HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Factors influencing the employment of young people

ROMA and CHARLEVILLE

Wednesday 2 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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Factors influencing the employment of young people

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Wednesday, 2 April 1997

Present

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mr Brough	Mr Mossfield
Mrs Gash	Mr Sawford
Mr Marek	

The committee met at 10.52 a.m.

Mr Charles took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public meeting on the inquiry into factors influencing 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 young people.

The committee has received over 100 submissions and 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 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.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of issues the committee will consider or which might be raised. We are entirely open to the views of everyone who wishes to make an input to the inquiry. We are here to listen, to learn and to help improve the prospects of all young Australians. I now call representatives of Golden West Group Training.

[10.55 a.m.]

JARICK, Mr Kevin Victor, Manager, Golden West Group Training Scheme Inc., 95 Charles Street, Roma, Queensland 4455

CHAIR—You have made a submission; would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr Jarick—Yes, I have a submission, if I could leave that here. The board of directors and myself believe a number of issues are affecting the employment of young people. The Golden West Group Training scheme covers not just the Roma area but twice the size of Victoria. It covers from Dalby in the east, right through to the South Australian and New South Wales borders, and from Goondiwindi through to Cunnamulla to the New South Wales and South Australian borders. North of here is Injune, Taroom, Wandoan and we go as far as Longreach. We have an office in Longreach. We have a fair range of coverage and the submission covers not just the Roma area but all the areas in which we work. It reflects on being in a rural sector as well.

CHAIR—Is that it?

Mr Jarick—I have my submission. Would you like me to state the individual issues that we wanted to raise?

CHAIR—If you do that only briefly, because then we will start asking you questions.

Mr Jarick—Sure. The first issue was the obvious one: the continued drought and seasonal conditions over the last six years have hampered a number of employment issues. As stated in my submission here, there is not a lot you can do about the seasonal conditions, other than our hope that the state and federal government will continue to level their support behind the rural industry, which has eased a lot of the burden in the bush. There has been, to a certain extent, a lot of employment sustained because of that.

Another issue is the drift of the people from the rural areas because of the seasonal conditions and the lifestyle getting harder and harder—the drift of young people looking for opportunities to the eastern seaboard and the bigger centres. That has definitely put a drain on the number of people that are available for positions and, once they have gone, you cannot get them back. Through the group training network, we have even tried to get young people from other group training company areas on the eastern seaboard and northern Queensland. Unfortunately, they like to stay near the water, where all the facilities are, and a lot of them have a perception, as I mentioned to Bruce before, that we live in the desert. It is very, very hard to get the point across of the facilities and the areas that we have out here.

Another area has been the reduction, which is probably a very common one—it comes up in a lot of areas—in the training subsidies, primarily in the area of apprentices and trainees. That has been a big burden on a lot of businesses. We deal with a majority of small to medium businesses in our region. The subsidies before were a real plus for employing apprentices and trainees. In the last 12 months, we had over a 100 per cent increase in employment of apprentices and trainees.

Then, in December, we had the subsidy reductions. The 60 per cent reduction in the subsidies had a big effect because the small and medium businesses needed those subsidies to try and bring down the bottom line of the wages and the on-costs of employing people. Those small to medium businesses are not only carrying the debt of employing people in the various industries; they are also carrying the debt of the people in the bush.

To date, there have been a number of areas where small to medium businesses could access subsidies to help them through the hard times, but there has been nothing really substantial, as the rural industry has seen, to help them try and overcome their burdens. Those young people that they want to employ are the sons and daughters of those rural people that are also carrying the debts. They are sort of copping it from both angles.

In a number of areas, the misdirection of appropriate government funding to programs and organisations does not create genuine skills and real jobs. Since the training system has been deregulated and opened up, we see a number of larger organisations coming to the rural areas looking for the training dollars. Where traditionally we utilised our excellent facilities here as a TAFE college with organisations like Skillshare, we see a lot of outside operators coming in and looking for those training dollars. There are a number of federal government programs that these people have tapped into because of deregulation. All they are interested in is the training dollars; they are not interested in delivering the quality or the ongoing support that locally based organisations deliver. They come in, they do their bit and then they go back to the cities. Those dollars are also lost to the rural areas, whereas before the dollars remained in the rural areas and circulated through the community.

One thing you mentioned before, which is in our submission as well, is people's attitudes towards work. I have detailed the scheme in the submission. The group scheme goes to all the schools from year 9 onwards up until year 12. We visit schools twice a year promoting not only the group scheme but apprenticeships, traineeships and career paths. I know parents are really lost with the number of changes in the training system over the past couple of years but young people are also dismayed in relation to the training direction. There is not enough emphasis put on pursuing career paths at an early age.

We also have a number of schools involved with the group scheme in a school to industry link program that we are just getting under way at the moment. Hopefully, that will produce some real rewards. The main thing that the young people think of is either going to school or university or going to the bigger centres on the eastern seaboard. They think they will not have a job opportunity in our region and that the jobs just are not there. But the jobs are there if they want to get out and look for them.

The other thing they think is, 'I'm not going to be able to get a job so I need to register with the CES.' The sad part about that is the fact that year 10, 11 or 12 school-leavers balance up the difference between what they are going to get under the traineeship or the first-year apprenticeship—and this does not reflect on those wages at all; I believe the wages are very reasonable for the task undertaken—and what they are going to get on unemployment benefit. Unfortunately, sometimes a few of them get together and rent a house or a flat and the lifestyle on the unemployment benefits outweighs looking at a career path. That is a bit of a shame.

The other thing was in relation to the reduction of state and federal government departments in the rural areas. Over a number of years we have lost a lot of government departments to the metropolitan area and larger cities. That has had an effect on the area because it reduces the population and therefore the dollar turnover in the towns and then has an effect on lessening employment opportunities in the different areas. It is not just Roma; it is places like Charleville, Cunnamulla and those types of areas.

That is as brief as I could be in relation to the areas that I would like to cover in my submissions. I would be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIR—Thank you for that. I take you back to one of the things you talked about under the broad category of careers. We have heard from lots of metropolitan based major employers, smaller employers and employment groups that there is a general problem—at least in metropolitan Australia—of young people not having a good understanding of what jobs or career paths might be available.

The bush telegraph used to work very well. I know that because I lived in the bush myself. It worked well and kids grew up having an understanding of what work was. You got your hands dirty or you did something with your mind. But they had a good grasp of the world of work and they also seemed to have a good grasp of where they might get jobs, at least in rural or regional country areas. They might not have had a total grasp of what was available in the cities. From your comments, do you think that situation has changed? Why has it changed and then what do we do about it?

Mr Jarick—There are young people who want to pursue a career or want to find a job, but there are still a lot of young people who pursue a career but they still treat it as a job. There is a difference there as well. What we need to do as far as young people go is promote it even more, that is, something very similar to what we are doing with the schools in our region. We are visiting them twice a year and we should start at an earlier age. We start at year 9. We are doing it twice a year. We usually do it around March or April and we do it again in August or September.

The reason why we start at year 9 is that we have so many schools to cover in the region. Our work still goes on, but we have not had the time. We need to get to them at primary school age, years 6 or 7, and start enforcing the fact that you have to start thinking about your career path to make it long term. When I am talking about career paths, in our field apprenticeships are the career paths that we pursue. Traineeships are fine. They learn their skills, work ethics and everything in 12 months and hopefully they will roll over into an apprenticeship. But with any apprenticeships that we have got young people into, they have pursued those career paths further and beyond doing their four- or three-year apprenticeship. They have pursued those. We have had good sustainability and we have produced some very good apprentices.

I really do think that there needs to be more promotion through the schools with organisations like ourselves and other organisations. The schools themselves should promote it at an earlier age and get young people to think towards the longer term—not the short term, the longer term. I believe that is where it is going to come from.

CHAIR—To what extent does business or industry have a responsibility, rather than the school?

Mr Jarick—We have approached a number of businesses in relation to coming around with us when we are going around to the schools. The big problem is the fact that they have not had the time to be able to do it. It is unfortunate, but they cannot leave their business. They will do the local schools, but when you get outside that, unfortunately the businesses in other areas have not had the time.

I think they have a very real responsibility because of the fact that the industries are the people that are hurting, because they cannot find the skilled people today. The traditional industries, such as motor mechanics, auto electricians or whatever, in this particular region are the real industries that are hurting. They have to get in, promote themselves and talk to these young people as well.

CHAIR—I understand that to some extent, when times are tough on the property, some young people might tend to stay at home rather than take on unemployment benefits and head off to the city. They might tend to stay at home with their family and perhaps do non-essential work. I understand that that is a significant factor in this region and yet you tell me there are jobs going for the asking.

Mr Jarick—We are talking about the rural industry now. We actually have positions available that we cannot fill. I believe there are two reasons for that. The parents of the young people you are talking about who are not going onto benefits and are staying home—even though subsidies are available under the traineeship system, the wages they pay and everything else—actually cannot sustain or employ their sons and daughters under the rural traineeship and gain them some extra skills at rural pastoral colleges or TAFE colleges. They are just working at home for their tucker, a few extra bucks or whatever. That is a fact.

The other matter is that I believe we cannot get the young people. Sometimes we can get people who want to work there, but they have not got their heart in it and they just do not stick with it. The people who I believe are out there but are not going for the positions are really turned off by the seasonal conditions and commodity prices. They see the rural industry as a dead end street; there is no future working on the farm any more. They really do believe that.

There are a number of areas out here where people's sons and daughters are not school age, but their sons and daughters have actually worked on those properties because of the seasonal conditions. They have had to go to the cities and the mines to get work because the farm can no longer sustain the family. The sons and daughters have actually had to leave those farms, because if they stay on there they are going to go broke. The farm cannot sustain the employment of the sons and daughters. So they have had to go off-farm to find employment. They have actually gone to bigger cities and the mining industries and things like that, pursuing employment. It is a fact.

Mr SAWFORD—You are saying that those jobs are all farm jobs?

Mr Jarick—We do have a number of apprenticeships and traineeships that we cover, but it is a minority. When you get to areas like Cunnamulla, Quilpie or places like that, the young people are just not available in that particular area to take up those positions. But as far as the new rural skills traineeships that we have promoted are concerned, we have about 25 rural trainees going at the present moment. We have probably got another half a dozen to 10 positions available, if we could find the young people who would take up those positions, the right young people who are going to stick with it.

Mr SAWFORD—Could I make this a bit more specific? I understand you employ about 240 apprentices and trainees.

Mr Jarick—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—How many of those apprentices and trainees are there in Roma and in what areas are they?

Mr Jarick—We have probably got about 35 apprentices and trainees actually in Roma, and the majority of those would be in the construction area and engineering. When I am talking about engineering, I am talking about boilermakers, motor mechanics, diesel fitters, auto electricians and that type of thing. That is the majority of them in this town.

Mr SAWFORD—I was interested to hear your comments about the training dollars where you said that people came from outside the area, saw a gap in the market and came in. Why do you think that is? I would have thought in an area like this you would have had it all tied up. Why do you think they saw a gap in the market?

Mr Jarick—I will tell you one particular area where it happens, and it actually creates a real problem for training in Queensland. You could verify this, but it is an actual fact. There are organisations that come out here. Under the traineeship system you can actually employ existing employees under a traineeship system. You are not entitled to the incentive to take on a trainee, but what it does entitle you to do is to tap into the training dollars that the government provides for training trainees. You can still tap into those dollars.

What they do is come out and sign up trainees in an existing business. They are not entitled to incentives, but all they are interested in is taking the training dollars away through the state system that I believe was put there to train people going into genuine traineeships. Some of these employees have been working in these businesses for 10 and 15 years. We spoke about industry having a responsibility before. If somebody has been working in a business for 10 or 15 years you would think that they would be pretty reasonably competent at their business or they would not have the job. Organisations are coming along, signing them up as trainees and saying, 'We are going to give them extra training.' The training dollars are available through the state to train these people in the jobs that they have been doing for 10 or 15 years. It seems a bit silly to me—the fact that we are spending money on those people who really should already be competent in those areas. I would have thought that those dollars are there to train in apprenticeships and traineeships unskilled people who are coming into existing open positions, not existing employees. That is one area.

Mr SAWFORD—Other than engineering and construction, are there any other areas where you employ apprentices and trainees here in Roma?

Mr Jarick—Yes. There are plasterers, wall and floor tilers, saddle makers, electricians, plumbers and cooks.

Mr SAWFORD—All the established trades?

CHAIR—Hairdressers?

Mr Jarick—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you have any major industries at all in the area, like mines, sawmills or manufacturing industries?

Mr Jarick—The sawmilling industry is another area where we do employ trainees under the new forestry industry traineeship. It has just taken a good lift actually. We have a number of sawmills in the area. I think it is probably one of the largest sawmilling areas in south-west Queensland. We have a number of trainees in the sawmilling industry.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you feel as though that industry is contributing enough towards employing young people in the area?

Mr Jarick—They are now, since the new traineeship system has actually been introduced. That is another good thing that has happened in the last 12 months. The new traineeships that have been introduced and the flexibility in them have opened up a whole new lot of opportunities for people to be employed. I believe so, yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—You did draw some distinction between traineeships and apprenticeships in the sawmilling industry. Would apprenticeships be more appropriate because they provide a longer term of training?

Mr Jarick—I think so, but unfortunately in the last six months they have knocked the apprenticeships on the head and pursued the traineeships more. I believe a traineeship is good for somebody for 12 months to gain the industry skills and bring them up to scratch before they roll them over into apprenticeships. We have done it on a number of occasions for automotive trainees. They then roll over into either an auto electrician, a motor mechanic or an electronics trainee. That is a prime example.

Mrs GASH—How large is your organisation? How many people do you actually employ?

Mr Jarick—We employ 12 on the staff.

Mrs GASH—And they travel throughout those areas you mentioned earlier?

Mr Jarick—Yes, we have 2½ field officers. I am not only the manager, but half a field officer as well. We have one field officer who looks after the eastern seaboard, which goes from Roma east, and we have another training coordinator who goes from Roma west and looks after that. We service all our apprentices and hosts, and every six to eight weeks a trip is actually made. The apprentice furthest away is at Bedourie. He will go all the way out to Bedourie, stay the night, service that apprentice and then service Quilpie, Charleville, Cunnamulla, et cetera on the way home. When he goes, he goes for a week. The same goes for the eastern seaboard, and we service them every six to eight weeks.

Mrs GASH—I certainly share your concerns about outside trainers coming into the areas. Have you done anything about that? I know you do not want to mention them, but I think you should and you should certainly put a submission to that.

Mr Jarick—Yes, I have.

Mrs GASH—Because you are not the only one who has told us that, and we are very concerned about it.

Mr Jarick—Yes, I have. I have actually written to the state and federal governments in relation to it, as well as pursued it with the college council here. We have a new college council and I am actually taking it up with the minister, Santo Santoro on Friday. He is opening our building on Friday and I am going to take it up with him personally.

Mrs GASH—Is there any concern with the new industrial relation laws here?

Mr Jarick—We do not have any problems with them at all. We have not had any employers who have brought it to our attention. I guess the reason for that is the fact that they do not have any problems, because the group training scheme is the employer. It is our responsibility and that is one of the reasons why we service our hosts and make sure that we keep in touch with our apprentices and trainees, so that if any issues do arise we are there to provide counsel or whatever to fix the problem. But no, we do not have any problems with them at all.

Mr BROUGH—You do a lot of work with the schools, as you said. This committee has agreed at different times that we need to start getting involvement earlier in to careers paths at year 6 and 7. You are starting at year 9, which is encouraging anyway. Do you think that the schools you visit are across all the information and working with vocational education, the MAATS and the pathways programs to the degree that they should be? Or do you think there is a lack of information or even a lack of desire in some of the schools?

Mr Jarick—We have got a jobs pathway program going, as well as being involved with the new apprenticeship system. We are just in the process of kicking a program off with ASTF with a cluster of schools throughout Roma for the school to industry link program. The big problem has been as far as the schools go that they feel threatened, and I have had a number of principals actually tell me this. It seems silly, but they see us as a competitor coming in, taking some of those young people away from their schools and putting them into jobs.

I do not know whether their funding goes on school levels or whatever, but it came to light with our jobs pathway program because of the fact that, under the privacy of information act, they could not actually give us the names and addresses of their year 12 school leavers, so we passed on the envelopes and they filled in all the data themselves. Some schools did not post them out on time to make everything come together. In discussions with the schools—there was no aggro or anything—that was a real factor: they felt that we were a competitor and not willing to work with them, when that is what we are there to do. It was unfortunate.

Mr BROUGH—Did you say that you cannot fill apprenticeships as well as traineeships?

Mr Jarick—In some areas we have not been able to, yes.

Mr BROUGH—I have two questions in relation to that. First of all, do you have any sister organisations anywhere on the coast which you plug into to try to pull people out here and which explain exactly what occurs and that this is not the desert? Does that happen?

Mr Jarick—We network with every other group training company in Queensland. We probably network more than any other group training company, because we have to. We have probably got six or eight apprentices that we relocate from other groups at any one time to fill positions. Yes, they have promoted it in relation to trying to get young people to come to areas like this. But, unfortunately, when it comes to areas like Cunnamulla, Quilpie and Charleville and they look at them on a map, it does not look very appealing.

Mr BROUGH—It is a long way from the surf!

Mr Jarick—Yes. They have got their own pictures in their minds: yes, the surf, the facilities, nothing to do on weekends—all that sort of stuff. That deters them. The other area where we are trying to attack the problem is signing a memorandum of understanding with the SQIT, the TAFE institute, to try to get a lot more pre-vocational courses going in a lot of other areas to try to bring those young people up through the ranks to make them available for positions. Hopefully that is another angle to try to address the problem. But it is the same old story: you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.

Mr BROUGH—Finally, trying to make that horse drink, I ask this. you alluded to the fact that some young people are saying that there is not a big enough differential between what they receive in a traineeship or a first-year apprenticeship and the unemployment benefits. Is there anything you can suggest which could help persuade them that their long-term benefit is obviously in employment in an apprenticeship or in a traineeship as opposed to unemployment benefits?

Mr Jarick—It might seem a bit harsh, but the only thing I can see that will make it happen in the short term is making the unemployment benefits less attractive: make career paths and—

Mr BROUGH—That is a generic sort of statement, but are there any physical things that you can put forward to the committee and which we can look at—anything which would make it less attractive to be on unemployment benefits as opposed to being in a job? You are in that unique position here of having a surplus of jobs in some areas, apprenticeships in particular, which do lead to a career, and you have the people to fill them. That is not the problem we have experienced elsewhere. Is there anything in particular that you can throw up?

Mr Jarick—The only thing is, as I say, the monetary factor: the monetary factor for the unemployment benefits has to be reduced to try to bring it home. They have got tunnel vision in relation to that. All they look at is the bottom line—the dollars. They are not looking at anything else. If we start there and attack the dollars, then hopefully they will start looking at other options. If we continue to promote, encourage and motivate young people to pursue a career path, I think it will happen. There has been mention of a bit of military service training if they leave school before year 12—something like that, with a bit of discipline. Those sorts of areas possibly would not go astray.

Mr BROUGH—Thank you, Kevin.

Mr MAREK—Kevin, I heard what you said there before about other training companies coming to town. It seems like that is prevalent everywhere. I have seen training companies go from Rockhampton out to Longreach and to those sorts of places to poach. I guess it comes from the fact that they have already done work for the state governments or whoever and got themselves a name, then they just shoot off and keep tapping into the dollars. It does look like a definite problem. I guess it is something they might be able to address.

Another area I would not mind you commenting a bit more on is the ability for people in grades 9, 10, 11 or 12 to do more work experience, say for three or four days a week, and then the fifth day or the last day of the week go back to school to focus on maths, English and those sorts of topics. This way, if they get involved in an apprenticeship or a traineeship that they are not really au fait with and they do not want to do it, they have still got their link with school so that they can go back. I think some areas may be looking at this, but I would not mind hearing your comments on it. What do you think?

Mr Jarick—I think there are some real benefits in the school to industry link program. We are approaching it, as I said, because in certain areas it depends on the number of employers that are available. The idea is that we have got the college here and we have got the middle school, and then, in our surrounding areas, we have got Injune, Wallumbilla, Surat and Mitchell. We plan on bringing all those schools together, and they have agreed to come together as a cluster and utilise the broad range of host employers that we do have because, in situations like Injune or Surat, they have not got those employer groups available in those towns. So there is a cluster. We utilise employers in Roma or wherever to mix and match.

The ASTF said that they will be able to help us out by utilising year 10, because some of their schools do not have years 11 and 12. Year 10 students will be able to access industry one day a week; they will still do their subjects at school and, as well, they can select different vocational subjects as they go along and do one day a week. There are some real benefits in the situation where you have got a year 10 student who starts off, who then goes on to years 11 and 12 in Roma here, and then continues that vocation.

By the end of the time that he comes out he is going to have some real work skills, a work ethic, and be career path orientated. That is where the benefits are going to come from. And it cannot happen without everybody being involved and being committed towards it—the colleges and the schools, ourselves and the employers. We have got everybody on side, so it will happen.

CHAIR—Kevin, you talked about young people's attitudes. I know that you yourself as an employer go through a selection process before you put on either apprentices or trainees. Can you tell us what problems you find, the extent of literacy and numeracy or lack thereof, how many you reject, and whether that range of problems that I hope you will share with us is fixable?

Mr Jarick—Yes, it is fixable because we actually do fix it. We do not reject, unlike some other organisations or group training companies. They actually undertake tests with young people before they will even look at taking them on. We do not look at it on that basis. We look at it in reverse—in that we advertise for the number of positions that we have available. We interview the applicants and we select the best three

applicants or, depending on the number, the best four applicants that we feel would be most suitable for the job.

We then have another interview with the host employer or the employer that we plan on placing them with, unless they say they want us to select the person. In lots of cases we like to have them involved to make the choice as to which person they think best. Now, from there, we employ the person. After they have finished their probationary period, whether it is a traineeship or an apprenticeship, we actually undertake an aptitude survey, a vocational institute of Australia survey with those young people. The probationary period is there to make sure that they are happy with where they want to work, that that is the career path they want to pursue, and that they do fit in with the work environment.

From those aptitude tests we pick up the strengths and weaknesses of those young people. They may have a literacy and numeracy problem or just one and not the other. The Golden West Group Training scheme has a program which we call our extra training initiative which we have put in place. Sometimes it might be three months; it could be six months before our apprentices or trainees go to college or do some of their training.

Say, for instance, some young people may have literacy and numeracy problems: we actually employ tutors—if we can get voluntary tutors it is fine, but in lots of cases we cannot—to tutor after hours with those apprentices and trainees to lift their skills. The reason for that is so that when they do go to college they do not have any difficulties adapting, not only because they have to travel five or six hours to college and live in a strange place where they have only been with their parents or their families, but so that they do not have to worry about struggling through their TAFE college. Once they get down there they are on their own, and it is a real fact that if they start struggling and having trouble it reinforces 'I'm here all by myself away from home.' The next thing is they are out of there. You find that you get their host employers on the phone saying, 'The young fellow came back on the bus last night; he is at work today. He could not handle college so he is back home.'

So we address that. We do not say, 'No, we're not going to employ you because you've got a problem'; we employ the best person for the job—the person that has the right attitude—and then we address the problems as we go along. We have apprentices that are in their third and fourth year that we are still tutoring and training.

The other area that we do training in is where, unlike lots of the metropolitan areas in big cities, apprentices and trainees can go and tap into training courses in their particular career paths on nights, weekends or whatever. We are unfortunate in that we are so far away from everything here so we cannot actually do that. Organisations of which we are members, such as Autotech, which is part of Repco, put training courses on, and the college puts training courses on at different times. We hire the TAFE facilities and we actually employ professionals in different fields, as in the Electrical Contractors Association or Petro-ject, who are EFI specialists for motor mechanics, and the Master Builders Association. We actually employ them. They come out on weekends or nights, and we hire the facilities here. We bring all our apprentices and trainees in and pay their travelling costs and their housing. They may be here for two or three days, and we actually train them to upgrade their skills and knowledge. That is a benefit we offer to our hosts in the rural areas.

There are two benefits in this. Firstly, the employers see the benefit in training staff, training people. We have actually got hosts now—this has been going for about three years—who turn up to the training courses themselves or, at different times, if in their particular industry training courses come up, will not only go themselves but will take their staff away during working hours during the week and actually spend dollars on training. They see the benefits.

The other benefit is the fact that you can see the young people developing their skills and their knowledge at these training courses, taking it back to the businesses, putting it into practice, and enhancing the profitability of that business; as well, they are hungry to learn more and more to become the best possible tradesperson they can in their career. The proof is in the pudding.

We have won a number of awards in the last 12 months. One of the ones that we are very proud of is an apprentice that came from Quilpie. He had a literacy and numeracy problem which we addressed all the way through, and he tapped into our training initiative. If there were any training courses on he was there. He actually took out apprentice of the year, not only for the south-west but also for Queensland. He was also picked as the Queensland representative in the national titles. That guy came from Quilpie. That is another thing that we reinforce with our young apprentices and trainees. If they want to put the effort and the time in and tap into it for their career paths, the benefits are at the end of it. That is the proof that is in the pudding as far as the extra training initiative goes.

CHAIR—Thank you for coming along. Thank you for the submission that we will make sure gets entered into the record and distributed to committee members. I am going to have to move on.

Mrs GASH—Could I just ask your opinion of the work for the dole scheme as proposed by the government, please?

Mr Jarick—I think it is a good initiative if managed correctly. I have not seen anything in relation to the way they propose to manage it, but I think it has a lot of benefits.

Mrs GASH—Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you again. We hope to conclude the inquiry by June. It is uncertain at the moment when we will get the report finalised. We will certainly send you a copy. We thank you for your input.

Mr Jarick—I appreciate it.

[11.39 a.m.]

WALTERS, Mr Perry Lyle, Manager, RSW Training Centre Inc., 84 Charles Street, Roma, Queensland 4455

CHAIR—Thank you for coming.Put very simply, this inquiry is all about, firstly, how we can help young people to become more employable and, secondly, how we can encourage employers to make more jobs available for our youth. Having said that, I invite you to make a statement to the committee. If you wish to make one, we would love to hear from you.

Mr Walters—In our organisation, we are dealing with much the same type of area that Kevin Jarick spoke about before, but we are dealing with the long-term unemployed principally through case management, Skillshare, job clubs and those type of things. The long term unemployed, or the youth that we are dealing with, are probably in the lower end of the achievement scale. They are the ones that need the assistance down the track with literacy, self-esteem—that type of area. With case management, we are picking up quite a few younger ones, and also through Skillshare with the change in criteria allowed for us by the government last year. So we have been able to pick up a lot more youth and have been able to direct them into employment as we have found it possible to do so.

CHAIR—Good. Lyle, can you given us the unemployment statistics for the region?

Mr Walters—We are also the local CES agents, so I just happened to sit down yesterday afternoon to peruse them. Currently, we have got 363 registered. That includes all people from short-term to long-term unemployed. That is for Roma town only, by the way. Of that, 93 are under the age of 21.

CHAIR—That is about a third of those that do not have jobs that want jobs?

Mr Walters—That is right.

CHAIR—Kevin Jarick told us that he had traineeships available that he could not fill. You reckon that the CES is trying to help 90-odd young people who do not have jobs. What do we need to do to get them together?

Mr Walters—We have all been working towards the one goal, but one thing you have got to remember, when you start talking about country towns, is that some of these kids might have done something wrong at some stage. It is not the training schemes or anything like that; it is the employers that have seen them. The problem could be a family name. These are all things that tend to reflect on what young people are likely to do in a town.

Mr SAWFORD—You operate from a range of areas; you are into case management; you are the CES agent; you are a training provider; and you do a whole range of things. Whom do you see as the major client? Is it the employer or the unemployed?

Mr Walters—Basically, since early March last year, we have been working towards the goal of always

servicing both sides of the equation—employers and employees.

Mr SAWFORD—Is there not an inevitable conflict in that?

Mr Walters—No.

Mr SAWFORD—That goes in the face of the history of the CES. The CES has stated quite categorically in the past—this is because of government policy, not because of the CES itself—that when government policy dictates that you look after the employers' needs, you have a very different structure from the one you have when you look after the employees' needs. The CES throughout Australia has got itself into great trouble—and drawn unfair criticism—because it has only been carrying out government policy of the day, and all governments of all persuasions have moved both ways. I am quite surprised to hear that there is no conflict.

Mr Walters—We do not treat it as a conflict at all, the reason being that we are on a performance based contract. We are paid for the services we provide. We treat it as our business. We look at where we can employ the people and where the employers can get their people from.

I looked at a couple of case studies that were done over the last 12 months. Of those, we did 55 jobs for one major employer here. We did all their employee servicing for them. That included young people, unemployed people and tradesmen—we put them all in. That was on the pipe coating plant that was doing the south-west gas pipeline. We provided full service from both sides. In that way we stand to make some money that we can use to put back into our unemployment programs.

Mr SAWFORD—What is the actual unemployment rate for Roma—about 10 per cent?

Mr Walters—No, you will find us probably under seven per cent—about 6.5 per cent.

Mr SAWFORD—And in national terms?

Mr Walters—Traditionally, Roma has always been below the national average.

Mr BROUGH—Lyle, are you conducting job clubs and that type of thing throughout the year as well?

Mr Walters—That is right.

Mr BROUGH—Have all of those courses always been fully subscribed?

Mr Walters—We have always had them fully subscribed. With the last one, we have been running at around 60 to 80 per cent since January on our job club placements.

Mr BROUGH—Of placements?

Mr Walters—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—Kevin Jarick told us earlier about outside people coming in and contesting the market. Obviously, you have got the local forward job placements and training programs. Has that outside competition been a problem for you?

Mr Walters—It is always a problem. Last year we had a private training organisation come here and compete for the courses that our local TAFE could provide. They are struggling for work. They are coming out and doing a 20-week certificate in office fundamentals. We had a course up here that could not be subscribed to. If that is open competition, it is not very nice.

Mr BROUGH—Are they all state funded, as we were told?

Mr Walters—State funded, exactly.

Mr MAREK—You are talking about TAFE. I think there is not just a general perception but it is a fact that TAFE is extremely expensive when running a course compared with the private sector. That is why I have seen a lot of private sector members get particular projects and jobs over TAFE. In other words, TAFE outprices itself. Would you agree with that?

Mr Walters—I would agree with that, but TAFE has not been given an opportunity to really go into competitive tendering—its infrastructure is too great.

Mr MAREK—Exactly. So it is its structure and its set-up that needs to be considered.

Mr Walters—That is right.

Mr MAREK—So that is an area of concern that this inquiry can look at passing down the line—that TAFE needs to have a close look at itself. The thing is that, as I know TAFE, a lot of the people within TAFE would not want that to happen anyhow.

Mr Walters—Just while you are talking about that, one comparison that I can talk about is in the hospitality area. There is a private training organisation in Toowoomba. Its cost of doing exactly the same course in the hospitality area, compared with TAFE, is dearer by about one-third. So TAFE, in that particular area, is competitive. But in other areas, the infrastructure costs that it has got to add on make it uncompetitive.

Mr MOSSFIELD—One of the points that Mr Jarick was making—and I would have liked to have talked about this a bit more—was the attitude of young people who will not accept employment positions. The point was made that they weigh the money they get from Social Security against what the wage might be and determine the matter. I certainly would be opposed to reducing social security benefits. What more positive way could we utilise to encourage young people to take on employment positions that appear to be available at the moment?

Mr Walters—From our point of view, we have not found the situation where that has happened, especially with young people, because the amount of benefit that they do get, especially if they are living at home, is very low. If you put them out even into a traineeship or that, they will probably just increase their

benefit threefold. Their spending power has gone up considerably.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So you do not see that as a particular problem?

Mr Walters—Not among youth; in the older ones, I do see there are problems.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I can understand the cost of employing young people, and that is obviously a factor. But what about in the latter years of an apprenticeship, where the young person has the skills and could almost do the work equivalent to that of a tradesman? Would there be some value in having a higher wage rate in, say, third and fourth year, to ensure that they are retained? That would be an encouragement for them to remain in that particular position.

Mr Walters—It would be a big advantage to them. Towards the end of the second year and from there on, in a lot of cases—especially out in these areas—they are jack-of-all-trades in it, and they have probably done a lot of what they are going to be doing in their fourth year already in their first year.

Mr MOSSFIELD—They have, yes. Mr Chairman, can I just cover another point that has been mentioned in the summary? You mentioned new work opportunity programs. Could you give us more information on how they operated in this particular location? I know that, in the area I came from, we actually linked new work opportunities, which was a six-month program, with a traineeship, which was another six months. We gave those people who took on that program 12 months employment. Was there any such scheme operating here?

Mr Walters—Yes. We actually operated as part of the partnership program out of the southern Queensland area consultative committee. That was with the 1,000 jobs program that was launched here in Roma by Mr Keating. We started with 50 and we ended up doing 75. Every one of those was put into a one-on-one employment placement, principally in private industry. We ended up with 48 per cent that are still in employment today. We did have a good success rate.

Mr MOSSFIELD—You see it as a success?

Mr Walters—In some places, especially where they were put in group situations, I do not think the success rate was as high. It was a program that I felt had the opportunity to go a lot further, in the way of utilising it to prop up small business. Really, if you go west of Toowoomba, you can take out a few government departments and shire councils, and small business is all you have got.

Mrs GASH—How long have you been operating Skillshare?

Mr Walters—Skillshare has been in Roma since 1989, when it was first brought in; before that, there were four years as a CYSS.

Mrs GASH—How many people does it employ?

Mr Walters—We employ currently, with case management, Skillshare and job clubs, four full-time and

two part-time staff.

Mrs GASH—Frank touched on junior wages and so forth. Do you feel it has been a detriment? How critical are junior wage arrangements to employing young people in the rural area here?

Mr Walters—Kevin did talk about it at length; the rural area cannot afford people at present. In a lot of cases, if they can employ them, they cannot afford to give them the materials to do their own maintenance. Commodity prices and the drought have dragged that right down. This area is a prime example. Even with the agriculture around here, they are at the stage now where they are doing most of their own work, whereas before they had smaller machinery and had to do it over a longer period of time. On employment of rural people, I believe that there is—

Mrs GASH—It is important to keep that youth wage?

Mr Walters—That is right. We export all our academics but, in a lot of cases, we do not have anything for the lower end of the scale.

Mr SAWFORD—What are your views on the quantity and the quality of careers advice that young people receive in secondary school and even post-secondary school?

Mr Walters—I do not think there is enough of it. I have done some of the skills here myself at year 10. We try to talk kids who are leaving school at year 10 into going back. We see them through our CES all the time, especially kids pulling out mid-year from pressures. You ask them what they are going to do, and all they have to look forward to is getting an unemployment benefit in 13 weeks, if they are lucky.

Mr SAWFORD—That seems to be a common problem throughout Australia. The second question is about the vocational curriculum. What do you think is the strength of the vocational curriculum in areas like Roma?

Mr Walters—Here we are in a situation where we have a lot of facilities centralised. We have one campus for the TAFE out there. Even at Skillshare, we cannot be everywhere to assist the unemployed or the youth.

Mr SAWFORD—What about the secondary school system? Do you think the vocational curriculum is strong?

Mr Walters—No. I have been through it with two of my own children. Fortunately, both of them are employed. I have exported one away to the government; that is the way it goes. She is in the army now. But the thing is this: I look at it as being that they would not have to be taken away if we could find work for them out here; but we have not got any secondary industry.

Mr SAWFORD—What changes would you recommend to our secondary school system? That will be my last question.

Mr Walters—More emphasis on how to get and maintain jobs is probably the biggest one. Kevin did speak about the one day per week work experience. I was actually on the college council here about four years ago when we brought that in through the tech centre for people who wanted to go out into the construction and engineering industry. The idea of that was that they could go on from there into employment with the person that they were placed with, if they were suitable. While the three Rs are great, how far off track have we got with them? We are losing at both ends of the scale. The kids who are low achievers are not being picked up, because you have got to hurry the rest through the system. That means that you have got nowhere for them to be picked up again. They are not picking them up until it is too late and they are on the street.

Mr BROUGH—Do you agree with Kevin's comments that the schools really have the dilemma that they are worried that job placement programs and vocational education are sometimes detracting from their role? Is that your experience?

Mr Walters—I would not say no completely to it. The thing is that in the schools and even in the vocational system there are not enough people with the actual hands-on knowledge of industry outside. They cannot really put themselves in the position.

Mr SAWFORD—And vice versa.

Mr Walters—Yes, that is right. You have got schoolteachers who have been schoolteachers since the day they left school, practically.

Mr BROUGH—Exactly.

Mr Walters—No industry experience.

Mr BROUGH—We always talk about exporting, as you said; but, from the CES's angle, are you seeing a drift of your young people to the cities, and at what point? Do they go onto the unemployment system here in Roma and then, after a period of time, become despondent and move away? Can you give us any direction as to when they are disappearing into the cities?

Mr Walters—Most of them try to find something in the first three to six months after leaving school, and then they start to look further afield for work. One of the things that the bush has got in its favour—and I am a product of the bush and I myself went to the city, too—is that they are always employable in the city because, in most cases, they are good workers.

Mr BROUGH—My last question is about the construction industry. We had a hearing in Brisbane and we took evidence that there are no junior wage rates or any ways into the construction industry, particularly in heavy machinery. Is that something that you have encountered out here?

Mr Walters—For heavy machinery, there is no real structure at all out here. I know that about eight years ago we did run a program for Aboriginals. We ended up with a 50 per cent strike rate out of it for full-time jobs, and that was on heavy earthmoving machinery from bulldozers down to graders and that type of thing. It was over a 13-week period. No-one has really gone into that again since then. It was a costly exercise

for the government. It probably paid dividends, in that we got 50 per cent outcomes. There is no career path into that anywhere, not even in state transport departments.

Mr BROUGH—In Queensland, you get full wages from the start, don't you? There are no traineeships or whatever.

Mr Walters—Not on plant operators, no. You can sit for your exam and satisfactorily pass it. You get a piece of paper that says you can operate a D9 bulldozer. Sure: anyone can get on and start it up and move it forward and swing it around, but can they do anything with it? There is no training in that area.

Mr BROUGH—So it is an 'all or nothing' sort of approach.

Mr Walters—That is right.

Mr BROUGH—Thank you.

CHAIR—About four answers ago, you said one thing about regional or country people is that they can almost always get jobs in the city, because they know how to work. As an employer on the fringe of a major city, I always found that was true. Why is that? Is there such a differential between kids who come from the country, rural centres or the bush and kids who grow up in the cities and suburbs?

Mr Walters—It might have a lot to do with the fact that out here you have to find your own way and you have a lot of different avenues to pursue; you are not regulated by the neighbour being right on your doorstep. I cannot really explain it, but I know it is something I have seen over the years. The bush kid will find a job in the city more quickly than the city kid, in a lot of cases. Whether it is their motivation and their positive attitude or whatever, I do not know.

CHAIR—What percentage of the 90 or so young people in Roma who do not have jobs have attitude problems, literacy problems, numeracy problems, or all three?

Mr Walters—Literacy problems would be the lower end of the scale, just from my brief flick-through yesterday. In education, most of them would have a minimum of year 10, if not year 12, passes. The ones we are seeing there now are probably those with motivation problems, which we are picking up as we go along.

CHAIR—How do you deal with motivation?

Mr Walters—Mainly by getting them into groups to talk to one another, and getting them going in that way. You cannot motivate them, but there are ways we do it, with lifestyle—

CHAIR—Do you have a strong stick?

Mr Walters—You cannot use those on people, unfortunately: sometimes you wish you could! You have no way of motivating them. You have to remember that some of the kids we are looking at now could be second or third generation unemployed. That is a reality.

CHAIR—Even out here?

Mr Walters—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—Are you getting people moving out here, which is what we are hearing about in other areas?

Mr Walters—Yes, we are.

Mr BROUGH—Single mothers and families, because of the low housing prices?

Mr Walters—Yes. We see them. We also see the modern-day swagmen, people drifting from town to town looking for work. They submit their form where they can and, because of social security restrictions, they may stay and change their address for a month and then move on. We have been seeing that for the past three years.

CHAIR—I understand that Roma has a population of about 6,000. Is there much casual and part-time employment available?

Mr Walters—Yes; there is a substantial amount of casual employment, but a lot of it might be one or two days here and there. There is not a big demand for casual shop assistants. Once Woolworths, say, get their list of who they require, there are no more vacancies in that area for quite a while, unless someone leaves.

CHAIR—How about the clubs and pubs?

Mr Walters—They are suffering pretty much. Do you know how many pubs there are in Roma?

CHAIR—No.

Mr Walters—About nine, and they are hurting pretty much in their own right.

CHAIR—That is about 1,300 people per pub.

Mr Walters—What if 1,000 of them do not drink?

CHAIR—Thank you very much for coming and talking to us today. We really do appreciate your input. We intend to wind this inquiry up in June, and hopefully we will bring down a report in August or September. We will certainly be pleased to send you a copy. Thank you once again.

[12.08 p.m.]

CASTLEY, Mrs Beryle Judith, Job Placement Officer and Personnel Officer, Queensland TAFE, Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE and College of the South West, Timbury Street, Roma, Queensland 4455

HEBBARD, Miss Mandy, Counsellor, Queensland TAFE, Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE and College of the South West, PO Box 181, Roma, Queensland 4455

CHAIR—I welcome the representatives of the College of the South West and thank you for coming. Would you like to make a brief opening statement to the committee?

Mrs Castley—No, I will refrain at this stage, thank you.

CHAIR—You will just let us ask you questions?

Mrs Castley—I suppose my concern is that we were approached, not through the institute but individually as it were, and that the institute has not had an opportunity to either brief me or send along a representative so that they could be seen as being responsible for the statements that are being made today.

CHAIR—We are glad to have you here. One of the things that the committee has heard since we began this inquiry last May, and what we have heard constantly from all the cities that we visited in Australia and now today in Roma—and the same sort of problem exists in the bush—is, firstly, that a percentage of young people seem to have a deficit in understanding what the real world of work is all about, which is probably not as applicable to an area like this; and, secondly and perhaps more importantly, that young people today do not seem to have the grasp of knowledge or understanding of what jobs are or might be available in industry, business, commerce or the public sector and what career paths might lead them to what future jobs. Since you represent counselling services, this committee would be absolutely delighted to hear your views on why that has occurred, what you do about it in your jobs and what sorts of recommendations you think you might give the committee in addressing that as a national problem.

Mrs Castley—Thank you for giving us the opportunity. I do think education has a lot to do with it and that we are not informing our young people. I think that goes back to parents as well. I do not think parents are encouraging their children to look far enough afield at what is happening out in the world today. Emphasis is placed on being top of the class. Emphasis is placed on only the top achievers being able to follow through with their careers. As most of our students are in the middle and lower achievement brackets, I think we are doing them a disservice by not giving them the opportunity to learn and to see what is happening out there.

I do not know whether that is too broad a statement, but I think that we are definitely being much too competitive. We are not supposed to be competitive anymore at school, but it is still happening. Parents are telling their kids that they have to come and they have to do because they won't get if they don't. They are not looking at what the skills of the students are or what their abilities are so as to guide them into areas that may suit them best of all.

I have had an opportunity, on a couple of occasions, to talk to students in grades 8, 9 and 10 in some of the close schools about their careers because the guidance officers have not been free to do that for them. I have been prepared to go along and spend a day with each of these grades and go through what their skills and interests are, what their abilities are, what employment is likely to be found locally for them, what they want to do, whether it is likely that they could do that and whether they have got the academic ability to do that. The teachers and students have found that very beneficial. But it is not really part of my role. We need to have someone doing a lot more of that and, as the gentleman said earlier, we have to start younger than grade 8.

CHAIR—Who does that?

Mrs Castley—A very good question. If I had an answer I would make sure that they did it and did it well. At this stage the teachers are responsible for it. It is part of a section in the curriculum that is called 'community education', or something like that. They spend half an hour a week in this particular subject and they cover heaps and heaps of things in it. Looking at careers is only part of it. I do not know whether they actually get to look at their skills and abilities at the same time; they do do certain things as far as their goals, their self-esteem and those sorts of things are concerned. But, honestly, there is not a lot of time spent on it because there is a lot of emphasis put into getting through their academic careers.

CHAIR—Some time ago some states and some groups—and even today some group training companies—have given, or now give, aptitude tests to students. What is your view of aptitude tests?

Mrs Castley—They are good to use in conjunction with other things but I would never recommend it. I think Mandy needs to answer that question.

Miss Hebbard—I agree with Beryle. It needs to be used in conjunction with other things: looking at students' skills, strengths and weaknesses. On their own I find that they can be a little bit subjective. It can label people too. I do not like them on their own; I think they need to be used in conjunction with talking to the person and other things.

CHAIR—But do you like them in the absence of not having them at all? In other words, are they a valuable tool?

Miss Hebbard—In some cases, yes. I do not use them very regularly here but I think, yes, in some cases they are.

CHAIR—Why don't you use them?

Miss Hebbard—We do not have any here at the TAFE; I have access to some. As yet I have not needed to use them but usually, when talking about careers and jobs to people, we look at their skills, strengths and weaknesses, interests and things like that. Then we look at the requirements and pre-requisites for different areas.

Mrs Castley—It would only be used in a case where nothing definite came out of that discussion and

information. Then we would suggest that they did an aptitude test, if the student so desired.

CHAIR—There is—and I say this advisedly—criticism, constantly, of careers guidance teachers and the curriculum by some people and companies and employee organisations who see the teachers, the schools and the curriculum as being responsible for the fact that young people do not understand what might be available. I have a different view. In a society where the world of work is changing rapidly, where the jobs that are available are different from what they were 10 years ago and, in some cases, different from what they were two years ago—and they are different today from what they will be 10 years from now—what structures might we put in place to help these young people to have some concept of what is going on out there without forcing business and industry and commerce to do it for us, in some kind of forum? How do you think we might do that?

Mrs Castley—We are addressing it here in Queensland to a certain extent. We have introduced six industry orientated subjects that students in 11 and 12 can now elect to do. Two of the basic ones are maths and English for work. Then we have an engineering, a construction and a business one. There is another one too. I have not got it on the tip of my tongue. They are pilot programs at the moment. A number of schools are picking them up. They can pick them up here at the college too. Because we are part of TAFE Queensland, we have been able to pick up five of those subjects. We probably have about 10 to 12 students enrolled in those types of subjects. I have not done my homework on this—this is my interpretation of it.

The idea is that we have teachers teaching those subjects who are coming out of industry, and the students will be going into industry to do work experience on a more regular basis than the rest of the grade 11 classes. At this stage, grade 11s do one week compulsory work experience. This year they made it optional for our grade 12s. Out of our 70 grade 12 students, only 16 are going to do work experience this year, because it is going to be in their school holidays and it is voluntary. So that is the difference it makes.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I get a fix on how you operate during the week. For example, how many students are here in the College of the South West?

Mrs Castley—We have about 160 students doing grades 11 and 12 and probably 40 are doing TAFE courses—just the TAFE area section of it. That is full time.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you explain briefly what you do in a week?

Mrs Castley—That is very interesting. It depends on which week. Let me take last week. I organised places for 11 hospitality students to do industry placement over the next eight to 10 weeks: they are going out for one day a week. I have finalised the work experience that grade 12 are doing. I have spoken to a couple of students about the possibility of getting part-time work while they are still at school. In my human resource position, I have also looked at position descriptions and advertising jobs.

Mr SAWFORD—How much time do you spend on job placement? Have you got other roles?

Mrs Castley—I am employed as a .5 position.

Mr SAWFORD—So it is half a position?

Mrs Castley—Which half of me does the work is interesting. Yes, it is half a position. Eighteen and a quarter hours a week is allocated to that at this college. The main reason for that is that the job placement is really TAFE orientated, and we do not have a lot of TAFE students compared with a lot of other TAFE colleges.

Mr SAWFORD—So in a given week how many students would you spend concentrated time with?

Mrs Castley—Individually, probably about half a dozen. That is probably stretching it a bit. I spend concentrated time with three or four, on average. But there are weeks where I may be seeing 10 and 12.

Mr SAWFORD—So in a year you are not going to get to the whole 200?

Mrs Castley—That is where we fall down. I am not looking at placing grades 11 and 12 in full-time work. I am only looking at placing grades 11 and 12 in work at the end of their courses—for those ones that are not going on. Of the 50 grade 12 students who finished last year, 40 of them went on to further education. So only 10 were looking for work around here. But over the year there were another 20 who dropped out.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you place some of the year 10s, year 11s or year 12s early if there is a job available and they want it?

Mrs Castley—Yes. Those ones are only on demand. It is a concentrated effort at the end of the year then.

Mr SAWFORD—Amanda, are you part time?

Miss Hebbard—No, I am full time.

Mr SAWFORD—You are full time. You are a rare person.

Miss Hebbard—In my position I would probably see a dozen students and concentrate on them. This could be about career guidance and looking at course or job options. We do career questionnaires. We talk through options and undertake personal counselling—some of this can be ongoing—helping students with life problems to help them through study. I talk with teachers and counsel both staff and students. I often help teachers with problems with students, strategies for dealing with different situations and personal problems with staff. I try to organise workshops for students or for teachers and staff. I have to address different issues that are coming up that are being called for by students or staff.

Mr SAWFORD—I understand you have only been here for a couple of months.

Miss Hebbard—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Maybe this should be a question about what you plan to do. How do you plan to develop those links with the local industry and the local businesses in this town?

Miss Hebbard—I am attending different meetings in the community and getting to know what is available here and what employers are looking for. A lot of the time students come to me wanting a particular job. They may have to go away from Roma to study or to do that job. That is what I have found so far within the couple of months I have been here. The jobs are not here that they are looking for or they have to move away to study. They tend to look at jobs in the city since they have studied there. The options are wider.

Mr SAWFORD—Are you originally from Roma?

Miss Hebbard—No. I have been in Brisbane for the last couple of years.

Mr BROUGH—Only years 11 and 12 are at the college; is that right?

Mrs Castley—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—And there are other high schools in town so—

Mrs Castley—No.

Mr BROUGH—There is no other high school in town?

Mrs Castley—We have got a middle school that goes to grade 10.

Mr BROUGH—So this is the only option, is it?

Mrs Castley—It is the only local option for years 11 and 12.

Mr BROUGH—Okay. That negates that question. I thought there might have been a particular type of student that you were getting through because of involvement with the TAFE.

What interaction is there between the TAFE students, on an informal and on a formal basis, and the high school students? Do you see it as an assistance or a negative?

Mrs Castley—There is very little interaction between our students. I have encouraged each of the TAFE courses to send a representative along to the student council to be a member of the student council body. I know the child-care section has taken that up but I do not think any of the others have. There is very little opportunity. They have lunch at a different time. The TAFE students go out for lunch between 12 noon and one o'clock. The 11s and 12s go out between a quarter past one and two o'clock. Morning tea time is the only time that they have a break together.

Mr BROUGH—Is this a deliberate thing to keep them apart?

Mrs Castley—No, I do not think so. I think it is just programming.

Mr BROUGH—We have had a fair bit of evidence that teachers who come into the schooling system

have gone through high school themselves, have gone to university and are back into the schooling system. They have a very limited scope with what is available in the workplace. This may sound somewhat pointed; it is not meant to be at all.

Where do you get your knowledge from and your life experience to be able to tell the students and inform them of the different opportunities that are available? The reason for my question is that things are said such as, 'You will end up working at an abattoir,' or whatever else when the teacher or the guidance officer may not be aware of what opportunities are actually available in that abattoir. It may not be something that suits their lifestyle or it may be a job which has never been of any interest to them. But it may well be something which is going to suit a different type of person.

Do you feel that your training adequately equips you to be able to fulfil the wide range of needs that obviously your student body will have?

Miss Hebbard—I feel it does. I do not have the experience of what the actual work is like, but I have plenty of resources in my room inasmuch as we look at areas of interest rather than specific jobs. I will try to look at the different jobs that are available. If they say, 'I want to work in an abattoir,' I will say, 'There are these sort of jobs and this is a requirement. This one involves this sort of work,' and I talk one on one about what is required for each.

Mr BROUGH—I can take your point that if a student comes to you and says, 'I am thinking about working in an abattoir,'—or whatever—then, yes, you do your job. How do you open up their minds to the various different types of jobs that are available? We took evidence from a school body that all they ever were thinking of as far as apprenticeships were concerned were the traditional trades of being a mechanic or a plumber. When we explained to them that they could become an electrical engineer or work in computers with an apprenticeship they were quite surprised. How do you open their minds up to the variety of opportunities that are available?

Miss Hebbard—They have career questionnaires which look at different areas. They show different jobs that are available. The main thing I look at is if they want to study further. Then we talk about different options. If they do not want to do long-term study we look at the different areas of apprenticeships, and I also liaise with Beryle and use her experience and knowledge so that I give a broader range. Also if I feel that if I do not know enough I will talk to other people. I will ring other contacts or other TAFE counsellors if I feel they know more.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I am interested in exploring this concept of the combined TAFE and school: is this common in Queensland where you have the school and the TAFE working together?

Mrs Castley—No. There are three in Queensland. We have three senior colleges, as they are referred to. The other two colleges that are in the same position have competition in the state high schools in so far as there are other high schools where they can go and do just their grade 11 and 12. We are unique in the fact that we have no local competition as far as that goes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Just so that I can understand the whole system, can I ask: are the people attending

the TAFE year 11 and 12 or are they post-11 and—12?

Mrs Castley—Most of our students who are doing straight TAFE courses are either post-grade 12 or adults coming back in. We have got a couple of students who have come straight from grade 10. We can take them but we assess them on why they want to do that before we take them.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I suppose the question then is this: if you were taking them in years 11 and 12, could the student in fact work towards both a trade qualification and a higher school certificate at the same time?

Mrs Castley—This is the reason why we have in the past had TAFE subjects that could be selected as part of their year 11 and 12 courses. These were set modules that they could do, and with a couple of night courses they could actually come out with the pre-vocational certificates in some of those areas as well as their grade 12 certificate. With introducing these new subjects—and these, you must understand, are pilot programs at the moment—there is some concern over how they will be graded and whether they will get the recognition for what they have done in it. But it is three months into a two-year pilot program.

CHAIR—Can I just ask: the other two schools are Redlands and Hervey Bay?

Mrs Castley—That is right.

Mrs GASH—Beryle, is it harder for women in this area of Roma to find jobs than men?

Mrs Castley—I do not think so. No, I have not found it.

Mrs GASH—What percentage of young women would be at the TAFE as opposed to the percentage of men?

Mrs Castley—Our engineering course is completely male students, our child-care course has one male and the rest are female, our hospitality course has four males to 10 females. We are running a SETI course at the moment that is completely male; that is in the engineering section. Our Charleville campus is running hospitality and engineering with the SETI group at the moment. Hospitality has one male to 12 females and engineering is completely male. It is very much orientated to the job.

Mrs GASH—Of the 160 you have going to TAFE, how many are between the ages of 18 and 20?

Mrs Castley—Two.

Mrs GASH—Really!

Mrs Castley—Yes; that is this year. The rest of them are 16 and 17, maybe 18. We nearly always have two or three adults who come back to do grade 11 and go through to do a proper tertiary entrance course.

Mr SAWFORD—How accessible is information to people in your role in terms of national, state and regional trends in job vacancies? For example, we know that in four or five years we are going to have a huge

national shortage of teachers and that the average age of teachers is about 52. When you go to a different profession, such as some of those guys and girls who operate the huge road-making plant machinery which takes three or four years to learn—they are paid twice the salaries of teachers, by the way; the work is not looked upon as that desirable, but they get $80,000 a year and a teacher gets $40,000—the average age of those people is about 54.There is a huge problem there.

In my own state of South Australia they have suddenly just woken up to the fact that in two or so years time these people are just going to disappear and retire. And why shouldn't they? They have been earning $80,000 to $110,000 a year for the last 20 years. So there is a huge problem there, but do you get access to that sort of data in the information you get in terms of planning what sort of options are coming forward?

Mrs Castley—No.

Mr SAWFORD—Nothing at all?

Mrs Castley—We have got to go and look for it.

Mr SAWFORD—That shocks me.

CHAIR—That was a very good question.

Mr SAWFORD—Is it readily available?

Mrs Castley—If you know the right people or who to go through, I believe it is available.

Mr SAWFORD—Some of it is.

Mrs Castley—But you have got to find the right people to ask the right questions.

Mr SAWFORD—So it is not just given to you. You cannot just ring up head office in Brisbane and say, 'What are the trends in all these sorts of job opportunities?'

Mrs Castley—No. Periodically, that information does come out with some of the information that comes through, but there is very little of it. We have got to be able to find the people, the profession bodies.

Mr SAWFORD—So we are all wandering around in a blind: people giving advice do not have the information and people seeking advice do not know what information to seek.

Mrs Castley—Yes, that is right.

Mr SAWFORD—There is a whole new job opportunity there, isn't there?

Mrs Castley—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—In fact, some people have indicated, in an aside, that there is actually a need for that information data to be available.

Mrs Castley—That is right. Nowhere do we know where the engineering section is; we do not know the age group of this lot of civil engineers or that lot of construction engineers, when they are likely to retire or what the ongoing prospects of jobs are for them. We have no idea.

Mr SAWFORD—This committee went to Fauldings—the pharmaceutical manufacturers—in South Australia. They are quite concerned about, and made the point of predicting, significant skill shortages in their industry. They cannot fill them within South Australia. That says something about industry, about education and about the careers advisory service that is available—all operating blind and not having the actual data and information to work with.

Mrs Castley—The human resource sections of many of the industries are only just starting to look at some of those areas. When they are doing their five-year plan, as far as staffing goes they are only just starting to realise that in some areas they are going to have trouble.

Mr SAWFORD—Don't take this personally—it is just a general comment—but I happened to write down, 'Structure? Plan? Ad hoc? Yes.' Everything is ad hoc.

Mrs Castley—Exactly.

Mr MAREK—I asked earlier on about the cost of TAFE. I have done the train the trainer course myself actually—not that I have ever used it, or had the opportunity. But as far as that is concerned, do you find that you do not have the ability to be able to compete?

Mrs Castley—I am pleased you asked that question because TAFE has got in it a set structure where, when we price out our submissions to run a course, there is a set program that we have to use, a set percentage for certain things. What we do find is that, on the whole, we are using fully qualified teachers. If you belong to my category—I have got to train the trainer—and you are employed as a tutor, the price of a tutor is equivalent to the price that is being paid to the people that were being used by some of the other training companies around, whereas when we use a teacher we have got to pay $40 to $50 an hour. That is where we price ourselves out, but we are using someone recognised in industry as a teacher.

Mr MAREK—I know of the Emerald TAFE. They would like to in some ways restructure a bit of their operation so that they can have the ability to be able to teach particular courses, such as Caterpillar courses, engineering, mechanics and those sorts of things, but they cannot because they just cannot compete because of the structure.

Mrs Castley—Here in Roma at the moment we are looking at our submissions and that is something that we want to address. For things that we are putting in for, we want to look at how we can use tutors over teachers, and whether that is acceptable to the people who are providing funding for these courses.

Mr MAREK—Where is the problem? Who is it that you need to talk to? Is it a big industry focus

thing that is going to be very hard to change?

Mrs Castley—I do not think so. I think it is because we have been looking at quality. The factor today is quality, quality, quality. As far as TAFE is concerned, we have set ourselves up as a quality trainer; we have got fully qualified people who are teaching these courses, over some of the other training companies that are using people who do a very good job, an exceptional job—I was one of them before I took on this job, and I cannot downgrade them. It is just that, in some areas, it seems that if you have a teaching qualification it is worth more than someone with the experience and the actual interpersonal skills to get someone to do something.

CHAIR—Would it be fair to say that in Roma and the surrounding district you would not have many students who, when they looked at career choices, would have a great aversion to getting their hands dirty?

Mrs Castley—No; on the whole they are quite happy to work. Actually I think the students' attitude to work is a contributing factor to whether they get a job or not. I agree with Kevin and Lyle, the witnesses who appeared before us, that if you want to work there is work to be had. It is a case of being prepared to do whatever might be necessary to start off with. I encourage the students who are looking for work to take whatever comes up, to start off with, and then continue looking for whatever their particular area might be, because it is a known fact that once you are in work it is easier to find work. It is a matter of getting into work in the first place.

What is coming back to me from placing students in industry placement or work experience is that some of the employers are saying things like, 'They do not know how to show initiative. They cannot find something to do if I am not there to tell them what to do. They were not real keen to actually work.' These are things that sometimes can carry over into full-time or part-time work. So there are some of those attitudinal things. But, honestly, that is with the minority of our young people, not the majority. The majority are out there working. I would like to say that we have got a 94 per cent employment rate in Roma. We have not got a six per cent unemployment rate.

CHAIR—Terrific. Thank you very much for coming. Despite your initial reticence, may I say to you that between Rod's question and your answer I am confident that this committee is going to come up with a recommendation because that is one of the key pieces, I think, that we have been looking for. You have made a very important contribution this afternoon. Thanks very much.

[12.51 p.m.]

MAWN, Mr Patrick John, President, Roma Business Development Association Inc., PO Box 239, Roma, Queensland 4455

CHAIR—Welcome. Our inquiry is about employment, not unemployment. We are looking at two major areas: how we can help our young people to become more employable, and how we can encourage business, industry, commerce and the public sector to make more jobs available for our youth. Would you like to make a brief opening statement and tell us about youth employment and job opportunities in Roma for young people?

Mr Mawn—Yes. Thank you very much. We received your invitation a couple of weeks ago and we took it to our committee meeting and had a very long discussion on youth employment. It became very fruitful. It was very good to see. I would like to thank you for coming along to give us that invitation, because we think it is important that we give you our perspective from smaller areas than you go to. We are not Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane or Melbourne, but we have problems employing young people out here. Employment in general has been sluggish in this area. Business has been sluggish in this area and that, of course, is reflected in employment.

We have discussed a number of issues we thought were important, and I would like to put those across to you. One of the major problems we found with employment of young people was the basic skills they come out of school with. We are probably reiterating what you have heard on a number of sites, but we think it is very important.One example was a shop owner who has got two socks for $9.95. He employs a young person. Someone comes in and wants two pairs of socks, and the young person has to go to the cash register to add them up. It is not that we want them to add the distance between here and the moon and take off their age or whatever. We just want to be able to get people who can add up quickly on their feet and be confident in adding up or taking 10 per cent off something at a quick rate in front of a customer—or two or three customers. That is not a skill that we think is beyond those people. When they are being paid those rates and the pressure is on them, they are not confident in those fields.

Concentrating on schooling, we think that confidence or those skill levels are not being brought in. Confidence is not given to people, nor are they taught how to handle an irate customer or a stock shortage or something adverse—more than the normal 'Yes, I have got that, not a problem.' We discussed how young people and older people differ—and you cannot expect young people to have the same experience—but young people lack a tremendous amount of confidence in the basic day-to-day skills.

We had young people at the meeting—we have got a couple of young people in business—and they told us that when they left school they were taught to apply for university or the dole and there was no course for how to apply for a job. We found that astounding. They left school last year, these two people in question. As to how to go for a job, that was a specialist course and we thought that people coming out of year 12 especially should be job ready. Not everybody is going to go to university, and even if people do go to university, they come back here and work in their holidays and it is very hard to get those sorts of jobs, especially if you do not know how to go about it.

That was enough. Once we got out of that, we tried to come up with a solution. The solution we came up with was that just before they are released out of grade 12 those people should do a course in being job ready, whether that be a one-week or a two-week brush up course, right at the end, after exams. Even if there were no exam on it, we think that that could help. There is no exam needed; the exam will come when they apply for their first job. However, there are generally one or two weeks after they finish their final exams when, to our knowledge, they basically party. We would like to see that turned into a time when they could brush up their skills just before they have to go out and put their names on a piece of paper and apply for a job.

After that we discussed the impediments to actually employing these people once we got them into the work force, or got them ready to be employed. One of the main things we found was that people were reluctant to employ apprentices and take on trainees. We found that these subsidies have been cut back, and at this time, people think that that is a retrograde step. They want some incentive to put these people on and they feel that coming out of the tight economic times they have had here, they just cannot afford it. We did put a number of questions around about the number of people who intend to take on trainees and the number was very small. That is not good for any of us.

We did discuss then other impediments once these people are on, and one of the main things discussed as a group was the lack of training available here. In any trade, we have to send people away to be trained. We realise that Roma is small and you cannot pay for a lot of training with a small population. However, we have got a vast resource here and we seem to underutilise it. For a long time we have had very little interaction, we feel, between the businesses and the TAFE. We have had work experience and those types of programs, but for training in engineering for the oil industry, for example, people have had to go away. People who have to resit exams have to go to Toowoomba or Brisbane. Anyone who wants to do a one-week course generally has to go to Toowoomba or Brisbane. We cannot seem to get anything here or based here and we would like if we could to have that turned around, mainly so that skills built up can be retained here and money spent down there can be spent here on accommodation and that sort of thing. There are a lot of reasons. Any change in this economy out here, be it large or small, reflects largely.

Again, there was talk in our association of training rates, penalty rates, and those sorts of things, paid to young people in training time. Basically, they saw that as an impediment to taking young people on, due to the fact that the skill level was low early, and some people in our association felt that those penalty rates were excessive in training time. Fair enough when they are working and making their money, but when they were training it seemed to be just that extra burden that they did not feel was essential.

And lastly, probably, was the retention of trained staff. A lot of the impediment for actually employing people in Roma, or in this area, is the fact that you train them and they leave. You cannot stop that. However, we feel that retention of people and skill levels is an issue, especially if you put somebody through a four-year apprenticeship and that person leaves you four years and one day afterwards. That is an age-old problem and we see the only solution to that to be an extra extension to the apprenticeship or the traineeship, a commitment that you will work for another year. I do not know how that works, or what the mechanics there are in having to do that, but the retention of trained staff is important. Once those staff become fully productive to you, that south-east coast of Queensland looks beautiful and that is one of the things we fight for.

Also, a lot of the members of the association tell us that while their trainees are going through that training time, they earn less than people on the dole. I do not know whether this is a fact and we have not traced this back. We only briefly discussed this the other day. We wanted to get more facts on it before the hearing. However, we do have people who are on social security receiving, if not as much, very close to, and they do not have to work. Admittedly, four years down the track these people will have a trade and the other people will not. However, young people probably do not see four years down the track, and a long holiday appeals to them. We find this very hard to fight. But they are the main issues that we feel impede employment for us.

CHAIR—Thank you for that, Patrick. Other people who have talked to us this morning—and, I have to say, almost universally people that have talked to us all over Australia so far—have enunciated a problem that seems to exist that young people do not really seem to have a clear understanding of what careers may be available, what jobs they might undertake, what sort of pay they might have and what sort of future there might be in those industries or those businesses. What responsibility do you take, as the Roma Business Development Association, to work with the schools or the TAFE or the colleges in order to help young people gain an understanding of what it is that you as an employer want, and what the future might hold?

Mr Mawn—At various times in past years, of course, almost all the businesses here have participated in the work experience program—I think that is the title. However, as such, I think it is important that recently we have had more participation with the college here on a footing of not only bringing our members into schooling, but using school or TAFE students—sorry about the terminology here; I am not familiar with it—to perform functions for us in business development. It works as a two-way street: we get very cheap labour, which, of course, we like, and they get to familiarise themselves with the businesses of Roma and those enterprises that are being carried on here.

We are currently in the very early stages of a project for the TAFE college to complete a survey for us on business as to what customers desire in Roma, what they feel are important, what is wrong with Roma, and all those sorts of things. We feel those sorts of projects can only enhance it. We have since carried out a number of workshops with our own members to do it, and we found that we needed more input from young people. As such, we are trying to encourage those young people to do those sorts of questionnaires, and we look forward to more of those projects with the college to try and tie in more links and to tie in what Roma does and how distinctive Roma is to the rest of Australia and what they feel is important. We are trying to listen to what they feel is important as well, as they can help us.

CHAIR—Okay. You said when you started talking to us that our invitation to you today encouraged you to sit down and look at what employment opportunities there were, what disincentives there were and what problems there were with youth employment, and we congratulate you for that. You have given us a comprehensive list. Will that encourage you now to work more closely with your schools and with the training institutes in order to achieve the objectives that you think will help get better outcomes?

Mr Mawn—We are very committed at the moment to working with anybody really that can generate sufficient staff—and, while I say sufficient staff, sufficient staff do not usually tend to be a problem. None of our members experience a lack of staff; they have always had enough applicants for jobs. We did ask that question.

We are very interested in forging links with the college or forging links with any body or any school that will make people more job ready. We discussed that with the director here at a recent meeting and, being a new organisation—we have just changed from being the Chamber of Commerce; we are now the Roma Business Development Association which is more or less the same organisation—we are a group of people that are now more committed to changing the philosophy. We are interested in getting more industry here, and one focus is to have people ready to take on those jobs. We have discussed that at a local level and have tried to put those things into place that will help us talk more to the college.

As an organisation we do not see that we can employ anybody, but what we can do is liaise between the businesses and, if we see a problem, make the college aware of it. As such, there have been lots of people who talk about a problem but do not talk to the right people. As a body we have seen them come along and have a whinge to us, and we will represent that body too, or try and do something about it. However, we do not see ourselves as a body that actually goes to find those problems. It is mainly our members or our association that brings them to us and we represent them.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr SAWFORD—Patrick, congratulations for developing the links with TAFE and schools, but there is one other little group out there too called the training providers and the CES. What are your links like with those groups?

Mr Mawn—I would have to say very good, the reason being that we talk regularly. The two bodies I think you referred to are Skillshare and Golden West Group Training. We have regular informal discussions with those people. Most of our members either have been or are participants in their training programs. Most of the apprentices employed within the area would be Golden West Group Training apprentices. As such, our members have all those apprentices. We have talked for long periods to Kevin Jarick and to his organisation. We have discussed the problems.

Lots of our members recently brought up the lack of subsidy problem and that the price of Golden West Group Training had gone up. We did take that on with Kevin and he told us it was basically because the subsidies had disappeared. Since then we have communicated that back to our members. That was only a recent thing. We talk regularly to those participants. We are very aware of the projects they bring up and are more than willing to support them.

Mr SAWFORD—Roma might have some disadvantages in being away from the eastern seaboard, but it has also got some advantages. One of those would seem to be that you have a real opportunity in this town to put all those three groups together. Have you ever had a substantive meeting in this town where the issue has been employment opportunities or business opportunities, or whatever, where the schools, TAFE, the businesses and the training providers have all been there at the same time?

Mr Mawn—Not to my knowledge.

Mr SAWFORD—What is your view about that happening?

Mr Mawn—I think it would be a very good idea. I think the exchange of information is always a tremendous idea, but in that case a lot of people are not aware, or may not want to be aware—I am not sure of that—about what lots of those organisations perform and how they perform it. They just know that if they employ an apprentice it comes through Golden West Group Training; if you need some skills training you can send that off to Skillshare and you get that done. Apart from that, they are not aware of those providers. In relation to the careers opportunity people, I do not think anybody in our organisation or outside the TAFE would be aware of the skills they would provide for that opportunity.

I am not sure that we have had any feedback from our association or any of our industries here about what would be required of employment in the next four or five years. As you might be aware, the large industries here are timber, beef and those sorts of things. Bearing in mind we are chasing industry like mad here, one of the big industries we have got is sawmilling. I do not know whether the sawmilling industry has an association and, if they have, whether they have ever communicated with the TAFE or with CES, or whether any of those organisations could be used to help them. I think they do it all on their own.

Mr SAWFORD—It just seems to me that with employment opportunities—and you mentioned three or four years down the track and maybe even further—you have got to be able to bring all those groups together. Not so much in rural Australia, but in urban Australia you get all of these groups blaming each other—it is the schools' fault, it is businesses' fault, it is the dumb CES, it is the dumb this, it is the dumb that—and often you get a lot on talkback radio that confirms all of that. All of that is wrong, of course. Perhaps the real problem is that in the city it is not so easy to get all those groups together in a particular region, but in your place it is easy. It does not guarantee that you come up with a viable plan, by the way.

Mr Mawn—Whilst I am not against a formal meeting, I think the communication levels are very open here. As you say, city-wise you might not see anybody from one month to the next. Here, if I do not run into at least the CES or the Golden West Group Training or someone from the TAFE college weekly, I would be worried. Here we talk more often but, as an industry-wide thing and as an information giving thing, I think there is more to be done, especially for those organisations to industry.

Industry obviously has to feed back the information about the jobs they want, which is probably a failing by us and the industry based bodies. On the other hand, some of the services that these places could provide are not always communicated. When I say that as a criticism, it is not one that I find significant. We do have a lot of people who know a lot about it. I do think, however, especially on the TAFE side, there are not a lot of people aware of the services that they can provide to industry.

Mrs GASH—Thank you. Patrick, would it be fair to say that most businesses would expect their young people to be trained, regardless of age, with the programs that are available today? Are they job ready in your opinion, are you being well served by government agencies and how do your members feel about on the job training?

Mr Mawn—That is a loaded one. To answer your question, basically we do not feel that people who walk into a job now are job ready from day one. Generally employers expect Albert Einstein and really want to pay peanuts.

Mrs GASH—Exactly right.

Mr Mawn—However, being in the real world, they are more than willing to pay for people who are job ready and can perform to a level you expect of the person you employ. If you employ somebody out of a university, you expect that university service. If you employ somebody directly out of a TAFE college or a senior school, you expect them to be able to talk to customers, add up, that sort of thing. Generally, that is not happening.

In our experience, we do have to provide on the job training. On the job training, while being good, we feel is not as extensive as you can provide in a classroom. It gives you a lot more ability to think on your feet and that sort of thing, but it does not give you the ability to sit down one to one and pass those skills on. On the job training is more done on the hop, and we feel that when people come to us we would like them to be more confident and have more basic skills for the rate of pay they get.

Now, while I say that, we do not expect people to come in and know everything about the business. If they are a physician or a chemist we do not expect them to know where every drug on the shelf is. We do expect them to know generally what a panadol is. But what we are saying is that we get people out of TAFE colleges and out of schools who cannot add up, who cannot spell—and we are not talking about huge complicated words; we are talking about not being able to put a letter together. If you ask them to leave a note for a customer they say,'What do I write on it?' We want those sorts of skills to become natural, we want them to be confident. If we can get those, the rest is built on with confidence and on the job training, and we find on the job training not a problem.

Mrs GASH—Can I just expand on that a little bit? With on the job training, if there was an incentive to do so, would businesses prefer to do that or would they prefer to have the people come in fully trained?

Mr Mawn—I think they would prefer to do the on the job training, from my experience.

Mrs GASH—Yes, I thought that.

Mr Mawn—In the discussion we had, the on the job training would be because you can preselect the person before they are trained. The expenditure on training is huge. Your greatest investment in any company—as far as I am concerned and, after the discussion we had with our association, as far as the association is concerned—is the staff. Capital equipment is huge, but by the time you pay people, you are investing hugely in them.

That is one of the problems we have with retention of staff, especially with young people. We invest a lot of money, we make those people exactly what we want them to be. We put all that training in, the on the job training is good, but then they leave. So to answer your question, the on the job training with the incentives would be better.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Mr Chairman, could I go back to the earlier point you made relating to literacy and numeracy. We have had this complaint put to us in other areas. What has been said, too, is that while there is quite a concentration on literacy and numeracy education in earlier years, it seems to fade in later

years in favour of other skills and education. Do you see that as the case? Would there be some value in the local businesses having an input into the local education system on an ongoing basis so that you could identify these weaknesses and maybe make recommendations to correct them? My big concern is that if you leave it to the end of year 12, you have probably left it too late; they have lost the skills or they have not been trained properly, and I think you have got to pick it up earlier.

Mr Mawn—I think you have a very good point about input; my only problem is getting people with the time to put that input in. As with any organisation run in the country, this is all non-paid, voluntary stuff and, when you have got to run a business, having the time to come to a school committee meeting on top of your other commitments in trying to drive it would possibly be advantageous, but we have basically got to eat. We have got to work, and only do this in our spare time.

I think you are right about the lack of skills and I do believe now that the government has attacked it. In all states, it has been an issue for probably five years—and you hear it over and over again. I think all governments at all levels are doing something about it. However, I would have to agree about grade 12. I have heard and I have experience where the content of the essay is more important than how it is spelt.

Mr MOSSFIELD—That is the point I was trying to make.

Mr Mawn—While the content is very important and how it is spelt—if the word is Bolivia, who cares—but if the word is 'were' or 'how', I would really like to see them corrected on it.

Mr BROUGH—Which subsidies were you referring to which have been missed the most, specifically?

Mr Mawn—I am not familiar with the terms, but there were moneys paid in the first, second and third year, I think, of apprenticeships. There were moneys in trainees and that sort of thing. They were all cut back severely or, if not, wiped out. The sums at the time elude me.

Mr BROUGH—Would it be possible for you to go back to your members and perhaps let us know what you thought, because it has come up a few times today and I would just be interested to know what the specific ones are.

Mr Mawn—It was a matter of about nine months ago that they were dropped, because there were rumblings at meetings and we did discuss it. We did discuss how we could take it up. It was put on the backburner as one of those things that we would have to do. We have a list of things to do that was nine miles long. When this came up we brought it off the backburner and did discuss it heavily at that meeting. It was mainly apprenticeships, but I can get back to you on that.

Mr BROUGH—Thank you; that is all.

CHAIR—Patrick, thank you very much for coming and talking to the committee; it has been most useful.

Mr SAWFORD—Could I ask one last question? From a business point of view, if you could go to a

place with a phone, television, modem, whatever, and could get advice instead of having to go to the TAFE or the education service, the CES or Skillshare, what is your view on being able to access one shop, one point, in terms of getting any information re career services or guidance service or education and TAFE?

Mr Mawn—Great idea, on one proviso. In one-stop shops, in my experience—and I suppose in the experience of a lot of people—you have to take a encyclopaedia of information to find out what you want to know. My problem is this. You walk into your one-stop shop and say, 'In five years time, I'd like to have four sawmillers,' or 'I am starting an industry and I'd like to know what is available for me to get three, four or five of those people and employ them.' One of the problems I have generally with government services—and we have it, from a business point of view—is that if you ever get on a phone or you access it directly, or whatever, the first thing you are asked is, 'Have you got this number or would you like to know this?' First of all, you have to have this information, your birth date, your tax file number, who you last spoke to, who were they were, and what firm they work for. After you have got all that information, they say they can tell you. But if you can walk in and say, 'I want this,' yes, very good. That is one of the problems I think with the one-stop shop, that the person on the other side of the counter needs that much information to dissect to get your—

Mr SAWFORD—We do not have any one-stop shop by the way.

Mr Mawn—No.

Mr SAWFORD—But I take your point.

CHAIR—Absolutely. Thanks very much for coming. I think that your exercise a couple of days ago was useful to you and it is useful to us. We appreciate that very much, Patrick, and good luck to you. Carry on with it, by the way. We will send you a copy of the report when it is done.

Hearing suspended at 1.20 p.m.

The hearing resumed at 3.41 p.m. in Charleville

Mr Charles took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people. The purpose of the inquiry is to consult widely and produce recommendations for government action that will help promote the employment prospects of our youth. The committee has received over 100 submissions and 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 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 their concerns to the committee.

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

ARNOLD, Mr Brian Keith, Youth Development Worker, Blackall/Tambo Shire Councils, PO Box 21, Blackall, Queensland 4472

PETERSEN, Pastor Brian Francis, Blackall Christian Fellowship, Pastor, Assembly of God Church, PO Box 203, Blackall, Queensland 4472

CHAIR—Since we have not received a submission from you, Brian, do you have a statement you would like to make to the committee about these issues that we are here to discuss?

Mr Arnold—I was not aware that there needs to be a submission. I would have been more than happy to put one in. I had no idea of any submission, but I do have an outline of some of the topics that I feel are pertinent to the youth in my region and possibly that could carry over to other parts of Australia. They cover a lot of different issues—some that you mentioned and others that I feel are the basis to prepare youth to move into some of the things that you were talking about such as employment.

Let me just start with my position and what I feel is important. I am a youth development officer. My primary responsibility is to develop things for the youth projects, access funding and that type of thing for their interests. Mal was saying earlier that a lot of times older people are in my position. I listen to the youth and I try to follow what their interests are. Just recently I put in a submission for a rural youth worker on the basis I thought of what kind of history and what kind of infrastructure and structure we have in Blackall. Of course, we have a great deal.

There was a video that I thought James might have accessed through the ABC. We have a youth radio station that has a great following. The youth centre has a great following. I try to incorporate young achievement Australia programs and that type of thing. But my point is that, to be able to act as a youth development officer and be effective, I needed a rural youth worker to actually implement a lot of the projects that I put together. I feel this is important for their development and moving on after high school.

Basically, the reason we were given that we did not get it was that Longreach needed one. They did not have one. I did not quite understand it, because there was no infrastructure there. My point is that, for these types of things to work, I believe that you have to have somebody there to support the projects and the things that we do. Places like Longreach should maybe prove themselves for a year or two before they actually receive any type of funding, not just because they have been apathetic, in my opinion. That may be a little bit strong.

With a successful program that has support you are going to find that the council is going to come in to bat. The community is going to come behind that and they will support positions like that. You will not have to worry about spending that type of money again, whereas whenever you are putting money into a town with no structure, infrastructure or those types of things like Longreach, the same thing is going to happen in three years. It is just going to go back to the way it was, I would tend to believe. It has happened before.

As to training for the youth in these types of small towns, right now there is a big program based out at Longreach. You are going to be speaking to a gentleman who is in charge of it in the remote area planning and development board, Lawrie Cremin and David Loch. They have a program running called Aussie Host.

From my understanding they access a lot of you guys to try to receive funding. I do not think it is effective. I think it is a waste. Aussie Host basically is effective for a very small minority of groups within our area. It basically is just a course that is set up primarily for young people to teach them how to be polite and those types of things. I can only think of maybe a couple of businesses in the region where that would be useful. One is the Stockmans Hall of Fame.

If you are going to put training in—these programs like Aussie Host—it needs to have many other different components. The population of the central west—and this is the south-west of course—is only about 13,000 or 14,000. You cannot just strike at one particular segment to develop one certain area of training for business. They are probably going to get after me for that one. As I said, preferably there should be one course that covers many things if you are going to have something like Aussie Host. I do not know if they have come to you guys to try and get support, but I believe that they said that $20,000 was allocated to them just recently by them soliciting or lobbying you guys. I do not think you really know. I am not the only one who feels this way. Before I put this, I had a lot of people look at my notes. I cannot worry about that. That is how I and others feel.

The other point is that in towns like Blackall, Tambo, Barcaldine and Longreach there are not too many people who are ready to employ anybody, anyway. They cannot afford to do it. Why are we having training programs that are training people how to be polite? We need training programs that are going to train them, in my opinion. What I feel my primary directive is, as employment and youth development officer, is to try to teach them to be entrepreneurs. I want them to create employment for themselves, because nobody is going to come into these towns any time soon and set up any kind of manufacturing, unless—and that is another point—the government puts together some kind of benefit for people to relocate or locate to these small towns.

Right now I am allowed to go into the schools through convergence in Tambo. I have a business degree. I am in business principles. I have set up a YAA program there, young achiever Australia. They are learning to do their own business and it is affecting not only the young people there; also some of the older people are acting as advisers in the town and are actually thinking about their own business. It is bleeding away from the schools, too.

There is some money available at Blackall State School and they have asked me to help with hydroponics. These type of things are the important things, I believe. Also in the schools there should be a business principles class covering the fundamentals of free enterprise—some kind of course like that where they have to start thinking for themselves if they want to stay in these towns. Not everybody can work for the council; not everybody can be on the dole happily or be a roo shooter.

To me there are a lot of opportunities in the outback. The outback has an intrinsic value that you cannot copy anywhere in the world. There are a lot of things that you could sell. Just to prove it to you, a perfect example is Tambo Teddies. It is an internationally recognised teddy manufacturer. Teddy bears are not even native to Australia. They are using Australian products and attaching the intrinsic value that way. I believe that should be incorporated into education in the schools, for example, young achiever Australia programs.

Going back to what I was saying about the right youth development officer worker team, hopefully

they should be multitalented where they can actually act as a community development officer and an economic development officer. In small towns like Tambo I am the only development officer there and they are wishing that I would do more things for the community. I do not know if I am supposed to talk all the time.

CHAIR—We would like to ask you some questions.

Mr Arnold—I knew I only had 30 minutes so I was trying to get my 10 hours worth of talking here. This is just an outline, if five pages is 10 hours talking.

CHAIR—One of the things that we have heard all over the country is that young people today seem not to have a clear understanding of job prospects, what careers they might pursue, what might lead to employment outcomes, what sort of incomes are available and what skills are necessary in order to get into those industries, that business, agriculture or the public sector. Do you find that true here?

Mr Arnold—Yes.

CHAIR—What do you do about it?

Mr Arnold—This is where I was going to start, but I thought you guys might feel I was a little bit off, if you do not already. As to media reality courses in the school, I believe that television is a primary source of education. I said that to a friend of mine who is in a state school and they said, 'No, that could not be.' I grew up in America with many, many channels. I am 32 years old and I was disillusioned for a long time as to what it actually took in life to become successful—to know what it took to get a job and to know what was out there.

Why I refer to media reality courses is because it could be one of the things that you guys could do that would be relatively inexpensive. It could be placed in the HRE courses as it is in the schools; that is to say, put together a course and facilitate it. Somebody from the outside like me could come in or a teacher could do it as it is. For example, show them *90210* and show them that kids cannot in just two 30-minute stints on a sitcom become wealthy, drive around in cars, tell adults what to do and be smarter than adults. What do you expect? They obviously become frustrated with the world when it does not happen like it happens on TV.

When I was 18 somebody said that the ills of society are based on TV and what you see. I agreed with them all for the heck of it, because they were an adult but I did not believe it. But it is true. For the longest time—and my dad is a doctor—from a combination of what I saw on TV, I felt that by divine right when I came out of high school I was going to be making that kind of money, too. I flunked out of uni the first time. I thought it was going to be easy, but it was not. It was not too long ago that I was in the same position as a lot of these youth.

To nail down an answer to your question, whenever I am around these youth in Blackall I try to bring them to reality and explain to them that it does take hard work. I would like to do it on a more formal basis where I can get in the school on a regular basis and be able to institute some kind of course. That is what I do. I try to clue them in as to what it takes and what direction or what avenue they can take if they want to

get into agriculture, become a veterinarian or whatever they want to do. I can direct them on the pathway to do it. They are beginning to see these things. We put together a radio station in five months. It runs 12 hours a day, seven days a week.

CHAIR—What sorts of jobs are there available for young people in this region?

Mr Arnold—In Blackall or Tambo you might be lucky if you get into the council. You might be lucky if you take on a position at the electrical shop. Most of these positions are already taken. It is really sad.

Mr SAWFORD—How many people are there in Blackall and Tambo?

Mr Arnold—There are about 2,200 in the town, about 400 in Tambo and about 1,700 in Blackall. How could there be jobs there really? They are all small businesses that deal on a local basis. The only money or resource that really comes into Blackall is from roo shooting, cattle and those types of things. Brian was just saying earlier that somebody is trying to run a property of 220,000 acres with three men, whereas he probably would have employed a couple of hundred and those people would come to town. So there are no jobs. There is no industry coming there and that is why I go back to trying to teach them to be an entrepreneur and do whatever.

Mr SAWFORD—What sorts of businesses do you encourage and what sorts of businesses have you encouraged?

Mr Arnold—We started the radio station and ABC news came down and did a story on us. I was hoping you would be able to see that. It has only been operational for about seven months, but within another 12 months we will be full on and I can employ people there. It may be just a token of $5 an hour or something, but this was a learning process for them to show them that something like this can be done.

Entrepreneurs are the latest thing in America. I just read an article in the *Australian* that these high school students had grossed $2 million selling CDs off the Net. It is anything like that. There are crafts. Right now with YAA, I believe they are collecting an outback type of wood and doing native flower arrangements. It is anything that you can attach the value of the outback to. I have bigger businesses that I feel would go well in the outback. We have a wool scourer that I am working on with the economic development officer that would employ 20 people. If you have not heard of it, you should have. We have been soliciting just about everybody to try to get that running again, because it would be the only steam driven wool scourer operating in Australia. It would employ 20 people. We have a market for the wool and it is a great tourist attraction, of course.

We brainstorm ideas. I own the cinema in Blackall. I restored the cinema there. I have somebody learning how to be a projectionist. I have room to build a shop out the front. I have often challenged them: if I get more equity in the cinema, I might build a shop there. What could they put in? What could they do? I would prefer something that brought money into the town, something that might attract the tourists.

Mr BROUGH—What sorts of numbers of young people are you dealing with at the moment, Brian Arnold and Brian Petersen?

Mr Arnold—Through the youth radio station and the youth centre, we touch everybody in town. So there are probably about 400—

Mr BROUGH—The young people you are directly involved with?

Mr Arnold—I am directly involved with probably about 100.

Mr BROUGH—Okay. Is there a high school in town?

Mr Arnold—No, just to year 10.

Mr BROUGH—Where are they going to do years 11 and 12—Charleville?

Mr Arnold—Some will go to Blackall and some will go away.

Mr BROUGH—How far is it between Blackall and Tambo?

Mr Arnold—One hundred kilometres.

Mr BROUGH—Are they day students?

Mr Arnold—No, they board.

Mr BROUGH—Do they board Monday to Friday and go back Saturday and Sunday?

Mr Petersen—They have a hostel there. They stay there during the week and go home at weekends.

Mr BROUGH—Do you have a big problem dealing with their expectations, as you said, regarding *90210* and all that? Where do they see the future? Do they see the only chance they have as moving out of this region, or do they believe that there is still a future here for them?

Mr Petersen—You have not got a real balance there. You have kids that just cannot wait to get out of town and kids that just say, 'I will just be a roo shooter like Dad, or go out in the sheds.' There is no vision. They just cannot wait to get out of school to go out in the sheds or get out of town.

Mr Arnold—I set up one young fellow with cheap housing. He was set up for TAFE. I even set him up with a job because I used to work for Wet and Wild. That is how I came to Australia—to work for Warner Brothers. He was back within a couple of days. I have not really had enough time to sit down and chat with him because, unfortunately, it is not my job to be as much hands on as I would like to be. I did do those things to help him set up. Maybe he did not want to leave and is disillusioned about what was there. Maybe it was too much for him to handle. It is hard to say.

Mr BROUGH—You said your position is as a youth development worker, but did you also need a social worker?

Mr Arnold—I would have liked to have seen a rural youth worker.

Mr BROUGH—You basically have the ideas and put them into place, but do you need someone there to be able to facilitate these ideas and to see them through to fruition along with the others?

Mr Arnold—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—You are saying that without that person and that constant, where the young people come and go, they will fall over and, therefore, that is something which is very much needed? What will they get out of your programs? What do you expect people to get out of some of the ideas you perhaps have not been able to fully implement yet if they were able to be implemented?

Mr Arnold—If they could be implemented, it would broaden their horizons. Before they would not have imagined that they could have created a radio station, much less talked on it. It has taken me six months to get a lot of them to be able to come along to talk on the radio station. They can get out and do it.

Mr BROUGH—So you are improving their confidence. Is that the idea?

Mr Arnold—Oh, yes.

Mr Petersen—They are getting life skills now.

Mr BROUGH—They believe in themselves and their life skills.

Mr Petersen—They are encouraged to talk on the radio. They get a more realistic view of life and what it is like out in the work force. I talked to a girl last week who had just started work this year. She said, 'I did not know it was like that.' She was just devastated. I have a nine-year-old. He thinks that the way we get money is to just go to the bank and they give it to you and it is not a problem. We have a lot of 17-year-olds that think that too. Unless we address that issue of life skills, school is not preparing them for the workplace.

Mr Arnold—As I said in my submission, it eventually went to Mr Lingard and I did have a chat with him on a couple of occasions because I was very disappointed. I felt we would be a best practice program to show them that this can work. I do not think making sure there is one in each town and everybody is happy is the solution. If you started off at Blackall, you would find that they would not have to make an investment in us again in three years. Then they could go and make all the investments they wanted in Longreach or other towns. I do not have anything against Longreach; I knew of their application.

Anyway, with a team like that I could institute a lot of programs to start businesses. I am ready to do it for them unselfishly. Some lady said to me because I gave them one of my ideas, 'Those are good ideas.' She even said in the class—she is one of the advisers—'You can take some of those ideas. Don't give them all to everybody. Don't do this just for YAA. You can do this yourself. If you make these things, you can sell them in other towns.'

Mr MOSSFIELD—I appreciate the difficulty that you have. We can only congratulate you on what you are trying to do. Would race day be a big event in this part of the world?

Mr Arnold—I am not as familiar with Charleville. I do not get to come out here.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Don't you? I would imagine that 1,000-odd people or more would come to the races here. What chance would there would be to build some sort of business arising out of that sort of activity?

Mr Arnold—Sure.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Particularly young people could be involved with providing refreshments and that sort of thing.

Mr Arnold—Yes, hot-dog vending. There are a lot of things. We try to take advantage of as many as we can in Blackall.

Mr Petersen—Most of the time they are tied up with Rotary, Apex—

Mr MOSSFIELD—But they would be the people that you should talk to. As community minded people, they should be prepared to work with you to provide work for young people, even if it is just on a casual basis.

Mr Arnold—I designed a dunk tank and then the kids built it. We use it at all the different fetes and festivals. We even hire it out to other towns, such as Tambo and Barcaldine. They are learning. These are the ways you start out—learning how to do the small things that you are talking about, which can be weekend jobs when these events come up. The dunk tank makes heaps of money. We got $34 from dunking the police sergeant for one deal. We simulcast all the fetes and festivals on the radio station. That is the way the youth make money too. It is another way they are seeing that they can make money.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What is your view of the education system in this area?

Mr Arnold—Poor.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Tell my why.

Mr Arnold—The times that I have gone into school, I have been quite shocked at the spelling ability and writing of year 11 and year 12 students—no offence to some of the teachers there. Sometimes the value that a lot of parents hold in education is not very high. It is not going to be very high for those young people and it draws down the ones that do want to excel. I do have a section here on that. I think that education should be picked up and there should be gifted programs or accelerated programs for years 9, 10, 11 and 12 in these areas, so the ones that do want to excel can excel. Then you do not lose so many too.

We lose a lot of people that do not believe in the education system and, probably deservedly so, send

students away. When you send them away, that is money leaving the town, and it also tears at the infrastructure of the state school system. I have often wondered why the government supplements people to go outside their region to school. Why does the money not stay in Blackall? That extra money could maybe hire those two extra teachers for accelerated studies. There were always accelerated studies in my schools. I graduated in a class of 565 from my high school. There should be equal access opportunities and choices for all students.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What is your view of the vocational curriculums offered in these schools in these areas?

Mr Arnold—I will have to be honest; I am not that familiar with them. We have a wood shop and that type of thing. I think that they should be directed more towards what they can build to make money, not how to build a chair. Let us build bush furniture. Let us build something that we can sell in the tourist market. Let us not just say, 'Okay, let's build a chair and table.' Let us think in an entrepreneurial way, 'What can we build to make money? We are going to attach the intrinsic value of the outback to this. What is it that we can build?' I think it should be all around in any of the different trades that are built. That is the extent of my knowledge really of what courses they offer. But I think that it should have an entrepreneurial flavour.

Mr Petersen—I have three boys myself and that is the greatest concern of my wife and I. The eldest one is nine, the next one is seven and the youngest is four. When I talk to the teachers and find biology teachers teaching maths and manual arts teachers teaching biology, I think, 'Where are we going?' We have got to offer the best for our kids and if they are not getting the best—I would rather stay here for the rest of my life. I am happy to stay in Blackall for the rest of my life, but we all want the best for our kids. If they are not going to get the best, you are going to see a slow shift to somewhere where they can offer the kids the best education.

Mr SAWFORD—There is an irony to all of that too, because when everybody does that, you will never change them. You just make it worse.

Mr Petersen—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—If the local community does not stand together and hang on to its educational opportunity for its young people, it will lose them.

Mr Petersen—Yes. Part of that drift is the country people. They send their kids off to boarding school, which is their right. But I think to a certain degree, if we had the subjects offered to at least grade 10, they would be more likely to hang around. That is not happening.

Mr Arnold—They are giving a direct incentive of a $3,000 subsidy for boarding schools now with the Lands Department and DPI, and there are four other government agencies that are about to put this into place. Why is the government stabbing themselves in the back? They are giving these subsidies. I know they have to be able to attract these people out there. It seems the least expensive route would be to attract these accelerated teachers so they do not feel like they are missing anything. How they can send their kids away at 13 or 14 years old I just do not understand. That may be an Australian country culture that I have not picked

up on yet. I do not think I could send my child away at 13 or 14 years old.

Mrs GASH—How long have you been in Australia, Brian?

Mr Arnold—Three and half years.

Mrs GASH—How much funding do you receive from the councils and the other people that support you?

Mr Arnold—The funding is from the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care and it is on a sliding scale. I think it started out at 90 per cent and over the next four years it goes down to about 20 per cent.

Mrs GASH—Of what?

Mr Arnold—Over four years.

Mrs GASH—Yes, but how much money?

Mr Arnold—It would be 90 per cent of my wage, I believe. I am not quite sure what they have included, but they supply me with a car. They do not question me about my phone. They have basically given me carte blanche on whatever I decide to do and they pay the bill. What I am trying to say is that the council is very progressive. They are outstanding; they have given us the Memorial Hall for a youth centre. They have given us credit to purchase stuff for the radio station. The council is outstanding. They go out of their way to spend money to help.

Mrs GASH—What do you need to help you? What are you looking for? Agitated is not the right word, but you want to get places in a hurry and you are not moving fast enough, as I sense it with you.

Mr Arnold—I am motivated and I have a lot of enthusiasm. I get along with all the people in Blackall. They say it is because I am American but it is just that I have enthusiasm and I have a lot of energy to do these things. I enjoy business and helping the youth and that type of thing. But to help me—I will go back to having someone as a youth worker to be able to implement these programs. I would like you to accelerate the classes, so I have more youth in the town. I would like to see you institute business principles classes and young achievement Australia programs in all the schools.

CHAIR—We do not do that. We are members of federal parliament, not state. We do not run the state school system.

Mr Arnold—At least you know what would help here.

Mr MAREK—Moving on to the youth worker program, as I understand it from the local shire councils—and I was on one at Belyando—the main thrust of the youth workers was to basically interact with the youth and to get them away from graffiti, break and enter, theft and those sorts of things. Have you been

able to make any great inroads in those areas? It sounds to me as though you are not just looking after that arena, you are actually trying to move into the area of traineeship and employment as well.

Mr Arnold—We have moved beyond that. We do not have problems like that in Blackall. Basically, anybody who does anything gets tattled on; I do not know who it is the next day but all I have to do is just go ask. I have worked out a program with the police. They actually come and have to work for me, doing gardening work and stuff, and improving the youth centre. There was a break-in with some young kids that were about 10 years old, and that was solved. The two other ones before that I solved, and that was handled. We are past that; there is very little of that.

Mr Petersen—Brian and I have a different idea of a youth centre from a place where the kids can just go and do the same thing as they do at home—playing Nintendo or watching TV or videos. We see it as a place where they can develop skills at a young age.

Mr Arnold—Give them guidance that they might be missing at home, or they are missing at home.

Mr BROUGH—How do you deal with the youth who live further out? Obviously, the ones in town, in Blackall, are one thing, but how about access for those affected by transport and those sorts of issues?

Mr Arnold—The management committee of Barcoo Family Care Centre is basically made up mostly of property owners. They are in town quite often and they drop off their kids. They will give me a ring and say, 'Is the radio station open today or the youth centre?' and I will say, 'Yes or, if it is not, this is going on and you can do this.' They pretty much know what is going on, and the kids come into town.

Mr MAREK—Do you know any training groups that come here specifically just to train youth in certain programs, such as concept training, or those sorts of training groups?

Mr BROUGH—Outreach programs—something might be based on Brisbane but they do an outreach program, for example, for self-esteem. You have not seen or heard of any of those in the region?

Mr Petersen—No.

Mr Arnold—Through Barcoo Family Care Centre we have those. For example, I facilitated one on domestic violence in the schools. I did years 9, 10, 11, 12. Barcoo Family Care Centre had a change of coordinator. It did not operate so well, but we have a new coordinator and we are going to facilitate those type of things—self-esteem and other things—in the schools.

Mr MAREK—You were saying that you actually go into the schools and give them, say, employment development. Do you talk to the kids about what jobs they would be good at and that sort of thing?

Mr Arnold—No, somebody actually comes from PCAP. There is a guidance officer.

Mr MAREK—That is what I wanted to hear.

Mr SAWFORD—My last question is for information more than anything. I know you said you have been funded by the Blackall Shire Council and the Queensland department responsible for families. Who was the person or persons who initiated your position?

Mr Arnold—A friend of mine, Jani Allan—unfortunately, she is not here today—and people through Barcoo Family Care Centre, like Virginia Wacker. It started years ago, actually.

Mr SAWFORD—So they convinced the local council?

Mr Arnold—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Right.

Mr Arnold—In 1991 or 1992, Yvonne Diocchio from Rockhampton came out, had a chat with the council and said, 'If you can start working on building some infrastructure here, you will be able to attract more funding,' and finally they got my position.

Mr SAWFORD—Thank you.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Where was the closest TAFE college?

Mr Arnold—It is really hard to understand exactly what TAFE is doing. I am not really pleased with TAFE. I do not really understand what in the hell they do in our area. Blackall they have pissed off. They were teaching us to make paper bags, basically. It was just clerical skills—how to file A through Z. It was just ridiculous. They said, 'We offered courses,' and I thought, 'The calibre of people in Blackall are not dummies and maybe they want to get their bachelors degree or something like that.' There is one in Barcaldine.

Mr SAWFORD—How far away is that?

Mr Arnold—One hundred kilometres.

Mr Petersen—Longreach has got one.

Mr Arnold—And then Emerald. Since you guys are to do with federal money, how about a university in Blackall? The university could be agricultural and mechanical, and you could put in years 9 to 12 and keep the kids in the central west close to home.

Mr MAREK—Much like an agricultural college, like they have in Emerald.

Mr Arnold—Yes, like the pastoral college at Longreach.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Maybe if we could start off with TAFE doing a better job than it is doing now—

Mr Arnold—That would be good.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Improve vocational education before we move into a bigger field.

Mr Petersen—TAFE was here one day and gone the next. They were like the phantom.

Mr SAWFORD—But this is a two-way street, isn't it? It is all very well to have a go at TAFE, but all these things are two-way things, as we have found in talking to people all across Australia. The non-school group blames the schools, the non-business group blames somebody else. That is not the story. The story is how the three groups cooperate—the training providers, and I include you in that group; business, and I include all sorts of businesses; and the school system. If you do not have that cooperation, and you have polarisation, you will get nothing.

Mr Arnold—I know what you are saying. But, in this case with TAFE, I stood there with my arms open—and so did several other people. I offered to teach basic business courses free, or whatever could help them. There were other people in town. The first course that they did, for training the trainer, there were 15 or more people who turned up. I was in the class. Then they disappeared for another couple of months before they even came back to do our assessment. Blackall is a very closely knit community and welcomes any kind of support and help, honestly. We would be happy to see TAFE on a serious level.

Mr SAWFORD—But if they did not turn up for two months, I would be surprised that somebody had not rung up after a week or so and said, 'Where the hell are you?'

Mr Arnold—It was just before the Christmas period. I called Estelle Egerton to get some support for an online public access initiative through DCA and she said, 'Have you heard anything back?' and I said, 'I was about to call and ask for my money back,' because it was supposed to be just after Christmas, in January, and it was then already into March. But people are pretty tolerant in the bush—they do not get so mad so quickly. It took me a while to adjust.

Mr BROUGH—You have adjusted, Brian? Good.

CHAIR—We are going to have end questions there, in deference to the next people who are coming to talk to us. Thanks very much for coming in.

Mr Arnold—I hope I helped. Thanks for taking the time.

CHAIR—We hope to finish this thing in June and get a report out in August or September. We will certainly send you a copy.

Mr Arnold—Thanks very much.

Mrs GASH—Congratulations for the work that you are doing, Brian.

[4.24 p.m.]

KINIVAN, Garry Sylvester, Administrator, Bidjara Housing and Land Co. Pty. Ltd., Community Development Employment Program, 111 Sturt Street, Charleville, Queensland 4470

CHAIR—Welcome. Simply put, Garry, the inquiry is about employment, not unemployment. We are trying to come to grips with two major factors: how we can help young people to become more employable and how we can encourage business, industry and commerce to make more jobs available for young people. Would you like to make a statement to us about the things that you do and how you see, overall, this issue that we are trying to address?

Mr Kinivan—My dealings with the youth is mainly through the Aboriginal youth, through our employment program. It is virtually a work for the dole scheme. Out of the 91 participants in this scheme, about 20 of them are youth, really. Most of these kids that I deal with come from long-term unemployed people, poor families. Most of them have Aboriginal backgrounds, no education, no training, no anything—no future really. This employment program is virtually a stopgap just to get them into a job because most of them have no hope of getting a job at any stage. They have been kicked out of school, mostly.

We set up training through the local TAFE, and they do do a good job. Brian did run them down a bit, but my dealings with them have been pretty good. The local TAFE college here gives us all its programs and all of its courses that it runs through the year. Any one of our kids that are interested in it, we pay them to actually go to school instead of go out and do meaningless tasks like mow lawns and stuff. They actually go to college. Also, we access training in different areas. QFF, the Queensland Farmers Federation, give us money. They send guys out to teach them things like small engine courses and rural workers traineeships—things like that. It does help them.

The main help that we give them at the moment is just to get them into a job. So they are actually getting up and going to work even if it is only for two days and it is only working for the dole. A couple of them end up with full-time jobs out of it. I do not see it as any great thing; it mainly helps the older unemployed people, my program. You can see the position of the kids that came in here: it is not good.

CHAIR—How many young people are in the two groups?

Mr Kinivan—About 20. About half and half—half indigenous, half non-indigenous.

CHAIR—And you do not think it has been very successful?

Mr Kinivan—The program itself is. As far as youth training is concerned, it is not really designed for that. We try to put them through as much training as we can if they are interested in it. We try and get them interested in different things just to get them into something, to find out what they like. A lot of them do not stick at it. Because of the lack of funds and lack of resources out here we just cannot keep up with them.

The people I deal with are Aboriginal people. They are here one day and gone the next, and their kids go with them. You might set up one lot and train a few of the kids in a certain thing, and they will get

halfway through it and they are gone. You just cannot do anything about it. I have seen a lot of the kids go through it, do the courses, but it still has not got them jobs. They come back on the program, and they are still there.

CHAIR—Are there jobs available?

Mr Kinivan—Outside the program?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Kinivan—Not a lot of jobs, no. The kids that I have got have not done well at school. So they are not going to get a job. Outside of the program there are a few jobs about for kids that are prepared to get in and do it, but not the kids in my area.

CHAIR—What kinds of jobs?

Mr Kinivan—Out here?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Kinivan—Most of the kids out here are looking for jobs in government services, in local government, state government, Commonwealth government as such, national parks, DEH. They employ a lot of locals. A lot of kids go into jobs like that—office jobs, administration, stuff like that—or out in the field. There are jobs through the government departments. The railway employs a few. I do not know if you know, but the railway out here has virtually closed down from here. It is still operating. It does not go any further west. So there are no more future jobs there.

You probably heard about the abattoirs, meatworks, they set up here? It has just been burned down. But the jobs in there were such that they may as well come and work for me. They were getting less money and there was no job at the end of it. They were jobs that no-one would want; the kids just did not want them. I do not blame them. There is no future in them.

Mrs GASH—What sorts of projects are you providing?

Mr Kinivan—At the moment, for the kids—you are mainly talking about the kids, aren't you?

Mrs GASH—Yes.

Mr Kinivan—A couple of the kids have done rural work as traineeships through the QFF. Bidjara owns three properties out here. We send them out there and they do work with sheep and cattle, welding, small engine maintenance and windmills—that sort of work, real property work. That is just part of it. There are other jobs. We have a couple of kids doing mechanic work in town through our program. Also, through our cultural program, we have kids doing tourism. We have two guys there that are learning to paint—Aboriginal artists, and that sort of thing. It is limited what you can do for them with our program.

Mr SAWFORD—Garry, in the Charleville community in general, are there any coordinated local initiatives, strategies to encourage employment? Or is it all just ad hoc—a few people here and there doing their own thing?

Mr Kinivan—That is right; that is virtually what is happening. You probably talked this morning to Kevin Jarick who runs the Golden West.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Mr Kinivan—There is stuff like that, but nothing is coordinated. You either go from one program or one TAFE course and, when you leave that, there is nothing there. You are just going from one to the other.

Mr SAWFORD—Is it too hard to have a coordinated employment strategy in a place like Charleville?

Mr Kinivan—It would be difficult. It would not be impossible, but I think it would be very difficult.

Mr SAWFORD—What would you need to do to actually make it work?

Mr Kinivan—The federal government would have to step in and set up some sort of infrastructure to coordinate the whole lot: instead of having a local council running one program and the education department, through TAFE, running another, have something set up so that they can actually administer and coordinate the whole lot. I do not know how. I have no answers to that, but there has got to be something that can be done. I do not think it works.

Mr BROUGH—What sorts of skills do you try and give them? Obviously, their numeracy and literacy skills. You said they have virtually no education; they come from some pretty difficult situations. Are they mainly townies or are they a mix of both?

Mr Kinivan—No, mainly townies.

Mr BROUGH—So, in the first instance, forget about the jobs. Are you working on trying to give them the life skills—how to manage money, what is expected in a job, turning up, that sort of thing?

Mr Kinivan—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—So, if you equipped them with that and there are no jobs locally, do you think you can get them to a point where, if they moved away, they might have half a chance of getting a job?

Mr Kinivan—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—Or is it the case that when they move away they also—particularly the Aboriginals—lose that family infrastructure which is so important to them, so they are no further advanced anyway?

Mr Kinivan—With the Aboriginals, yes, that is what happens in their case. But just to get them into a job is a big thing for them because they have never had a job—and are not likely to get a job either because no-one is going to employ them. Most of these kids have got a history and no-one—

Mr BROUGH—You are really talking about the ones that are behind the eight ball before they start?

Mr Kinivan—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—So, in that case, do you see the CDEP program as a positive thing for them because at least it does give them something?

Mr Kinivan—Yes, I really do see it as a positive thing. It is not the be-all and end-all of anything.

Mr BROUGH—No, of course not.

Mr Kinivan—As far as the kids are concerned, I would like to see the kids move on to something better. We can do things for some kids. Some of the kids are just not going to get skills; you cannot teach them.

Mr BROUGH—The CDEP program is not compulsory?

Mr Kinivan—No.

Mr BROUGH—Do they still all participate?

Mr Kinivan—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—So they want to be involved in something?

Mr Kinivan—They want to be involved in it, yes.

Mr BROUGH—Would you say their underlying attitude is fine but what is necessarily presented to the community and whatever else is perhaps not all that flash? But if they are turning up voluntarily on a regular basis they are reaching out and they want something, don't they?

Mr Kinivan—That is right. Part of it is that the community, as a whole, can see these kids getting out. If they go out and mow a lawn for a pensioner and the pensioner goes down and gives them a glass of water and says, 'Thanks, mate,' when they see them in the street, instead of turning the other way and crossing the street, they will go up and say, 'How are you going, Bill? Are you going to do my lawn next week?' That is a big thing for these kids because earlier these people would not talk to them.

Mr BROUGH—How long have you been running this program?

Mr Kinivan—I have been working for them for 14 months. The program has actually been going for

two years.

Mr BROUGH—It is still relatively new and it is well accepted in the town and has built bridges between the young people and the older people?

Mr Kinivan—Yes, it has. It is well accepted in the town and particularly by the older people who have never had jobs. I am talking about the long-term unemployed. They see the kids, who they thought were going to be no good, going out to work for the dole, whereas the wider community as a whole—I have some non-indigenous people working for me—do not have to. There is no program for them and they just get their dole.

Mrs GASH—We will have to change that.

Mr BROUGH—Are the white ones volunteering to do that?

Mr Kinivan—Yes. As I said, it is 60 per cent Aboriginals and 40 whites.

Mr BROUGH—But you said there were very few jobs at the end of it. What is the reasoning? Why do these white kids want to be involved in it?

Mr Kinivan—It is better than sitting at home. How bored are you going to be when you have nothing to do out here?

Mr BROUGH—It just flies in the face of what people tell you about young people—that they prefer to sit on their backsides.

Mr Kinivan—Yes, that is not true. Kids are not like that. Kids want something to do. If there is nothing for them to do then, of course, they are going to go out. You have to realise the kids are Aboriginals and the Aboriginal family is fairly complex and different. It breaks down all the time and they have all the problems of domestic violence and alcoholism. These kids are going to come out of this devastated because they have nothing to do. They are going to go out at night and wander the streets to steal, break in and carry on like that. If you send them to work to do two days a week then, sure enough they might still do it a bit but it seems to give them a pride in what they do, especially if someone comes up and thanks them for mowing their lawn or thanks them for fixing their car.

Mr SAWFORD—What sorts of sporting opportunities do young people have here?

Mr Kinivan—I do not have a lot to do with it but there are a lot of young kids out here doing a fair bit of sport. There is the usual cricket, football, squash and soccer. There is a fair bit of sport for kids if they want to get into it. There is a lot of sport like golf and tennis.

Mr SAWFORD—What about the racecourse? The taxi driver said you have a meeting about once a month here.

Mr Kinivan—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have any horse trainers here?

Mr Kinivan—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Are there opportunities for strappers?

Mr Kinivan—Yes, there are kids employed in that. Most of the kids employed in that are from racing families. The pay is not great either so most of the kids do not see that as an option. The kids who come from those families go straight into it and that does employ a few.

CHAIR—You said the pay is not great so they do not see it as an option. At least one person this morning in Roma said that the dole was a disincentive to youth to work. Do you want to comment on the wages available as an apprentice or trainee? He said there was a disincentive for young people to take up apprenticeships and traineeships because the dole was too attractive.

Mr Kinivan—I would not really like to comment on that. I do not really see it as a disincentive to work. If you are 16 and you are going to get the dole, it is not great money. I think it is about $50 a week but I do not know what it is really and could not tell you.

Mr MOSSFIELD—When there are no available jobs there is hardly a comparison.

Mr Kinivan—Yes, that is right.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I was looking at the training you do and I appreciate the difficulties. Is it accredited? Do you do anything at the end of the training program such as presenting a certificate to the kids to say they did a good job? They would then have a certificate that recognises the skills that they have learnt during that period of time.

Mr Kinivan—Yes. All these courses are accredited. For example, Nurunderi TAFE Cherbourg is a virtually Aboriginal TAFE course. They sent these guys out there for a 14-week course. We gave them the bus, all our machinery, the shed, the lot, and they did it. At the end of the course, they lined them all up and gave them all certificates. Out of the 14 that started, only five finished.

Mr MOSSFIELD—It was something for those that did finish.

Mr Kinivan—They have completed a course to say that they are accredited to work on a property, that they are competent in all these skills. They have a piece of paper to say—

Mr MOSSFIELD—They can go elsewhere, too, with that certificate and say, 'This is what I have done.'

Mr Kinivan—It looks good on your resume anyway. There is not much work in the rural industry these days.

Mr MOSSFIELD—No.

Mr MAREK—Let me go back a little bit to what you were talking about earlier. You were talking about youth that are not at school that you have got on the CDEP. I have got Woorabinda in my electorate in Capricornia and I spend a considerable number of days and nights there. I have just gone up and watched the kids at the school. A lot of the kids do not attend the school. They just, basically, get out and do what they want to do and if you sit down and watch them long enough they turn up there with sticks and those sorts of things and bash the teachers if the teachers want to try and get them into the class anyway. So there is nothing much they can do with them. These are the kids, I guess, that you are picking up in your programs which seem to be very effective. Are you then having the kids going off with whipper snippers and dropping them in the creek, and that sort of stuff? That is the sort of problem that we are having at Woorabinda.

Mr Kinivan—Yes, I can understand that. Our program is not as big as Woorabinda. But the thing is that their gangers are their elders. If they go out and chuck a whipper snipper in the creek, they will get thrown in the creek themselves. They will only do it once or twice; they will not do it many times after that. To a point, they respect them. I have had a case of one of them going out on a brand new ride-on mower and riding over all these steel pegs and wrecking it. The guy concerned rang up one day and said, 'No, I am not coming back to work.' He was too scared. The kids learn not to do that sort of thing.

Mr MAREK—Yes. I guess that that is the difference with Woorabinda. You have got so many different tribes and no-one respects the elders.

Mr Kinivan—Exactly right, yes. But in the Bidjara community here, there are not a lot of full bloods left amongst them—not like Woorabinda.

Mr MAREK—Getting back to where I was coming from with the school: do you think that one of the areas that needs to be worked on more heavily is enforcing attendance of the kids at the state school? Sometimes, when the teachers have really made some ground with some of the kids then the next minute the parents come up and try to flog up the teachers for keeping the kids at the school.

Mr Kinivan—That is what happens.

Mr MAREK—So it is a vicious circle.

Mr Kinivan—Yes.

Mr MAREK—I think that what we need to be looking at is the younger youth.

Mr Kinivan—Yes. You have got to get them virtually from the start of high school.

Mr MAREK—Ten-year-old on.

Mr Kinivan—Yes. As you say, there are cases of that here. They bash the teachers up and then when they are kicked out of school, the parents do not care. 'Get away and don't annoy me.'

Mr MAREK—Yes.

Mr Kinivan—So they come over to us and do two days for the dole. If they are any good at anything sometimes someone will say, 'They are going out to do those goats today. Can I go out with them?' I say, 'Do you like that sort of stuff?' and they say yes. So I say, 'All right,' and a couple of them got full-time jobs out of it because things have happened.

Mr MAREK—If you get the kids out of the community and into the more highly civilised areas like Rocky and on the coast, a lot of them then try to get into work, or go to university, or study. When you try to keep them, which is what our Aboriginal communities there are designed to do—to keep the tribe together—all it does is dissolve the tribe more. So the best thing to do is to get the kids to start leaving the communities.

Mr Kinivan—Yes. I would like to see more of the kids not leave altogether, but be sent away. There must be some sort of training. We sent a busload of kids down to Yanko TAFE, New South Wales, for six weeks. Two of them stayed and now they are at TAFE college. One is doing business administration and one is doing something to do with mechanics, or applied mechanics, or something. That is just one instance. It happens, if they can see the opportunities; but most of these kids have never been out of Charleville in all their lives. They have grown up here and they do not see any future for doing anything.

Mr SAWFORD—Have you had a chance to analyse why two kids made it and the other four did not make it?

Mr Kinivan—In that case, those kids had a bit of go in them, that is all. They were pretty good kids.

Mr SAWFORD—Self-motivated?

Mr Kinivan—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Did they have a good education to start with?

Mr Kinivan—No; they were just the same sorts of kids, but their parents looked after them a bit better. There was no breakdown of the family. There was no domestic violence or anything like that in their families. That does tend to wreck them a bit. If you go home and your mother is getting bashed by your father with a beer bottle, that does not tend to improve your outlook on life.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes; but some of those same kids who go home to that still make it.

Mr Kinivan—Yes, sure.

Mr SAWFORD—They get over that, as well.

Mr Kinivan—Sure.

Mr SAWFORD—Have you ever worked out why?

Mr Kinivan—I have got no answers to it. I would like to have a few answers.

CHAIR—So would we.

Mr Kinivan—Yes, I guess you would.

CHAIR—That is why we are here. Thank you very much for coming. We hope to finish the inquiry at the end of June and produce a report in August or September, when we will certainly send you a copy. Thank you very much for your input, and good luck with the kids.

[4.53 p.m.]

BRAY, Mr Kenneth James, Director on Southern Inland Queensland Area Consultative Committee, Committee Member of Charleville and District Chamber of Commerce Incorporated, 5th Floor, Heritage Plaza, 400 Ruthven Street, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350

PAYNTER, Mr Paul Denis, President, Charleville and District Chamber of Commerce Incorporated, PO Box 507, Charleville, Queensland 4470

CHAIR—Welcome. This inquiry is not about unemployment but about employment, and we are really looking at two basic issues: how we can help young people to become more employable and how we can try to encourage business, industry, commerce and even the public sector to employ more young people. Do you have a brief statement that you would like to make to the committee about the kinds of issues that we are discussing?

Mr Paynter—The chamber here has been very active in trying to promote job creation. We have also put forward—and Ken will expand on this—a way we believe we can employ young apprentices and young trainees but which has run into a brick wall. We do not understand this and we will probably give you a copy of a submission that we have been sending to ministers and others on our idea because this does fall into an area where we have been working very hard. We believe there are a lot of areas here where we cannot attract a tradesman; we believe we have to train them and put them on. We have worked out some of the problems and we have come up with an idea which we reckon will work. We have been fairly active in trying to create jobs for the younger people to keep them here. We want to keep them here because all these towns that we are talking about are suffering from loss of people. One of the causes of the loss of people is no jobs; so we want to find jobs.

CHAIR—Paul, do you reckon you have jobs but you still cannot keep the kids here?

Mr Paynter—We would not have enough jobs for all the kids but we believe we can create anywhere from 10 to 20 new jobs with this thing that we have worked out. It might not sound a lot but it is a lot for a small town. These are permanent jobs I am talking about, not casual jobs.

CHAIR—Are you losing a lot of young people to the city?

Mr Paynter—Not so many these days because there are no jobs there either. Years ago, a lot of these towns suffered during droughts because the people could slip into the city to get a job, and so they would leave. That applied not only to the young people but to everyone. But these days it is not quite as easy as that. You have to make sure you have a job before you go otherwise there is not much point in going. It would probably cost you more to live in the city than it would out here. So I do not think the drift is anywhere near as great. I think a lot of them do tend to stay.

CHAIR—I know I said the inquiry is about employment, not unemployment, but is there a high level of unemployment in the area; are there a lot of young people on the dole?

Mr Paynter—I would say we would be with the national average. I think the youth side of it might be as high as anywhere else, but I cannot give you the exact figures at the moment. The last time we checked, we were running pretty well in line with what the regular statistics say. But then a lot of kids here are either still at school or the parents are keeping them and they are not showing up on the figures. So it is probably a bit hard to say.

CHAIR—Ken, would you like to tell us about the skeleton of the program?

Mr Bray—Basically, this is a proposal that we have put up. We have sent this off to people like Amanda Vanstone through to Santo Santoro. It falls into a category where it can be both state and federal. I have been involved with group training schemes before, and they are great. They take a lot of pressure off the employer or the host trainer once you get into a group training scheme.

Out here, we have group training schemes that work. There is a problem in the city with group training schemes where the host trainer will have an apprentice for a particular project, and when that project is finished he hands the apprentice back. In our group training schemes, when an employer gets an apprentice, he keeps the apprentice for the whole four years, or whatever length of time that apprenticeship or traineeship runs for. It also gives employers the advantage of swapping, sending the apprentices to the city to get that extra experience on, say, high rises that we do not get out here.

We have come up with a shared apprenticeship scheme for out here and we need help with it. We have builders, electricians, painters—the whole lot. We have made it a regional thing where you might have three electricians in town here, one in Cunnamulla, one in Quilpie and one in Thargomindah. If we want to employ one more apprentice for, say, the electrical industry, he or she is shared throughout all of those industries. The Chamber of Commerce would do a lot of this work, and so would the Golden West Group Training scheme, who are in favour of it.

In other words, that apprentice or trainee might go with me for three months, then he or she might go with my competition for another three months. In that way, firstly, he or she is getting a good variety of work and, secondly, it fills that gap when you do not have enough work for an extra man but, for the few months when you are busy on a big project, you have access to one. We can leave with you how we plan to structure it.

It is a bit unfair for the Chamber of Commerce here to come up with this—we would like to start off with about 10, from hairdressers to office staff—and say to the Golden West Group Training scheme, 'We are going to employ these 10.' They help us to pick them and we then find out there is a lot of work in shuffling them from one host trainer to the next. We came up with the idea that it would help everyone if their training was subsidised.

In other words, when they go away to technical college, the host trainers do not have to find that money and neither does Golden West because, basically, they just do not have the funding for that sort of thing. That is where we have hit the brick wall. That is where we have come up with the big answer, 'No.' We find it hard to believe that the government can pay young people unemployment benefits, yet we just cannot have the little bit of cost for training that we would have to wear as host trainers. We just cannot do

it.You have to remember that it is over and above what we normally have on as staff. I have two apprentices at the moment, and I plan on keeping those two, but I could handle a third one for a few months.

Mr MAREK—Have you applied this theory to the new MAATS program? They give incremental money of a thousand dollars here and several thousand dollars there to help cater for when trainees go through university. That is a quick off-the-cuff.

Mr Bray—Yes and no. We have put it up, but we have come back with the big answer, 'No.' We have gone through this. We want it to be a pilot program. The other day, we were not happy with it so we went to our local member, Howard Hobbs. We said it never even got off the ground. Nobody even looked at it. Nobody picked up the phone. Nobody came back to us and said, 'Look, you are doing this the wrong way.' We cannot understand this—everything is supposed to be industry led. The closest we are going to get to industry is the Chamber of Commerce. We think we know what is needed for the area. We put it up; we did a lot of our work with our business facilitator here too, I might add. We do not believe that it was even looked at, to be quite honest. No-one said, 'No, you're going about this the wrong way. Try it another way.' We started this off months and months ago and we are prepared to go with it. We do not even believe it was really looked at. We then went back to Howard Hobbs and Olive Jones. Next week we have got to meet with her and hopefully we will get something sorted out.

Mr SAWFORD—Who is she?

Mr BROUGH—She is the Santo Santoro part of it?

Mr Bray—Part of that.

Mr BROUGH—Industrial relations and the TAFE system.

Mr Bray—That is right. I am just trying to work out what she comes under.

Mr SAWFORD—Further education or something like that. The state government.

Mr Bray—Yes, the state government. We just got the word no back and the only reason that we got back was training. There is nothing in it for training. It is very hard to get anything out of MAATS, let us face it. I have got some information here on MAATS.

Mr BROUGH—You do not have sufficient information?

Mr Bray—No, we are having trouble getting that specific information. We have asked for this to be a pilot scheme.

Mr BROUGH—I think that is a very valid point. I have heard it before, so that is why I asked it directly. Do you have any shortage of other information regarding these sorts of programs? Do you feel that you are really stabbing in the dark in general when you are trying to develop these?

Mr Bray—Perhaps we are going about this the wrong way. We will listen if somebody comes to us to say, 'Look, you're going about this the wrong way.' We have come up with an idea, we feel that it would work and all we are getting is a flat no just because of training. They cannot wear the cost of training. They are not prepared to wear the cost of training. If somebody were to come back and say, 'Look, why don't we look at this through MAATS or through another scheme or something like that,' we are prepared to listen and go along with it, because we believe in it.

CHAIR—Do your apprentices that you hire directly pay for their own course at TAFE?

Mr Bray—Indirectly we pay for that course at TAFE. It is all in our fees through the group training scheme.

CHAIR—Right.

Mr Bray—So we pay weekly.

CHAIR—You employ your kids through a group training scheme?

Mr Bray—Yes.

CHAIR—They are not directly apprenticed to you?

Mr Bray—No.

CHAIR—All right, I understand that.

Mr Bray—We want to run this through the same shared apprenticeship and traineeship group scheme too. They are keen to go with it.

CHAIR—Why are they unable to support the off-the-job training component?

Mr Bray—Because of the lack of funding. Somebody has got to pay for the—

Mr BROUGH—Pay their wages while they are being trained?

Mr Bray—Exactly.

Mr Paynter—That is it, because it is shared, there is no one person—

CHAIR—But their hourly rate ought to take care of that.

Mr Bray—This is where it comes into it. We have got to go out and sell this too. First of all we have got to get it off the ground. We have done preliminary interviews, you might say, with the other builders and things like that and we are getting a good response from it. Yes, that could work, but somebody has got to

make the move and actually do it. We cannot go out to them and sell it to them before we get it through. We have got the answer no, so what is the point in going out and selling it?

I have got a fourth-year apprentice on at the moment and pay $600 a week. I consider that to be a fair amount of money. It sounds a lot of money, but bear in mind that we do not have to pay it while they are away at TAFE colleges and we do not have to pay them when they are on holidays. It is all lumped into that $600 a week figure. You say to somebody, 'Right, by the time he gets to fourth year, you are going to be up for $600 a week, but he will not be with you full time.'

No, it is not going to work. We believe that we need to get the training side paid for so it does not cost the host trainer anything when they send them away;, it is only on-time costs. While they are actually working they get charged and they are prepared to pay for it.

CHAIR—We will be happy to take a copy of your submission.

Mr Bray—That is great.

CHAIR—If we can do anything to help you we will but you understand the committee's job is not to facilitate special programs or processes but simply to try to write a report that makes major recommendations for change in the way we do things to try to help get kids employed. So if I can change tack just a little bit: one of the things we have heard in the cities, and we heard again this morning in Roma, was that too few kids today, by the time they get to be teenagers, have any real understanding of the range of job opportunities that might be available to them and what career paths they might follow. Their parents and schools seem to tell them that if you want to be successful you go to university and that is all there is. Have you any comments to make about that and whether that is true of Charleville; and if it is how we go about addressing it?

Mr Bray—I have certainly got my ideas on that one. Incidentally, the one thing I have not mentioned before is that in the ACC we are really starting to move on the youth side. We are setting up a subcommittee on that one and I have been appointed as the co-chairman for the youth forum, you might call it. I will be in charge of the western area. Unfortunately, it is a bit like Olive Jones coming out here next week—we cannot report back anything positive on that. It is the same thing with this one; we are just starting it up.

CHAIR—What about the kids' understanding of what jobs are available in the real world and what career paths there might be?

Mr Paynter—It is a problem with the schools, isn't it. The schools are failing; they are failing in telling them what jobs are out there and not everybody can go to university. This is the problem. They are not directing these people or showing them. They have these days every year when you go out and wander around but there is no real direction being offered; a lot of them cannot even read or write when they come out let alone know what job they are going to do. So I think there is a failing there.

Mr BROUGH—What is the suggestion there, Paul? What do you suggest they do, accepting there is a problem within the schools and they do not really know where they are going or what they are doing? How do you address it? What would you see being done?

Mr Paynter—That is a hard one. But there is a notion now in this country that unless you have got a university degree there is no job. That is flowing through everywhere and there are people getting jobs with university degrees who should not have them. There is just no risk about that. I have seen it in our industry. They have not got a clue what the industry is about and they have buggered it.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What is your industry, Paul?

Mr Paynter—Supermarket, food. I know it is in other industries, but the thing is there are a lot of jobs out there that do not need a university degree and I think we are lifting the hopes way up high and telling people, 'You have got to go that way,' when there is a whole vast range of jobs that have got to be filled. Someone has got to do them, right down to the garbage collection.

Mr BROUGH—Do you and the chamber of commerce go to the high school here and explain the variety of jobs that are available within the town? I know you cannot do the things that are outside of the town, but have you asked whether you can or have you been approached to?

Mr Paynter—No, not directly. We have been asked to go to those nights. I went to a few of them but I could not see anything there. We have never been asked to go and address the kids, no.

Mr BROUGH—Could you see any benefit in schools running a program where one day a week, for argument's sake, you had people who thought that they might like to get into your industry, at a management level—let's not say they want to be a checkout chick so to speak—coming in and spending one day a week in your business, whilst they are still at school, and seeing what your business is really about and then understanding where you went to to get to where you are now and what they would be required to do? Would you see that as a benefit?

Mr Paynter—They have a thing at the end of—

Mr BROUGH—Yes: work experience.

Mr Paynter—Work experience; but I have very rarely got anyone.

Mr BROUGH—Okay. But would that sort of a program equip someone to understand better your industry and the requirements and responsibilities of working in the retail industry?

Mr Paynter—Yes. It is badly needed. There seems to be a level there such that they think that that is the bottom end of the market, and that is no good. There needs to be something in a lot of areas to show people that there are fairly well paid jobs and probably career opportunities. I have trained a young fellow here who has gone right through and joined the chains and gone up; so there are ways.

Mr BROUGH—The kids do not understand that: is that what you are saying?

Mr Paynter—They certainly do not understand that.

Mr SAWFORD—I think it fair to say that, from talking to people at Roma this morning and also to previous groups, there seem to be three key groups involved in opportunities for young people. One is the education system, another is business or industry, and the third is the trainers—the CESs and all those groups. From what you have been saying, Paul, there does not seem to be very much coordination between the three. Everyone is going out and doing their own thing and perhaps even blaming each other. Ken, you made a point about the ACC: is the area consultative committee a viable body to actually link all those three groups together?

Mr Bray—Yes. We have got a very successful ACC in our area that goes from Gatton to Birdsville, virtually. We are changing now, since the change of government. It is a little hard, because the federal government does not actually come out and say, 'This is the job for ACCs.' It appears that we have got to make up our minds about what we can positively do for unemployment and then submit that, and then they say yes. For instance, we were heavily involved with partnerships in the new works opportunities, and that ran very successfully, especially out in these areas. But there are no more labour market programs, so the ACC has got to move on to other areas.

We see our job as a link between the REDOs and things like that. Our job is employment: getting jobs. We can be the stopgap. It is not necessarily myself: there is a lot I do not know about it, too. Through area consultative committees, people can ring up and can get access to people in the right positions, and get information as to how to go about things. Once again, our little program was run through the ACC and it has failed, so I do have to question how much notice they really do take of ACCs, too.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What are the major industries in the area? You are in retail, are you?

Mr Bray—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Outside of that, what other major industries are there? You are an electrical contractor?

Mr Bray—I am an electrical contractor.

Mr MOSSFIELD—And how many people do you employ?

Mr Bray—I employ five.

Mr MOSSFIELD—And how about you, Paul?

Mr Paynter—I employ 15.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Are there any other major industries in the area that employ reasonably large numbers of people?

Mr Paynter—In the town or in the area?

Mr MOSSFIELD—In the area, really—besides the council.

Mr Paynter—Shearing is probably one of the biggest.

Mr MOSSFIELD—And is there an influx of young people into that industry at all?

Mr Paynter—Yes; we tried to start some training through the TAFE here, and ran into all sorts of problems.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Are the Kiwis up here, as well?

Mr Paynter—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—And what is your opinion about that?

Mr Bray—As long as they pay their taxes, I think it is all right. We will not get too involved in the union side, but—

Mr Paynter—They are not causing any great trouble here now.

Mr SAWFORD—But don't they take jobs away from the locals?

Mr Bray—They did; they have.

Mr Paynter—They would have, I suppose.

Mr Bray—They definitely have, in the past.

Mr Paynter—Most of them are settled here; they are not transient. The mob that are here now have virtually stayed here. They have got homes here and have almost settled into the community.

Mr SAWFORD—So they are here permanently.

Mr Paynter—There were people who were shearing and their back went. But they were not getting enough young people through—and they are still not getting enough young people through, who are trained, to join. So these people did fill a vacuum, I think.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What about the TAFE? You may have heard some contradictory comments from other people here this afternoon about the value of TAFE in the area. Is TAFE responsive to the industries?

Mr Paynter—The TAFE here has gone through a very difficult period. They sucked all of our funds away—Roma took most of them—and left it starved. It has not been very effective simply because any of the programs we put up we could not get off the ground. But we have got things moving here and we have got more staff.

There was a question before about training. They were not; there was a beautiful big facility but the kids up at the high school were not using it. Just the other day they sat down together and decided they could work out a program and utilise the thing. So, finally, they are starting to talk and say, 'We can use this too.' They should have been doing that all the time. That was originally what was going to happen, but they all got in a—

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you believe a more effective TAFE in the area would assist in new training and job creation?

Mr Paynter—The biggest problem out here is that they start talking about student hours, that you have got to have so many things. We cannot always produce enough people to make that work, so we are pushing very hard to make sure they are given a little more latitude. I think there should be much more effective TAFE training on a whole range of training. As I said with shearing, you need to train them and there is nothing for them now. I think it would work, yes.

Mrs GASH—Who is your local federal member?

Mr Bray—Bruce Scott.

Mrs GASH—Did you attend the ACC meeting for chairmen that was held some months ago, where all of the policies and guidelines were laid down?

Mr Bray—Was that the one at Bundaberg or Canberra?

Mrs GASH—Canberra.

Mr Bray—No; our chief executive officer, Peter Nichols, went down to that. I do not think there were any other members from the ACC.

Mrs GASH—That was where the guidelines were set down for the new role for the ACCs.

Mr Bray—Right.

Mrs GASH—I will not go into that now, but there was quite a deal that went into that. How many businesses belong to the Charleville and District Chamber of Commerce?

Mr Paynter—We have got about 60 to 70 per cent of them.
Mrs GASH—How many is that?

Mr Paynter—We have got about 55.

Mr Bray—We actually have quite a strong chamber here. One of the reasons is that we pay a secretary—we have to pay a secretary—and we get things done because we have got somebody there if we come up with an idea, and it works. We find that very difficult because it costs us; it costs every business that

goes into it, because they have got to pay for one person to be employed.

Mrs GASH—Both of you are in business. What is the major thing that you look for in a young person before you will employ them?

Mr Bray—As part of the interview?

Mrs GASH—What are you looking for before you will employ them?

Mr Bray—You are looking for honesty, for—

Mrs GASH—What I am getting at is: is it things that can be trained or do you expect the people to have that already?

Mr Paynter—No.

Mr Bray—It is different. I have not actually answered the question about university. I probably agree that there are too many going to university. But on the other hand, if people are not going to university, Australia as a whole will be left behind because we will not have the expertise there to keep up with the rest of the countries as far as technology and all that goes.

Mr Paynter—Yes, but that is only so many people.

Mr Bray—Yes, I agree with you there; that is one of the things. Higher education is definitely a plus. This is where things have changed a lot. When I left school and I wanted to be an electrician, I was lucky and I got it. Back in those days you used to set your mind on what you wanted and you had a fair chance of getting it. These days you might set your mind to be a builder and you could end up as a panel beater. If you want to stick in the trade line of things and you are lucky, you grab it because that is all you are going to get. It is difficult to set goals if you are a young person and say you want to be such and such and go out and actually get a job in that.

Mr MAREK—People I have spoken to, particularly around the Rockhampton coast, are saying there is a shortage of skilled tradesmen like fitters, mechanics, diesel fitters and all those sorts of people.

Mr Bray—That is understandable. There is no incentive to put on these people. There is absolutely no incentive.

Mr MAREK—What is the difference between the incentive you have now and the incentive you had 10 or 20 years ago?

Mr Bray—To put it in the same light, we are working twice as hard and longer hours to get the same amount of money as we might have got a few years ago. Money would go further.

Mr MAREK—It is a loaded question. I am trying to get something out of you here.

Mr BROUGH—At least you are honest.

Mr Paynter—So long as it is not money!

Mr MAREK—There must be reasons why you, as individual employers, do not employ somebody. You can look at attitudes, skills, competency, numeracy, literacy and we have just discussed a shortage of skilled tradesmen. We have now just spoken about the difference between now and 10 or 15 years ago. Are you talking about bureaucratic red tape? Are you talking about taxation?

Mr Bray—As I say, there is no incentive now because back in those days your dollar did go further. These days it is pretty competitive and you have to do a job with minimum mark-up. Once upon a time, if you had an apprentice and you were a little bit quiet you would put him on the broom or you would do anything. These days you cannot afford to have him on the broom so you tend to do without him.

Mr MAREK—So you are saying the wages are probably a little bit too high for them.

Mr Bray—Yes. There is no incentive from the government to overcome that.

Mrs GASH—If there was an incentive for job training, would you do it?

Mr Bray—I do not say that I would do it more than I do. I am a believer in apprentices and I have my maximum quota of two at the moment. You can extend that, of course, and I can get two and one-third if that was to come true—

Mrs GASH—The question is basically: would you prefer to see them go out and be trained or would you, as a business, train them yourself?

Mr Bray—Out here we cannot get decent qualified men so we prefer to train them ourselves. We bring them up and we train them the way we want for the conditions out here when it gets quite warm in summer. They come out here and they cannot hack the conditions, the distance we have to travel, being away from home and things like that. If we get the local person who has been brought up with the fact that it is a day's trip to get to Brisbane—that is quick, these days—it is no problem for him to go out west when we might stay out there for a month.

Mr Paynter—We would take the incentive, in our industry, because a lot of kids, when you get down to what is left, do not want to work. I am better off putting on a married woman. I am paying more but I get the result.

Mr MOSSFIELD—When you say that people do not want to work you are getting down to that lower level which is a very small minority.

Mr Paynter—Yes, that is right.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you think the fact is that maybe those people feel they cannot get a job and so

they lose initiative and that makes them less attractive to employers?

Mr Paynter—There is great difficulty in employing young people who last. I have had a few on schemes and as soon as the scheme is over they can have them back because they are not worth it.

Mr BROUGH—Are you only employing them for the advantage of the scheme?

Mr Paynter—I have put them on and if they were any good they would still be there.

Mr BROUGH—Did they go of their own volition or did you sack them or not keep them on?

Mr Paynter—If I could get someone. I am short about three or four staff.

Mr BROUGH—So you have unemployment in the town, you have a low-skilled job—and I do not mean that to be derogatory—and you would take on three more people right now if you could?

Mr Paynter—If I could find someone right. But if I have to run around and do the job myself, I may as well do the job myself. That is what you have got to do. They are only there to put their hand out at pay time. Yet all of a sudden you pick up someone who has got a bit of drive and they are good. You can tell them what to do, show them what to do and they will do it.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have any school kids on part time?

Mr Paynter—Yes. I did not add them in, but I have the same problem there. I get some good ones, because they are going on and it is good training for them. But, once again, you have to sort them out, too.

Mr MOSSFIELD—When you originally employ them, do you advertise or do you get them via the CES?

Mr Paynter—I advertise and go to the CES.

Mr MOSSFIELD—And then you interview them and put them through the ropes to see if you are satisfied that they are the right type of person?

Mr Paynter—Yes, but you get fooled.

Mr MOSSFIELD—You get fooled?

Mr Paynter—You get someone all dressed up and who looks great and says, 'Yes, yes. I want a job.' He goes for about a week real good and that is the finish of him.

Mr MAREK—Looking at it from a bigger framework and particularly out here in the rural area, you have had significant drought that has lasted several years. You have had cattlemen who are on the bones of their backside who have got rid of a lot of their people. They have gone away to the city or whatever, as we

have mentioned before. So you now have a community that does not have the same number of people to support your industries.

Therefore, to continue to multiply and employ more people, you do not really have the people to service it. What you probably have are peaks and lows when you are busy and when you are not busy and you need people to fill in those lows and peaks. I guess that is what you are after. With that in mind, because of other areas of competency, skills and attitude, you are probably a little bit reluctant to put people on because you really know you only need them for those short periods of time. Would that be fair to say as a general comment?

Mr Paynter—Yes and no.

Mr MAREK—So the bit about the drought is not right?

Mr Paynter—Yes. The drought bit is right. As you said, a lot of people have left their properties, but a lot of our immediate properties here are fifty-fifty. They are not all cattle and they are not sheep either.

Mr MAREK—You spoke about the ACCs and mentioned the fact that it was spoken about down in Canberra. We have mentioned MAATS and we have now identified the fact that we might be short of information about the whole thing. Looking at the cattlemen or the people in the grazing areas around here, would it also be fair to say that they do not know what a lot of the new programs that the government has put forward are?

Mr Paynter—Yes.

Mr MAREK—I know there are programs that have just been put forward and millions of dollars have just been thrown at it to get people back on the land to learn how to do cattle work and all that sort of stuff. Would it be fair to say that the people out here have not been educated in the new programs and they do not know what is available?

Mr Paynter—Yes, definitely.

Mr Bray—That has been corrected a little bit recently. I have to say that as far as the ACCs go. I am not talking about out on the properties, but in businesses. For instance, the latest one is that CES program for the long-term unemployed. But, let us face it, there are the employable and then there are the unemployable.

Mr MAREK—Yes, but we have always had them.

Mr Bray—Yes, and that is what has happened with the last one. There are still people looking for people. There are still 50 or 60 people down there at the CES, but you just cannot trust them—one, you would not let them anywhere near your till, and two, your business would just go straight down.

Mr MAREK—Are you saying that maybe it is the fault of the CES by not weeding them out and getting the right people?

Mr Bray—No, on that one they are just the unemployable. You would not employ them with a 40-foot stick.

Mr MAREK—They have always been there, have they not? Once upon a time it used to be that you employed people on their skills, competency and attitude. Now it is the other way around; you employ them on their attitude, then their skills and then their competency because you can train them, whereas years ago everybody had a mentality that everyone wanted to work. Now we have a mentality that people do not really want to work. So things have changed around.

Mr Bray—This comes back to where Paul was answering a question and we went on to another subject. The schools are putting too much emphasis on the fact that they can go on the dole and that it is socially acceptable. Back in the old days, that never used to happen. It just was not mentioned. Sure, they have to know that they are going to be looked after if they cannot get a job. But there is too much emphasis on, 'She'll be right. You can go down there and just apply for the dole and you'll get it.'

Mr Paynter—They are given all the information.

Mr BROUGH—Is that from the schools or from the parents?

Mr Paynter—No, from the schools.

Mr BROUGH—It comes from the CES. They go down and actually give them kits and everything else beforehand.

Mr Bray—I think the attitude has to be changed around. You have to make every effort to get out there and get a job.

CHAIR—This going well but, in deference to your colleagues sitting behind you waiting to have a go and the fact that we have a plane to catch eventually, I thank you very much for coming and talking to us. It has been enlightening. We appreciate your input very much. We hope to finish by June and produce this report in August or September and we will certainly be sending you a copy.

[5.39 p.m.]

KENNY, Mr Graham Roderick, Executive Officer, Warrego Division, United Graziers Association of Queensland, PO Box 51, Charleville, Queensland 4470

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Kenny—As Executive Officer of the Warrego and South-West Queensland Divisions of the United Graziers Association, I am an employee of the association, not a member. I am not actually a grazier myself and I am not even an employer. But as well as overseeing the administration of the divisions out here, one of my roles is to represent the organisation when our president or members are unable to do so. That is why I am here today. I guess it is interesting that one of the reasons they are not here is because they are all very busy, flat out working on things that they once would have employed somebody else to do.

CHAIR—Thank you. The inquiry is about two things. Firstly, it is about employment—we are not talking about unemployment; we are essentially trying to figure out how to help young kids to become more employable, and you heard something of that from the last witnesses. The other side of it is how to try and convince employers to make more jobs available for young people. Do you have a brief statement you would like to make about the issues that we are here to discuss today?

Mr Kenny—I have not really prepared one, but I was thinking about it this morning and I have spoken to a lot of our members about it. I know that the work is definitely there, but they are just not employing people like they used to. I started to scribble things down and I came up with the diagram or a model that you all have; I was going to use that for my notes, so I thought I might as well get everybody to have a look at it.

I guess the way I see things might be one of the advantages of having me here, rather than an individual grazier who would probably give you an overview of their particular experiences. From a broader perspective, I see that we have got the employers—the graziers, in this case—and there is absolutely oodles of work to be done in this area, and the infrastructure is there to do it. Most of the places around here have probably one house that nobody lives in, shearers' quarters, cottages and that type of thing; they are set up to have staff because, going back a number of years, they all did. And, obviously, there are people looking for jobs.

When I started thinking about why it is not happening, what the impediments are, I came up with the major impediments in the form I have outlined on the diagram. Over the top of that I have got the prevailing economic conditions. By that I mean principally the conditions within the pastoral and grazing industries, because the fundamental problem at the moment is just the lack of the profitability of the graziers. If we remove that, I am sure we would see a lot of people employed very quickly. But being industries that are based on wool, of which 85 per cent is exported, and beef, of which 50 per cent is exported, the economic conditions, and the profitability and prices we have been receiving for those products, are probably things that are out of the scope of this inquiry because they are pretty much dependent on global supply and demand.

Taking those conditions as a given, and something we have to work with at least for the short term, I have looked into and thought about other impediments. On the side of the employers, I think there are a

couple of things that you mentioned with the previous witness. One of them is the red tape, which I have called 'regulatory complications', and that means the fringe benefits tax, superannuation, workers compensation, workplace health and safety. With all those things there is just so much paperwork involved. The big farms, the corporate farms, would have people who handle that side of things. But for family farms and enterprises around here, it is a real imposition; they do not like doing that.

They also have got away very much from employing people, not only for that reason but also because of the economics of the situation. It is now a sort of a culture, in some instances, that you do not employ anybody if you can possibly do the job yourself because of the red tape and because it is going to cost you a lot of money. I have spoken to some people who even skite about the fact that they have been in this place 10 years and they have never employed anybody to do one day's work ever—and they intend to keep it that way. So it has become a little bit of a culture, these days, of doing everything yourself.

On the employee side, the problem here and in isolated areas, particularly here in south-west Queensland, is that young people, I feel, do not see this part of Queensland—and the remote areas in particular—as being a terribly exciting place to live. A lot of them spend time away at some stage in their lives and they get to develop a taste for Big Macs or something and they are not really keen on coming back to these sorts of areas. It is a long way from anywhere, it is pretty hot and so they say, 'Why would I look for work out here?'—even though there is plenty of work to be done.

The other thing is that, these days, there has been a little bit of mismatching of the skills that people need. One fellow I was talking to this morning said it has changed for him because once upon a time, if somebody wanted to work on a property, as long as they could ride a horse and had a bit of commonsense they were pretty right. They did mostly that—mustering and fencing—and that was it. But things have changed so much. Graziers nowadays are using a lot of equipment and it is very expensive stuff. They are mustering with motorbikes. They are using all kinds of equipment and they are absolutely scared that somebody is going to wreck their stuff. I guess it is a training thing. It is a situation that somehow needs to be addressed so that there are more young people there that have those sorts of abilities and that the employers are going to take on.

Mr MAREK—Just tapping in to what you said about workplace health and safety: a lot of the graziers I have talked to scoff and giggle at the fact that, to own a chainsaw now, they have to train their employees in the city somewhere and they have to wear all these metal coats and stuff to be able to use or be able to buy a chainsaw. These are the regulations and complications that you are talking about, aren't you? Things that have been imposed on people in the country by bureaucrats who probably have no idea what they are talking about. Is that the sort of thing you are talking about as well?

Mr Kenny—Yes.

Mr MAREK—Regulatory complications?

Mr Kenny—With workplace health and safety, anyway, I think they find it a little bit frightening that they have to supply all this equipment. There is so much of it that they are worried that they will forget something and end up in big trouble for it because someone hurts themself because of something they have not done. Once upon a time, for generations and generations, the only thing you ever put on your head was a hat.

If you fell off and hurt yourself you either got better or you died and that was it.

Mr MAREK—Yes.

Mr Kenny—But nowadays you are open to all sorts of trouble if you have not supplied all the equipment.

Mr BROUGH—Are the jobs there now? You said the work is there but are there paid jobs there?

Mr Kenny—No.

Mr MAREK—Technology has improved, has it not?

Mr Kenny—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—But there is still the work there. There are still the fences that are down and there are still the other bits and pieces that need to be done. But, as you say, there is certainly not the money in the industry today to actually employ people, regardless of age or any other reason. Until the industry becomes more profitable, the cattle industry as a whole is not going to become the big employer that it was. There used to be stations out here bigger than the towns. They employed 100 people and they had their own everything. I have been to them and they are just ghost stations now. That will never return because you just do not have the profitability. What is the difference between the family farm here—and the breakdown between family farms—and those that are corporate farms?

Mr Kenny—In this area around Charleville, a rough guess would be 90 per cent family owned and operated farms.

Mr BROUGH—You still have 90 per cent, do you?

Mr Kenny—Yes. As you go further west into the channel country and bigger holdings they are obviously held by big corporations. Some of these places around here are also owned by bigger corporations and around Cunnamulla and in the better country as well. But family owned and operated farms, although they are getting bigger all the time—they are just adjusting because they have to—still are the majority of the—

Mr BROUGH—They have no ability to vertically integrate because they have not got any capital or whatever else so therefore they are being squeezed out by the Japanese and everybody else who are doing that and controlling it from the farm gate through to the retailer. What is the future for the family farm and employment in these areas? Is it going to stabilise in your opinion or is it going to continue to go down, or are we going to see an upsurge?

Mr Kenny—That is something I worry about. We have been getting bigger at a pretty great rate for about 30 years. I think every time we take a look at the situation in isolation we just say we have to have a bit of structural adjustment here. People have to get bigger and then they will be right. But when that happens they find out they have to get bigger again. I worry about government policies of not intervening with the free

market and letting it just find its own level. I really worry for towns like Charleville and Quilpie. If the free market is going to decide maybe it will decide we do not need towns like Quilpie and towns like Charleville. Some of those managers of the big corporate places in the channel country that I have spoken to have told me it would not make any difference to them whether Quilpie and Charleville and even Roma and Dalby disappeared because they do all their business out of Toowoomba. They even get their groceries once a week on a truck from Toowoomba.

Sometimes I think that maybe there has to be a conscious decision by the Australian people to say, 'We do want rural infrastructure. We do want people in the bush so we are going to have to make sure that they stay there.' It might mean providing the subsidies or the incentives or whatever to keep them there.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I think that is a good point you are making, Graham. I think you have probably hit the nail on the head. There has to be some political input I think to keep the type of culture that we have had going. I suppose we look for a few solutions from people like you. You said it is a cultural thing where farmers will not employ people anymore and even if business picked up the chances are that they will make do with their own family staffing. You have also said there is work to be done so what can we do to get people to start employing people again? I draw your attention to local organisations like the area consultative committee, group training companies staffed by local people trying to make a contribution to the local area. Could they have an impact in helping to change the culture? I think that is the way I would like to put it.

Mr Kenny—Changing the culture would probably be a very long-term sort of thing and the way to do that is probably to work on streamlining the regulatory complications. It is so complicated to employ somebody now and that is probably where these group training people can make a big contribution because they basically will do that and you just pay them.

Mr MOSSFIELD—They cut the red tape out.

Mr Kenny—Yes, and that is, I think, hopefully going to make a big contribution to that. I guess when I look at the other sorts of impediments I have listed there we have to start looking at what skills and abilities our young people have when they are looking for employment.

One thing in this area that got a lot of positive response from employers was the rural training and skills program where the employers and employees, when the money was made available, decided what they wanted to do courses in. The employees were able to do that at no cost to them or to the employers. That ensured that they were getting the training exactly in the areas where it was most required, both by them and by the employers. That is a couple of things.

I think that cutting the red tape is very important. I do not think people like you and me, who deal with bureaucratic stuff every day, realise just how big an imposition country people feel that is when actually having to do what they see as an absolute waste of time when they could be out doing something productive.

Mrs GASH—Could I say the farmers are not alone in thinking that. In the hospitality industry where we used to employ between 38 and 40 people we now employ 26 for that very reason. It is just sometimes too hard. However, I also agree with the comment I think you made earlier in the piece that there could be jobs

out there providing the incentive was there for people to pick them up and if the training was of a satisfactory standard. That is why we are here talking to you today: to find out how you see the solution. I also think you have to get it back to your members that, to make it successful, it has to be a two-way street. We cannot all say it is the culture or it is all too hard. I am not trying to preach to you but I am in the same situation so I understand all too well where you are coming from. I just wanted to make a comment.

CHAIR—One of the earlier respondents today said that in this area you might have a property of 220,000 acres run with three people. How many cattle would you have on 220,000 acres around Charleville?

Mr Kenny—Around Charleville, I do not know. In the channel country where properties of that size are more common it would probably be about 2,000 to 3,000.

CHAIR—Is that all?

Mr Kenny—Yes. It would be one beast to 100 acres out there.

CHAIR—Is the biggest problem fencing and water?

Mr Kenny—No, they fence most of those places out there.

Mr BROUGH—They do not fence in the Gulf country, do they?

Mr Kenny—Around here they still fence. Around here fencing is a big job. I guess on most places that are owned by big corporations they are set up and they have the infrastructure. They can afford to use the best equipment and they use aircraft to muster. One particular place I know that employed 100 people earlier this century now employs 12 and there are only six in the stock camp. So six people are probably doing now what 50 or 60 once did. That is simply because of technology, I guess—helicopters.

CHAIR—Two people have told us that young people are staying on at home, in many instances—the ones who do not want to go to the city, the ones who are not attracted by the bright lights and are unimpressed by unemployment benefits. They simply stay home and help Mum and Dad—for a feed.

Mr Kenny—Yes, that definitely happens. I know of many cases where that happens.

CHAIR—A lot?

Mr Kenny—Yes, I would say so from just thinking very quickly about the cases I know of.

Mr MAREK—I am fairly aware of that too. I know quite a lot of cases where people on the land have that mentality and ethic from their family that they do not want to be on the dole. They detest the dole so they stay on the land.

Mr BROUGH—And they are helping dad with their inheritance. That is the payment in some cases, further down the track. I do not mean that in a vicious way, but they are saying, 'That is going to be passed

on, so you pull your weight now, son, and we get fed and one day this will all be yours.'

CHAIR—In plenty of cases they do not get a lot of wages.

Mr MAREK—What we are seeing, particularly around the mining area in Capricornia, is that a lot of people have come off the land and picked up apprenticeships. It is incredible how many coal companies employ apprentices off the land rather than taking them from the township people because they know that they are going to want to get rid of them in four years anyhow, and they know that in four years the kids are going to want to go back to the land. It is incredible the amount of skill we have actually got in and around our own area in Capricornia.

CHAIR—If you go to Olympic Dam, all the miners are ex-farmers because they want to work.

Mr Kenny—That is it.

CHAIR—That is what they told us. They want to work.

Mr Kenny—You have got it right.

CHAIR—They make a lot of money underground at Olympic Dam.

Mr SAWFORD—How much do areas like this suffer from the fact that, in terms of any change mechanism, you need an impetus of new ideas? They either come from within or they come from without. In most circumstances they always come from without, but pastoral families do not have a history of actually cooperating very well together, do they? They do not have a history of being consistent with change. You mentioned the culture, but the impediments are there, and whereas another group of people find a way around them, in some ways if you put an impediment in front of a pastoral family they will say, 'That is it, give up.'

There are plenty of places all over Australia where people have gone into the Riverland, for example, where the citrus industry was going really bad and they were losing markets everywhere, not getting prices for it, and a new person—not even from the citrus industry—comes in and says, 'I am going to export all these things to Hong Kong. These are the wrong size oranges. I am going to organise all this.' They go ahead and do it and make a mint and employ a couple of hundred people in the process.

There were those towns that were sitting there for 20 or 30 years, going down the tube, until somebody comes in with perhaps a realistic idea of what the market is now and does something to apply some new ideas. Do you think a place like Charleville lacks that impetus of ideas and, until it comes, the way is all the way down?

Mr Kenny—There are new ideas about—they are here. There is goat meat. Until recently, goats have been simply regarded as a feral pest but in the last five years they have been regarded as a very valuable sideline. There has also been using eucalyptus trees—there are a few plantations the other side of town—for oil and that type of thing. Wild flowers is another, and obviously there is farm tourism. So there have been a few new ideas, but I guess there has not really been one of the magnitude that you are talking of.

Talking to graziers here, I know there is a belief that they can run sheep and they can run cattle and that is it—they cannot do anything else. But there are certainly ones around that look, and they look very hard, for other things that they can do, but until now they have not really come up with much. Hopefully, they will one day.

Mr MAREK—Let us take another angle then. We talk about governments and those sorts of things trying to do things for the country areas out here—subsidise and those sorts of things—to kick-start it. Would you say things like the Bradfield scheme or government orientated water projects or schemes to bring water out to the country areas here to give them more water so they can diversify would help? Or do you think that is sort of pie in the sky stuff?

Mr Kenny—It might help. With this country around here, a lot of what is mulga can be a lot more productive, given development, given water as well. I think it can be a lot more productive than it is. I think that is right. It would reinvigorate things.

One thing that is worth mentioning is that, after so many years of drought, where people have got themselves into a lot of trouble financially, they have had to reduce their stock numbers, and so, now the grass is here, there is no stock left to eat it. They just no longer have the financial impetus to restock, and restocking gets the regional economy rolling again.

Take the Winton shire, for example: it normally has one and a quarter million sheep in it, and it has now only got about 300,000. It costs the grazier, with all the on-costs, about $3 to shear a sheep, so there is $3 million that is not being circulated through the local economy.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. We do appreciate your input. We will send you a copy of the report.

Resolved (on motion by Mrs Gash):

That the committee receive as evidence and authorise the publication of the submission from the Goulburn West Training Scheme and that the committee receive as evidence and include in its records as an exhibit the document received from Charleville Chamber of Commerce, titled ‘Outline of proposed apprentice and trainee scheme’.

Resolved (on motion by Mrs Gash):

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

Committee adjourned at 6.06 p.m.