.m.]

BARWICK, Mr Phillip Maurice, Manager, Mount Isa Skills Association Inc., 66 West Street, Mount Isa, Queensland 4825

CHAIR—Welcome. I would like to say, firstly, that our inquiry is about employment and not about unemployment. We are trying to come to grips with two factors, basically. Firstly, how can we help young people to become more employable, and, secondly, how can we encourage those who do employ to employ more of our youth? Would you like to make an opening statement about the issues that we are here to discuss?

Mr Barwick—Mount Isa Skills Association is a community non-profit body. We run two agencies; one is Competitive Employment, which is an employment agency for people with disabilities, and the other is the local Skillshare program and training centre. I have been a manager of the employment agency for about three or four years and I have more recently taken on being the manager of the local Skillshare, as well. My experience is with the employment agency more than the training centre, but I will try to speak on behalf of both.

CHAIR—While I said that the hearing is about employment and not unemployment, we just wondered what the youth unemployment rate and, perhaps, the general unemployment rate are around Mount Isa. We have asked other people who have appeared here today and nobody seems to know.

Mr Barwick—In figures?

CHAIR—You do not know either?

Mr Barwick—No. The people who come to us that are unemployed are generally self-referred, or they are referred by other places like the CES to our services. Consequently, we have not had a need to investigate those types of figures.

CHAIR—One of the major issues we have found that seems to exist all over the country, whether it is in a major metropolitan centre, in rural areas, or in regional and outback Australia, is that it seems that a very large percentage of young people really have no concept of what careers are available to them and what paths they might follow in employment in the future, or what kinds of jobs they might aspire to, other than seemingly being told by their teachers and their parents that if they do not go to university, they are condemned to a life of unemployment or drudgery. Could you comment on that?

Mr Barwick—I found that with people with disabilities we run a lot of support placement programs. People go into the workplace, we target jobs for them and support and train them in the jobs. We find it very successful but, fundamentally, people come to the place looking for work. Once they are there, they are looking for work. Consequently, it is up to us to find an appropriate job match and once we have done that, we go and target the job they want. We usually find it is pretty successful.

Mr SAWFORD—How many people do you have on your books at the moment?

Mr Barwick—With the Competitive Employment agency we work with about 50 a year and with Skillshare it can go up to about 300 or 350 a year.

Mrs GASH—How many are there with disabilities?

Mr Barwick—There are 50.

Mrs GASH—Young people.

Mr Barwick—No. This is an overall program.

Mrs GASH—How many with disabilities?

Mr Barwick—There are probably about 10 to 12 young people.

CHAIR—What sorts of employers?

Mr Barwick—It is usually the secondary market and not so much the primary market, although we do touch on that at times. Generally, it is a matter of retail operations or the service industries and things like that. We try to fill jobs that people are interested in there.

Mr SAWFORD—So you place about 10 to 12 people a year?

Mr Barwick—People with disabilities? Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—What sort of industries? Give us some example of what sort of industries.

Mr Barwick—They will go into store work, into retail work as shop assistants, and into jobs like cleaning, and that sort of thing.

Mr SAWFORD—What sort of disabilities are we looking at? Is it the whole range?

Mr Barwick—Yes. We do a full range because the place is too small to specialise. Basically, we take anybody who asks for our service.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Tell us a bit more about Skillshare. What is the current level of activity?

Mr Barwick—The fundamental difference between Skillshare and the employment agency is that the people referred to Skillshare do not necessarily want to work. I talked with trainers about that just recently because I knew that this was coming up. We find that probably about 40 per cent of the people who are referred to us are most likely not looking for work and, consequently, they cause 90 per cent of the difficulties with the labour market.

Mr BROUGH—Can you expand on what you mean by ‘not looking for work’? Don’t they come from the CES?

Mr Barwick—No. If the CES says to them, ‘You have to get up there and do this, otherwise we will cut off your dole,’ then there is a sense of pressure there. I know that this is probably touching on the work for the dole scheme that is being mooted at the moment. I see a real difficulty there because it is taking resources away from other people who do want to work. Some of the programs that have been coming our way have been very similar to the employment agency program where people are placed in positions, supported in those positions, and given an opportunity to train.

Mr SAWFORD—How many young people would you think in this town are in that category of not wanting to work? Are there 10 or 12?

Mr Barwick—Is that numbers or percentages?

Mr SAWFORD—It is numbers.

Mr Barwick—We did a placement of 40 people on a program where we went and placed them out in the work force. Of those, I would say that 60 per cent would have been young people and 40 per cent of the whole group are not going to be successful in that program because, basically, they do not want to work.

Mr SAWFORD—Is it because it is the wrong program, or have they been placed with the wrong people?

Mr Barwick—There have been efforts made by trainers to ask them what they want to do and for them to pick their job. The trainers go through it with them and explain what their duties are going to be. The trainers then place them in the job, meet the employer, get the job worked out and, progressively, over a 16-week period, support them in the job to make sure that everything is running smoothly. There are things like not turning up for work, getting onto people’s premises and breaking and stealing things, and there is an endless list of problems that come from a small group of people within that program.

You have to remember that with Skillshare these people are probably not representative of the whole range of young people because the ones we get at Skillshare are probably more representative of the dropouts from the education system. They have poor literacy and numeracy skills and poor education generally, plus a whole range of other problems.

Mr BROUGH—Most of them are long-term unemployed before they get to Skillshare.

Mr Barwick—That is the main target.

Mr BROUGH—They have not only dropped out of school, but they have been unemployed for a long period of time?

Mr Barwick—Yes. They are youth at risk.

Mr MOSSFIELD—But you do have 60 per cent who are interested in looking for work.

Mr Barwick—That is on the positive side. If there were some measure there where trainers could have an opportunity to assess who would be successful in a placement program like that then I think it would be an excellent program.

Mr MOSSFIELD—You would run a different program for those you feel are ready.

Mr Barwick—The other 40 obviously need some other sort of work so that they can go and become more committed to getting a job and more committed to keeping employers happy when they get there.

Mr MOSSFIELD—How successful are you in getting that 60 per cent into employment?

Mr Barwick—With this program we are running at the moment, those 60 per cent have been verbally guaranteed positions at the end of it. That is after a 16-week concentrated effort.

Mr BROUGH—I want to pursue this bit about when you get them in from the CES. Say there are 40 placements: how many are CES sending you for you to short-list if you wish to actually put them into the 40 valuable places which cost money? You are saying that 40 per cent really have no interest in being there.

Mr Barwick—I think they rejected between 15 and 20.

Mr BROUGH—So you got sent about 60 in the first instance. Were you happy to take on the whole 40 or would you have preferred to have had more to look at in the first instance? In other words, how quickly did you ascertain that for roughly 40 per cent of them this was not going to be much assistance?

Mr Barwick—I discussed that exact point with the trainers and they felt that they could pick the problems basically as soon as they hit the classroom—

Mr BROUGH—But they still had to put them through, though.

Mr Barwick—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—That is a concern to me and I want your opinion on this. My concern is that we have limited resources; we have 40 places here. Your instructors have ascertained that X per cent, in your case 40 per cent, really are not going to benefit from this. Why have they then had to put them in? Why haven't they been able to go back to the CES and fill up that course with other people who could perhaps have benefited from it?

Mr Barwick—Under the terms of the arrangement, it was not possible. Those 40 people selected basically had to do the course or they would be cut off their—

Mr BROUGH—So you feel that is something that needs to be looked at so we can use resources better?

Mr Barwick—As far as labour market programs go—with the disability service they are essential.

With this kind of arrangement, if the trainers get an opportunity to screen the people going into them I think they can be extremely beneficial, yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—But you would not just push that 40 per cent aside and say you cannot help them at all, would you? I think you are saying a different type of program than for the 60 per cent.

Mr Barwick—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—What kind of program would you give them?

Mr Barwick—I think you need to look at their self-esteem, their life skills—there is probably a whole range of issues that is causing the problems because they seem to have these problems through school and then through employment.

Mr SAWFORD—They are actually not ready for placement.

Mr Barwick—Not in the terms that the employers require, no.

Mr SAWFORD—Have you got any thoughts or ideas on what sorts of programs could be used? If we gave you the dollars, what would you do with those 40 per cent? Have you got any ideas what you would do?

Mr Barwick—That is a difficult one. I guess you would have to look at the individual needs of each person, and some of them obviously need a lot of counselling. They are ready for a life of crime and street work and that sort of thing.

Mr MAREK—Where do these people usually come from? These kids you say do not want to work—what sorts of families do you see them coming from?

Mr Barwick—Not a lot of support at home.

Mr MAREK—Would the parents be working, not working? Transient sort of people?

Mr Barwick—It is very difficult to answer that exactly. If you are trying to look for a classification, I think there is a broad range there. These kids could probably be picked up a lot earlier in schools. I do not know exactly what could be done with them. If the home environment is not supportive then it is very difficult for the community to support them.

Mr MAREK—So you are basically talking about having another individual in the schooling system who identified these sorts of people. The great problem now with school teachers, and I talk with them all the time, is that they do not have time to waste time with students who do not want to get involved, who do not want to work. I guess those kids who get left to the side are the ones who might be falling into this category.

Mr Barwick—A certain percentage of those will get through under a difficult sort of learning environment like a Skillshare or a similar labour market program. Obviously if those labour market programs

give us a 60 per cent result then that is quite good. That other 40 per cent—you have to remember that the whole parcel of people is not representative of the whole range of kids who are unemployed. These are the ones who are at risk and long-term unemployed.

Mr MAREK—You just said you had a 60 per cent success rate in new work opportunity type programs. What sort of people are driving your new ways? What sort of people are administering it?

Mr Barwick—You mean the trainers themselves and support workers?

Mr MAREK—Yes.

Mr Barwick—Basically people with a lot of industrial experience and a lot of people with empathy, I guess.

Mr MAREK—The normal trend you find when you talk to people is that they say that new work opportunity were extremely expensive and they did not give a great benefit. It is interesting to hear you say that you had a 60 per cent success rate with it. I am thinking that maybe the people we have had running these labour market programs in different communities have been doing the wrong thing and have not been running them the right way.

Mr Barwick—I guess you would have to look at the way they were structured.

Mr BROUGH—You said 60 per cent were going to benefit from it, not 60 per cent that resulted in long-term employment.

Mr Barwick—At this point in time we are about halfway through one group of 40 and we believe that 60 per cent will be offered full-time positions at the end of it.

Mr MAREK—That is good.

Mr Barwick—We think it is fantastic, especially with that group.

Mrs GASH—Some of the Skillshares have been complaining about the CES referrals. Are you in that same situation or are you not having that difficulty at all?

Mr Barwick—That gets back to the referrals that are coming with people who do not necessarily want to work. We are struggling trying to place someone who does not want to do the job. They just do not turn up for work and you can imagine the problems.

Mrs GASH—What are you going to do at the end of the year with Skillshare?

Mr Barwick—We are at a crossroads at the moment and looking at the future of the training centre. The employment program is fine; actually it has been expanded, so they are quite happy with that in all areas. The Skillshare I think will have to change dramatically. It will not run under the same circumstances. We are looking at the EPEs and that sort of thing at the moment.

Mr BROUGH—On Skillshare, I was prompted to ask about your relationship with the CES—

Mrs GASH—You were not listening. I just asked about that.

Mr BROUGH—I am sorry, I was checking up on something. We were checking on another one that had a 46 per cent result in Roma. It appears that the new work programs go better in the rural areas than they do in the cities, because I think the national average is 14 or 20 per cent or something like that. So that is twice in the last two days we have heard that they have had what could be considered a pretty good result. Sorry, what was your answer?

Mr Barwick—I find employers really willing to have a look at these things, but some of them have bad experiences if they get someone who does not want to work.

Mr MAREK—That is something that Amanda Vanstone told me. She said that certain areas of Skillshare have been extremely successful and others have been nothing but a waste of time. That is when she basically indicated, I guess, that they are going to give funding to those Skillshares that work and not to those which do not. I do not know if that is going to continue.

CHAIR—Phillip, thank you very much for coming along today. We still have a long way to go through the rest of regional and outback Australia. We hope to complete our inquiry by the end of June and bring down a report in August or early September, and we will certainly send you a copy of the report. We thank you for sharing your experiences with us today.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Sawford):

That the committee receive as evidence and include in its records as exhibits for the inquiry into factors influencing employment of young people the following documents: from Mount Isa Mines the document entitled 'Report on Youth Unemployment at Mount Isa Mines'; from Youth and Community Combined Action Mount Isa the document entitled 'Issues Affecting Young People from Mount Isa and Surrounding Districts'; and from Mount Isa Group Apprenticeship, Traineeship and Employment the document entitled 'Parliamentary Witness Brief in Youth Unemployment'.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Sawford):

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

Committee adjourned at 4.09 p.m.