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**HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**Reference: Vocational education in schools**

THURSDAY, 6 MARCH 2003

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

**Thursday, 6 March 2003**

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

**Members in attendance:** Mr Albanese, Mr Bartlett, Mr Farmer, Ms Gambaro, Mrs May, Mr Pearce, Mr Sawford and Mr Sidebottom

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

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

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

**WITNESSES**

**DANIELS, Mr William Lawrence, Executive Director, National Council of Independent Schools Associations ..... 175**

**KLEE, Ms Christine, Director, Vocational Education and Training, Redlands College..... 175**

**Le DUFF, Mr Garry Raymond, Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools of South Australia ..... 175**

**Committee met at 9.12 a.m.**

**DANIELS, Mr William Lawrence, Executive Director, National Council of Independent Schools Associations**

**KLEE, Ms Christine, Director, Vocational Education and Training, Redlands College**

**Le DUFF, Mr Garry Raymond, Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools of South Australia**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training in its inquiry into vocational education in schools. I welcome Mr Garry Le Duff, Mr Bill Daniels and Ms Christine Klee. Do you have any comment to make on the capacity in which you appear today?

**Mr Le Duff**—I am the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia and I also represent NCISA on the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce.

**Ms Klee**—I am a practitioner of VET.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for your submission and for meeting with us today. As a formality, I need to remind you that the proceedings here today are formal proceedings of the parliament. I will invite you to make some introductory comments and we will then proceed with questioning.

**Mr Daniels**—Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before the committee. The issues surrounding VET in schools programs are important to independent schools. The growth in participation is welcomed. There are over 1,000 independent schools in Australia with 390,000 enrolments. This represents about 12 per cent of all school enrolments and is approaching 16 per cent of secondary school enrolments. The traditional and outmoded perception of independent schools as elitist and academic in their approach to curriculum is not supported by the participation data of VET in independent schools. The profile of the sector has changed markedly in recent years. Schools now cater for a diverse range of student needs and aspirations. Many schools provide religious or values based education. Others promote a particular educational philosophy or interpretation of mainstream education. Students are from families covering the full spectrum of socioeconomic backgrounds.

In our submission, we set out a number of principles which we advocate for independent schools. Some of these principles relate to support and resources. However, I direct your attention to just one of those principles. I think you will find it on page 2 of the submission. Vocational education and training programs in schools provide a valuable vehicle in giving choice and diversity in the pathways available to young people and are contributing to efforts to improve the retention rate in education and training. The growth in VET program participation of students in the independent schools sector in recent years has been significant. In 1997, there were 145 independent schools with enrolments of 5,000 students. By 2001, this had grown to 360 schools with almost 16,000 students. So looking at this another way, in 1997, 8.5 per cent of year 11 and 12 enrolments in independent schools were enrolled in a VET program.

**CHAIR**—Could you say that again, please?

**Mr Daniels**—That was 8.5 per cent. This had increased to 23 per cent by 2001. Clearly, one factor influencing that growth is resources. Access to ANTA funds in particular has greatly assisted this expansion. While general recurrent funding support for students in non-government schools from the Commonwealth government as well as state and territory governments provides a contribution to meeting school costs, most independent schools do not have access to state or territory government specific resources to support VET in schools. From a national perspective, the levels of support are influenced by the location of the school in the country.

Access to specific financial support, we believe, is essential if schools are to be encouraged to make the necessary organisational and cultural changes required to improve the effectiveness of the role of schools in VET and associated support services. The fact that it is generally agreed that it costs substantially more to develop and deliver VET in schools programs than other elements of the curriculum emphasises the continuing need for specific targeted funding.

Our submission addresses your terms of reference in some detail and makes a number of recommendations. I do not intend to reiterate these recommendations in detail. I do, however, want to assure the committee that as the independent schools sector continues to diversify and expand, we see high quality VET in schools programs as an essential component of the choices of educational options which these schools are offering to individual students and parents. Ultimately, the test for independent schools is determined by their responsiveness to the needs of students and parents. They prosper or fail on the merits of their performance.

With me today is Garry Le Duff, who acts as the NCISA expert, if you like, on VET in schools matters. Garry sits on the ministerial task force on transition and has done for some years. He is the prime author of the submission you have received. Chris Klee is a practitioner. As a director of vocational education in a large independent coeducational school in Brisbane with some 1,100 students, she has to deal with these program issues on a day by day basis. We have done this to try to give you the opportunity to question us not only about a national perspective but about the practicalities of delivering VET programs in schools. Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Bill. Garry, did you want to make any further comments?

**Mr Le Duff**—No.

**CHAIR**—I might kick off the questioning. Bill, could you outline for us a bit more how the funding arrangements work, if you don't mind. Do you get sufficient funding to cover the extra cost of running VET courses? If not, by how much does it fall short? Do you have any estimate of that? How does the funding arrangement work? How does it compare with what the states receive? I notice on page 2 of your executive summary you say school authorities receive little or no financial support from state and territory governments for VET programs. What specific financial support do state schools or public schools get that independent schools do not get?

**Mr Le Duff**—The contribution that state governments make to vocational education within the non-government sector, not just in the independent sector, varies quite considerably from state to state. That is the first point. The second point, though, is that state governments do target particular funding. Apart from the general recurrent grants they may allocate to government schools, they also allocate specific funding in their budget to vocational programs

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within the state government sector. In the significant majority of cases, non-government sectors—both Catholic and independent—would not have access to those funds. So we rely very much on general recurrent funding that schools would normally get, plus the three school sectors get money from ANTA, the Australian National Training Authority. That is based around a formula which is essentially, first of all, divided across the states. That is \$20 million per year, and that is divided across the states according to the proportion of enrolments. When it gets into the state, it is divided by the proportion of students enrolled in each sector at years 11 and 12. So that is—

**CHAIR**—Sorry, enrolled in total or enrolled in VET courses?

**Mr Le Duff**—No, enrolled in total in years 11 and 12.

**CHAIR**—Does that cover the incremental cost of running VET courses?

**Mr Le Duff**—There have been two lots of research by independent consultants. One research project is being undertaken at the moment by the Commonwealth, which is not yet published. Ernst and Young also carried out a research project for the MCEETYA task force, which clearly showed that the cost of running VET is several times higher than running general education programs. Both research projects show that the Commonwealth funds and the state funds which go into government schools do not cover the cost of the delivery, infrastructure and coordination of the VET programs.

What we have put in our submission and will probably emerge out of the latest Commonwealth project is that all three school sectors are putting in substantial general recurrent funds in addition to the targeted funds. For independent schools, it is absolutely critical that those ANTA funds continue. It is the one mechanism by which we have to bring about change across the sector, run professional development and coordinate workplace learning et cetera.

**Mr ALBANESE**—I have a question along those lines. How does it work in terms of the ANTA funds? Are there individual applications to ANTA?

**Mr Le Duff**—No. The schools authorities sign a contract with the state training authorities on behalf of ANTA. In that they set out a whole range of targets, which involves increasing the number of schools involved, the number of students involved and improving access to programs for students with disabilities, Indigenous students and so on. That is an individual contract with the state training authority. The schools authorities then have varying methods of allocating that money. In the state I am very familiar with, which is South Australia, it is by submission. So schools put in submissions to the Association of Independent Schools. We have a committee which consists of industry people and staff from schools. They make the decisions. It is not only based on the submission; it is based on the capacity of that school to contribute resources. So we use an index of disadvantage to allocate the funds and whether a school has applied before. If, for example, a school applies for the first time, they are more likely to get a higher proportion of what grant they have asked for. For those schools that have applied several times, we gradually reduce the grant so that the program is embedded into the budget planning process of their schools.

**Mrs MAY**—Is that done annually? The schools put them in annually?

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**Mr Le Duff**—Yes.

**Mrs MAY**—So schools could not rely on recurrent funding for programs? They have to apply every year?

**Mr Le Duff**—Yes, they do have to apply every year. By having the strategy of getting the schools to think strategically about these programs and realising that there is this high degree of uncertainty as to whether the ANTA funds are going to continue, we are trying to encourage schools to incorporate VET into their overall planning. Otherwise the sustainability of the programs is at risk. Not all schools can do that because of their limited resources. We are having this perpetual debate on the MCEETYA task force and with ANTA about what is going to happen after 2004. It is very difficult to sustain programs when there is this high degree of uncertainty. I want to emphasise the point that many schools are using their general recurrent funds to support VET, which I think is a signal that VET is now seen as a legitimate component of their normal budget planning processes.

**Mr PEARCE**—I think you were saying earlier that in the case of government schools the states and territories are providing incremental targeted funds for VET in the schools.

**Mr Le Duff**—Yes.

**Mr PEARCE**—Have you any idea on average how much per school incrementally that represents?

**Mr Le Duff**—That would vary enormously from state to state.

**Mr PEARCE**—I understand that. I do not have that data.

**CHAIR**—Would you be able to find that for us?

**Mr Le Duff**—We may be able to do so from the published data.

**Mr PEARCE**—It would be interesting to know on average per school how much that incremental amount is.

**Mr Le Duff**—On a per capita basis, though.

**Mr PEARCE**—On a per student basis—whatever.

**Mr Le Duff**—We could try to get that for you.

**Mr Daniels**—That would be in the context that the state and Commonwealth general recurrent funding for schools varies on the basis of the school. In the Commonwealth, it is based on their SES score. In the states and territories, it is based on different funding mechanisms, depending on the peculiarities of that state. On average, about 17 per cent of average government school running costs are provided by state governments to independent schools. On average, the Commonwealth provides about 40 per cent, which leaves about 43 per cent to come from other sources—that is, fees, largely.



**CHAIR**—Sure. But the specific question concerns state supplementation for VET funding.

**Mr Daniels**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—I have another question on cost. Are there differences in costs between the public and the independent sectors in terms of accessing, say, TAFE courses and those sorts of things?

**Mr Le Duff**—Certainly in our state there are some differentials. It is one of the matters we have taken up with the training minister. In fact, for many institutes of TAFE, they actually charge a higher level of fee for service for independent or non-government schools.

**CHAIR**—Could you give us an idea of the size of that?

**Mr Le Duff**—About a third difference in the cost. It is an additional cost. It is 30 per cent more. I will quickly refer you to page 15. Although it does not break down the specific question about state and Commonwealth funds, it does give an indication, if you combine Commonwealth and state funds, how in some states the government sector has considerably more funds available to it for targeted vocational programs. For instance, in South Australia, we estimate that, given Commonwealth and state funds available for vocational education, there is approximately \$345 per student. In the independent sector, it is \$86 per student. I am talking about specific vocational education funds, but I will endeavour to get more specific information on that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Thanks for the meaty submission. It is a significant contribution. On behalf of all of us, we appreciate that. I have two questions. There are a lot of other questions, but I have two for a start and I will flag a third one. You mentioned that the figure of 8.5 per cent of students in your school system has grown to 23 per cent in 2001; are you talking about generic VET or accredited VET?

**Mr Daniels**—Do you have the reference?

**Mr SAWFORD**—In your introductory comments, you mentioned the quantum involved in your school systems, being the number of kids involved in VET. You said in your submission that there has been a growth of 211.7 per cent. In your verbal submission, you said there was growth of 8.5 per cent to 23 per cent. What is that? Is that accredited VET or generic VET?

**Mr Le Duff**—To be counted in the figures, the programs actually have to meet particular requirements. That is accredited VET programs. It has to meet training competencies and so on. I preface my remarks by saying that even when you say that, when collecting data in this area there are significant inconsistencies. But in principle, one of the criteria in inputting the data is that those programs must be accredited programs by industry standards.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Last week in Sydney we spoke with representatives of the New South Wales education department. New South Wales has always given the impression of being a little bit ahead of everybody else in terms of VET. It was quite surprising to find them admit that only one-third of students in New South Wales actually have access to accredited VET. When you think that 70 per cent of those kids do not go on to university, that is a pretty small figure. Yours is even smaller. So maybe the outmoded perception of your school system as still being academic is not incorrect at this stage. Can you comment on that?

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**Mr Daniels**—First of all, the independent sector is growing. The nature of it is growing. So the composition of the school population is changing quite rapidly and has done so in the last 10 years. The bulk of the growth has not been at what you might call the elite end. The bulk of the growth has been in what I would call the middle SES range, with parents making decisions about sending their children to schools that have particular values that suit them. Obviously at the secondary end that is where a concentration on academic programs is occurring. This is reflected in our membership, of course. The core of independent schools that existed, say, 20 years ago are still there and have expanded either up or down or both ways within the individual schools. But the growth in schools has come from a very diverse range of schools.

**Mr SAWFORD**—My second question is about the rationale. Again, this is not a rationale that has been put to us just by your organisation; it is one put to us by state education departments as well. However, it is one that confuses me. I refer to your recommendation 4, where the emphasis is put on integration. Integration as a rationale is about what was and what is. It is not about a change in philosophy. If you use the theme diversity, diversity is about what is and what can be. In other words, it is about a change mentality. I cannot understand why in the rationale put forward about VET there is this theme of integration. I just think it is contradictory. What is your comment?

**Mr Le Duff**—I will first of all clarify what we are talking about there in terms of an integrated approach. The MCEETYA task force is not just dealing with VET; it is dealing with career counselling, or what they call vocational learning in the compulsory years of schooling, providing services to students in terms of job search, supporting those students post school. So the integrated approach we are talking about there is more about the integration of the services around a whole range of support services needed for students, regardless of who those students are. So this is rather than having one section of a department dealing with it and another section dealing with another aspect and so on. In terms of the integration of vocational education within schools as a program, we would see that as one option.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It seems to me that it is part of a rationale that seems to cover up a defence of comprehensive high schools and academic colleges in this country. The figures are just appalling. We have 70 per cent of our kids who do not go on to university. The biggest state in Australia that has the best record in VET, New South Wales, only has one-third of their kids accessing it. So for 25 years we have got things horribly wrong somewhere. It seems to me a defensive sort of statement. I want to flag this question: are recommendations 8 and 10 really a contradiction in themselves? I will leave that for you to think about, and I will come back later, if there is time.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Ms Klee, I would like to ask you about what structural impediments there are in school systems with these particular VET programs. What are the external factors, such as insurance, transport and all those sorts of things? We have heard from some schools who do it very, very well. Is it a culture thing?

**Ms Klee**—I can speak with authority from the way we deliver VET in our school. The problem is parental perception. I think this gets back to Mr Sawford's point about integration. Parents really perceive an academic program as giving the results. VET has never been able, from year to year, to confirm delivery because we await funding or teacher expertise. If you lose a teacher from a school who is accredited to do a course, then that subject does not run. It goes back to another point of teacher accreditation providing VET with the uncertainty. We delivered

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tourism last year. Our teacher moved away; we do not deliver tourism this year. So that is an issue.

We deliver generic accredited VET without major infrastructure. We do not have a hospitality unit. We do not have a manual arts unit. We rely heavily on interacting with people in the community, particularly our local TAFE college. However, for us to access the local TAFE college, we are up for costs of about \$80 per hour per student. There is a cooperative program system operating in Queensland whereby the TAFE college gets money for the independent schools, so we are really committed to go to those particular TAFE colleges. We cannot go to some of the private providers which probably could offer us a better service in coming to the school, because transportation in some cases, again, is a problem.

**Ms GAMBARO**—So the system is pretty rigid in that you have to stick with the TAFE colleges—

**Ms Klee**—As far as the funding is concerned.

**Ms GAMBARO**—You mentioned the lack of academic perception with the VET program. What are your thoughts on how we can elevate that? How can we elevate it to some sort of tangible benchmark? As a parent, I know where parents are coming from. What do we need to do?

**Ms Klee**—I think by looking at the proven success of most of the schools undertaking VET, and getting that information out not only to parents but to businesses as well. We integrate very heavily into the local area with small businesses. Many of them have not heard of things like school based apprenticeships. But once they are involved—and we spend a lot of our time interacting with these businesses, explaining what is going on—we get excellent feedback from parents who say, ‘We wish we had done programs like that when we were in school.’ So parents tell other parents and then we attract more students.

Businesses in the local area then go to other businesses and say that VET is not too bad. I think it is the old perception of what VET was in the past. But to deliver a quality program, you have to have the resources. My school totally supports VET. I have been made the director of VET. My role, really, is to promote VET amongst the students, the parents and the local community. So that is a heavy contribution from my school for me and my personal secretary, as well as targeting specific staff to come in who have a love of this. Teaching VET is very different from teaching modern history, which is my background, where you go in and talk to the kids. You love your subject. When you teach VET, you love the kids. I get emotional over this.

**Ms GAMBARO**—I can see that. I can see you love what you do.

**Ms Klee**—You can see the outcomes. Some of the outcasts that do not fit into an academic program are culled, if you like, at the end of year 10 because they are told, ‘You can’t go to university.’ They might struggle through. Their parents say, ‘You need to go on to university,’ without really looking at their ability. You can get to university using VET; we have proven that. We had the first student accessing the University of Queensland through a VET program.

**Mr ALBANESE**—For what course?

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**Ms Klee**—To do business. And this is the thing. I think the perception is that the kids do VET and they use this as a way to get into medicine or something. If they have done two years of hospitality, they have done a certificate 3 in hospitality, that shows the student's willingness and ability to stay in that area. Some of these kids are working five days a week at school. They have got their traineeships, so they give up their school holidays and they work during the evenings as well. So they are committed to that career. If they have an ability to go on to do a degree in hotel management and they have proven that they have academic ability in those areas, I do not see that they should be denied that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Could I correct a view that perhaps you expressed about VET in schools in the old days being particularly bad. It wasn't. In South Australia, the VET schools were the superior schools. They took off all the science, mathematics and chemistry prizes. With the Karmel report on comprehensive high schools, it was admitted in the report that it cost more to run the technical schools, and the high schools were actually jealous of their achievements. That is what happened.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—I thought Tasmania was the leader in VET throughout Australia.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Everyone thinks they're the leader!

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—Thank you for the comprehensive submission. Rod has already raised recommendations 4, 5 and 6. I read recommendation 4 not as philosophically as he did. I read it as saying that VET in schools requires not only a structural change but almost a mindset change, quite frankly. I thought this was really asking for support for principals, key leaders in schools, to understand exactly what it is all about. I suppose what really drew my attention to this, having looked at some of the submissions made by others, particularly teachers involved in VET, was that, apart from the resourcing issue, which was key to them, there was the question of not only the training, in-service training and requirements on staff—I think it is almost vocational for some of them, quite frankly—but also the issue of training standards, if you like. They kept talking about incredible burnout because the pioneers of VET really have had to do it from the floor.

Could you expand a little more on the implications for this whole area of not having enough flexibility in terms of getting staff. Of course, there is public concern about who is teaching our kids, where, when and how, and how able they are. Do you find that to be much of an issue?

**Ms Klee**—I really feel it should be looked at with the universities, looking at VET as a specific area. The need to understand the intricacies of delivering VET is quite profound. With respect to allowing somebody who has been an electrician to go to university, get a degree and then come back to the school—my deputy is an electrician—it is not so much about the ability to train in that area; it is about the understanding of the administration of it. I think that is where the burnout comes. The rules change so regularly.

If you look at English or history, there has not been as much legislation that other staff have had to implement as VET staff have had to implement. You put something into effect and then the rules are changed by the state or federal government and you are jumping through hoops. This then goes back to the parents again, who say, 'Why can't you do the same thing for my son or daughter?' At Redlands we have three families with their third child coming into our program. So we have had siblings come through and it has changed for each one of those

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students. You cannot get credibility with a parent when you try to explain that these are what the rules are and we are following the rules. They do not understand that, because in an English class everything has stayed the same.

**Mr Le Duff**—There are a number of other matters. I want to pick up a little on what has been said. Within this area there are also professional jealousies. Areas like teachers registration, for example, are very inflexible in terms of people coming out of industry and meeting teacher registration requirements. So there is not enough flexibility built in. The second thing is that there are quite substantial shortages in this area. There needs to be more acceptance by universities that this is a legitimate pathway for teacher training. The third point is that schools, industry and teachers are coming together and having to meet industry requirements as well as school requirements. So they have to do additional training on top of what they are now doing.

**CHAIR**—A division has been called in the House. Hopefully, we will be back in a few minutes.

#### **Proceedings suspended from 9.45 a.m. to 9.56 a.m.**

**CHAIR**—The issue of the shortage of appropriately qualified and trained teachers with industry experience—not so much for the general vocational learning courses but for the industry specific courses—seems to be a real problem and one that is going to continue to threaten the sustainability of VET in schools. Could it be argued that from a macro point of view it really is more efficient to use the trained staff that we have within our TAFE system rather than trying to replicate some of those programs in every school and, thus, put a much greater demand on a very limited supply of teachers?

**Mr Le Duff**—I guess there are two responses to that. The answer is yes, I would agree with that. But in many circumstances, the young people are actually going out of their schools into TAFE, to undertake TAFE courses. So there are agreements with the TAFE provider. Also, there would be many instances where the TAFE people are coming into the schools. But there is this territoriality about who claims the hours. As you move across the boundaries between the sectors, there are also different industrial conditions and so on. But certainly there are also instances where TAFE lecturers have actually had to go off and do the teacher registration qualifications. So we need a lot more flexibility to allow this movement across—

**CHAIR**—Are you aware of any situations where there is duplication within a particular region or a city where you have a TAFE course and a school or schools in that area are duplicating the same course?

**Ms Klee**—Hospitality would be one area. Through the cooperative programs, those schools that do not have hospitality units access the TAFE college. However, the times that are available to the schools might not necessarily suit the schools because the TAFE colleges obviously fill their kitchens with their students first. That could be an issue with timetabling.

**Mr FARMER**—Do you see it as an industrial problem with respect to getting the teachers from TAFE into the schools, or can that be solved with dollars and cents? This committee has looked at a number of aspects. We have looked at teachers being completely re-educated. It almost gets to the stage where teachers in schools have to be re-educated to think more along the lines of a TAFE teacher, for instance. The end result is creating this employment opportunity, as opposed to the TAFE teachers, who have more industrial experience or more

experience in the workplace, coming back into the schools. I am really trying to define whether it is a matter of dollars and cents or whether it is a matter of a change of legislation.

**Ms Klee**—In my experience, we have an excellent relationship with Moreton TAFE. They have sent their teachers over without any problem whatsoever. But it is the funding cost. So industrially there has not been an issue because of the relationship we have built up.

**Mr Daniels**—I would have thought there are also differences in interpretation about duty of care to students between schools and TAFE. For schools and school systems, this is very high on their agenda. Perhaps there are not significant differences, but that is certainly an area that would need to be explored, as well as the industrial issues. So I think it is more complex than just dollars and cents. But there is no doubt that the infrastructure and the culture within the vocational educational system, if I can put it that way, and the schools system do not blend very well.

**Mr FARMER**—If there were a duty of care, for instance, that duty of care varies from state to state. Would something uniform need to be put forward by the Commonwealth?

**Mr Daniels**—It is always helpful to have the Commonwealth broker cooperative arrangements. Whether it needs to be a national model, given the constitutional arrangements for education in Australia, I am not sure. That has not been necessary in most areas of schooling.

**CHAIR**—I have another meeting that I must attend. Thank you again for coming along today. Mr Albanese has some questions.

**Mr ALBANESE**—I have another meeting to attend as well. This question follows what the chair took up on Sid's behalf. Recommendation 8 goes to the nature of course provision. Paragraph 2 of that recommendation states:

This could involve some schools delivering AQF Certificates beyond level 2.

This relates as well to Rod's point that he makes to all witnesses about diversity versus integration. Is there a point where, once you move beyond that, you are not actually talking about VET in schools? Are you potentially talking about VET? Once you are talking about certificates 3 and 4, aren't you saying that they should be apprenticeships and people should be in TAFE and schools are taking over that role?

**Mr Le Duff**—That is an option. Rod would be aware of schools in South Australia like Windsor Gardens, Salisbury and so on, where clearly, if you were looking at those schools, perhaps they would not have all the features of technical schools of the past but they have a very strong focus on vocational education. If you go beyond certificate level 2 to 3, you are going to run into issues around trade requirements, contracts for training and so on. But I think we are in a world now where we have to look at the traditional barriers between schools, TAFE and higher education and enable them to be broken down. The reality is that some schools are going to have the expertise and the resources to be able to move to that higher level. So that is one option. But I do not think we should cut off the opportunities for young people in a comprehensive school to also do vocational education. Vocational education and training for

those students should not be of any less quality than what you would get in a more specialised school. So you have to have some commonality in the criteria.

I would like to make one other point. We keep hearing that employers want young people with skills. You can survey employers and ask them what skills priorities they want from young people coming out of school. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has just done a survey and is calling for schools to make sure that young people have what they call employability skills. I am sure you have heard of the Mayer key competencies. These are the top priority. These are really generic skills—communication skills, working in teams et cetera. You have all heard about them. We are saying that, regardless of whether a student is doing general education or highly specialised vocational education, they still have to have those skills because that is what the employers want and that is what young people need because of the changing nature of the work force.

**Mr ALBANESE**—That goes to my point: is there a danger that, in moving beyond certificate 2, you do, by definition, because there are only so many hours in the day, have the potential to lose those general skills?

**Mr Le Duff**—You are certainly moving into areas where the expertise and the level of competence would require a quite high concentration of time in vocational education. I am not disagreeing with that. We are saying that schools need to give young people that base to be able to move on to do that. Again, I can refer to South Australia. Chris may be aware of the situation in Queensland. We have students in schools doing level 3 and 4 modules, for which they will get credit in the TAFE system or through a private training provider. That also counts towards their diploma or degree at university. So we have beacons, if you like, where the barriers are breaking down and there are opportunities for young people, if not to take on the whole of the higher level certificate, to take components of it. We are in a world now where there is that flexibility and diversity which give young people a tremendous number of options. It has its disadvantages in that the community can be confused by the multiple number of options that are available, but there are certainly opportunities for young people to get more involved in that higher level.

**ACTING CHAIR (Mr Sawford)**—I want to continue to ask about recommendations 8 and 10. I totally agree with 10; I do not have any problem with it. I think it is quite clear. It indicates that there needs to be significant change for the future in terms of clarification of aims, purposes et cetera. I am sorry to be a bit pedantic, but recommendation 8 actually says ‘no change’. I do not want to have a go at your system. The comprehensive high schools have been doing this for 25 years and they have failed. When the change was made to get rid of the vocational schools, there was a huge void left. Basically, the comprehensive high schools did not change at all. They fitted in generic vocational education and were never serious about it. There were some exceptions. Peter Turner took on the department. He has been treated appallingly. I am not referring to his personal problems either; I mean in terms of professionalism. In New South Wales the principal who went out on a limb was going to be sacked. These were the people who took VET seriously around this country. What is true is that you are only looking at one or two people in the public system in each state who had the courage and who got treated horribly. In the end they survived and got that network going.

What worries me is that we are in the early days of this inquiry. I do not think anybody has a fixed view about where we ought to go. What Anthony was leading to is the direction in which I

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think some of us are going down. We may be wrong, and maybe we need to get more feedback. We are becoming a little less convinced that the current system is the ideal system to deliver accredited VET.

We went to Bradfield College in New South Wales and were very impressed. We could not believe that for political reasons—we assume they were political reasons—it had not been duplicated three or four times around the state. The number of senior secondary colleges in that state has remained at 20. We were a bit confused about that. We were more confused when they came back and said, ‘Only one-third of our students in New South Wales have access to an accredited vocational education course.’ To me, that shows a huge void.

In terms of our recommendations, do we go down the track, as has been suggested, of applying significant resources to the schools system, both public and private, to allow them to do it? Is that the best use of the money, or would it be better to have a Bradfield type college, a vocational college at years 11 and 12 level, which both the public and private system feed into? In other words, it would be almost the TAFE system.

This question is to Christine: during previous inquiries by this committee—whether it be careers advisers, transition from school to work, and even the boys education inquiry—a number of principals, especially from the private system, who have been even stronger on this, have said to us, ‘You can’t do both, Rod. You have to make up your mind what you’re going to be. If you’re going to be an academic high school, that’s what you need to be. If you’re going to be a vocational school, that’s what you need to be.’ The classic principals around the states that have run vocational schools will say exactly the same. So the people who have excelled in vocational education say it should be separated out. The people who are skilled principals in the academic area have said exactly the same thing. They are the very best of our principals. I do not think that should be ignored. That has been a consistent message coming to us over the last 10 years. It is either right or wrong.

What direction would you be advising this committee to pursue down the track? We do not want to get into this public-private argument. What is the best track for this nation to go down? Is it to really investigate year 11 and 12 and participation at some other sort of level, which is going back to Sid’s question? Is that where we should be going, or is it a case of actually doing it in the schools? Remember that we have had 25 years of failure, in my view. Is that going to change?

**Mr Daniels**—I do not have an answer to that, but I think the size of the school has a fair bit to do with it. The larger schools generally have greater infrastructure and are able to be more flexible about what they do. That is a fact.

**ACTING CHAIR**—There is a magic number of 600 for secondary schools.

**Mr Daniels**—Yes. The average size of an independent school is 300, and that is not much different from the average size of any school in Australia. But some of our schools have 3½ thousand, so they are clearly in a better position, simply because they have a bigger infrastructure, to make choices about diversity.

**ACTING CHAIR**—The Trinity colleges in SA.

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**Mr Daniels**—And Caulfield Grammar. The point about resources is that at the moment ANTA is putting in \$20 million a year. I do not know what figure the states are putting in. But the cost of the school system is \$24 billion a year. So there is not a lot of money in relative terms going into this. The school system goes from K to year 12, but that is \$21 billion of taxpayers' money and \$3 billion of private money going into running that system. So \$20 million out of \$24 billion is minuscule, really. We are not actually arguing a case for bucketloads more money. I guess we are arguing for a share of whatever there is around, on the basis that it is possible to integrate these sorts of programs into schools. It is easier to do it in schools that are more diverse and larger. That does not quite answer your question, but I think they are points that are relevant.

**Mr Le Duff**—You can have both. I genuinely believe that the VET we are talking about now has a much greater chance of higher standing in the community and acceptance from industry. I am not sure I would agree that we then need to create another senior college separate from our existing schools. The question I would ask is: why don't those young people go to TAFE and do the vocational training? We should not actually create another intervening subsector but we should encourage those young people to complete the higher level vocational education in the TAFE system. In that way you are not actually creating another sublevel of institutions.

If we move down that track, we have to be aware of any of the weaknesses that might emerge which create a differentiation between the old academic and technical streaming. If you create separate institutions along your lines, there would have to be associated with that a communications strategy that raised the awareness of parents and industry about the value addedness and the quality of the training that took place in those institutions. Certainly what I see is some breaking down of the barriers between schools and training and TAFE and higher education. We have a long way to go.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Christine, could you give a principal's view?

**Ms Klee**—I am a director, actually; I am not quite a principal yet. Parents want their children at school. I think that many of them are a little reluctant, in our experience, to send them off after year 10 to the local TAFE college. So there is more of a sense of security, I think, with their children being at school until they get their senior certificate. I still think it can be done. It depends on the nature of how VET is delivered. Many schools integrate it very well indeed. So it depends on the individual school and the application of VET.

As I said, we have a separate component within our school, but our kids then go on to school based apprenticeships. Ninety per cent of our students take up apprenticeships. For them to be integrated and miss a maths or English lesson, the teachers cannot cope. But these students have directed their careers, really, down the track of business. So they do their certificate 3 in business, and they know that is where they want to go. By the end of year 12, everybody is employed or goes on to tertiary education from what we have got. It works for us in that way. But they are still a part of the school. They take on leadership roles within the school. They take on duties that their expertise allows them to develop within the school. For some of these kids, their talents really have not been developed at year 10. You do not know what they are like. To give them that ability to flourish in a different pathway really is what you are looking at, because the old pathway has not suited them. Some of them go on to become outstanding individuals.

**Mr FARMER**—Perhaps one of the key points you have just made is the fact that within the school system parents naturally expect their kids to do well at maths, English or whatever before they go on into other areas. One of the things I grappled with regarding the whole situation of VET in schools was: what is the purpose of schools in any case? I have always believed that the end result of any school education, be it school, then on to TAFE or then on to university, is that it must be able to provide employment opportunities for these students. I hear what you say loud and clear: we also need to prepare them for every other aspect of their lives. They need to be taught to the highest levels they can reach in the fundamentals of English, mathematics and science. They are also very much an integral part of their lives so that they can go on to employment opportunities other than the ones they are directed to in the early stages of their employment careers.

As somebody who has gone through four major employment changes, with each being completely diverse from the other, I understand that I have been able to fall back on that base knowledge I picked up in school. You pick up other bits and pieces as you go along through different careers, but you keep falling back on that base knowledge. So I hear what you are saying loud and clear—the significance of these schools as opposed to being school specific, as we were talking about regarding Bradfield. If we go down the track of specific schools like Bradfield, those basics need to be covered off completely as well. It just puts an extra spin on that.

**Mr Le Duff**—The first bit of recommendation 8 does not exclude that from happening in a more vocational school and using the vocational context as a means of learning general skills.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Do you acknowledge that the problem with recommendation 8—it is not just your organisation; this is a consistent theme that comes up—is that it says ‘no change’? It says the current organisational structure is okay. That is what it says.

**Mr Le Duff**—I disagree.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is what it says. We can agree to disagree. I think it says ‘no change’.

**Mr Le Duff**—It is saying the option is there.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I think recommendation 10 indicates significant change is required. It was good to catch up with you again, Bill; you too, Garry. It was good to meet you, Christine. Thank you very much for your contribution. The substance of the submission, Bill, was excellent.

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

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

**Committee adjourned at 10.19 a.m.**