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STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Vocational education in schools

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Thursday, 20 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 Bartlett, Mr Farmer, 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

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Committee met at 9.12 a.m.

CLARKE, Mr Phillip Nelson, National Board Member, TAFE Directors Australia

FANNING, Ms Margaret Patricia, Executive Director, TAFE Directors Australia

FILLINGHAM, Mr Kimble, Member, TAFE Directors Australia

MACKIE, Ms Sheryl Margaret, Adviser, TAFE Directors Australia

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training into vocational education in schools. I welcome Ms Margaret Fanning, Mr Phillip Clarke, Ms Sheryl Mackie and Mr Kimble Fillingham from TAFE Directors Australia. I need to remind you that the proceedings here today are formal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. Thank you for appearing today. Could you begin with some introductory comments and then we will proceed to questioning and discussion.

Mr Clarke—Can I first of all thank the committee on behalf of TAFE Directors Australia for the opportunity to be present and to elaborate on our submission and to discuss and clarify the issues. As the committee may be aware, TAFE Directors Australia is a national association of institutes in technical and further education and represents those institutes and TAFE divisions of multisector universities in Australia. Most TAFE institutes are members of TAFE Directors Australia. One of our fundamental objectives is to secure greater recognition and understanding of the role played by vocational education and the contribution that public vocational education and training makes to Australian social culture and economic development.

As noted in our submission, TAFE institutes and colleges work closely with secondary schools and colleges on vocational education and training issues and in some cases deliver programs into those schools. Our submission is focused on some of the difficulties and challenges that are faced in delivering vocational education and training in schools and the ways in which we believe delivering vocational education in schools can be improved, either through the TAFE sector delivering programs for schools or through TAFE assisting schools in the delivery of those programs.

As the committee would be aware, systems and approaches differ among the various states and territories. The TDA representatives here today include people from three states. I am closely familiar with the system in Queensland. My colleague Kim Fillingham is from New South Wales and Sheryl Mackie is from Victoria. Margaret Fanning is the Executive Director of TDA.

I will make a couple of comments about key issues in our submission. The first is that we support the view that vocational learning has an important role to play in facilitating school to work transition for all young people and in broadening the opportunities available to students in the senior years of school through the provision of specific vocational courses that can be targeted to students, particularly those at risk of dropping out—but can I say not exclusively targeted at those at risk of dropping out. We hold a view that vocational education for schools is appropriately targeted at the whole cross-section of students in the secondary schooling environment.

The second point is that, if the goals of providing vocational education and training in schools are to be realised, it is crucial that we make the best use of resources available in both schooling and the TAFE sector. We need to be confident that students undertaking vocational education are actually gaining the outcomes that their qualifications claim that they have, and that is a key issue for us in terms of the relationship with the schooling sector. In a nutshell, we support the provision of VET for schools but we do not consider that such courses are necessarily best provided by the schools. The most appropriate approach, which you might have picked up in my language, is VET for schools not necessarily VET in schools.

We believe that greater use should be made of the TAFE sector to support VET for schools. This is because TAFE staff have the industry backing, the industry experience and the ongoing industry networks necessary to provide the assurance that the students in those programs do gain the competency which they set out to gain. TAFE institutes have facilities and equipment that have been developed specifically for delivering VET programs, quality assurance systems that are specifically targeted at quality outcomes for VET programs, and have developed links with industry and work closely with industry on an ongoing basis.

In recent years, those industry linkages—recent being the last five to 10 years—have been growing and becoming more and more secure over time. Key to those industry linkages is the necessity to get good, high-quality industry placement associated with the learning experience of students to make sure that their competency is well and truly embedded in an industry experience. That is also part of industry gaining confidence in the qualifications.

If we are to get quality results, however, adequate resourcing is essential. Funding of both government schools and TAFE remains tight, making it difficult to cope with the cost of providing VET in schools. VET in schools programs typically need more resources than the average year 11 and 12 program in a traditional schooling environment. The funding issue is complicated by different arrangements and guidelines that apply to the two sectors.

The funding models currently employed can create barriers to cooperation and in at least some jurisdictions there are disincentives for schools who might otherwise seek to outsource their VET delivery to TAFE providers. The comment I made about resourcing is because of the typically smaller classes that apply to a VET in schools environment and the level of resourcing that is typically necessary to support a quality outcome for a VET in schools program.

The final point we would want to underline is that, valuable as VET in schools may be, it is imperative that it not be resourced and expanded at the cost of either the TAFE sector or the school sector. TAFE institutes are already struggling to provide quality programs for 15- to 19-year-olds, and in particular the emphasis on New Apprenticeships, as positive as we think it is, is also putting a strain on the system. Funding for these programs has already been reduced over time and is barely sufficient to meet demand at present. We think that is a key issue in terms of a quality VET for schools program nationally.

The variation across states is a key issue for us. We do not necessarily seek standardisation—we are not saying that—but it is very difficult for us to draw research conclusions that are applicable nationally because of variation across jurisdictions. So some of our comments today will be jurisdictionally specific, particularly if we draw the committee's attention to what we think is good practice in some examples. That is as much as I would like to say, Chair, to open up proceedings.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Clarke. You mentioned the need for more efficient use of resources, particularly given the shortage of resources overall. In your experience, are there many cases of duplication between what schools are doing and what TAFEs are doing within particular regions where the same course is being provided and where a more efficient use of resources could be achieved? Do you see the possibilities for greater use of TAFE in some of those cases or greater use of schools doing what TAFEs are doing? What is the potential there for a more efficient use of resources?

Mr Clarke—I might get Kim to make a comment about the New South Wales experience which I think is fairly typical nationally.

Mr Fillingham—There certainly is duplication in some places and a lot of that is driven by the resourcing model in New South Wales schools where the actual resource follows the students. So if the student is attempting their vocational course at a TAFE college, then the staffing component for those students for that time is put into the funding model which then funds TAFE to deliver, which is quite an appropriate use of resources. But, unfortunately, the individual principals in schools quite frequently look at what the impact will be in having courses delivered outside their own school premises and what the possible reduction in their overall staffing will be with large numbers of students in years 11 and 12 going off to a TAFE campus.

That means the principals pursue ways of delivering the vocational course on their own premises rather than accessing something that already exists at TAFE. In that way, many of them then seek funding either through raising funds through their P and C association or through other ways to actually construct on their own premises a facility that duplicates something that is already present at TAFE.

The most common example of that throughout the state would be in hospitality. Schools have provided, for part of their course in the technological and applied studies key learning area, which used to be called the home economics area, kitchen facilities, which are all domestic kitchens, and that was the basis of the living skills component of that course. Schools have raised substantial amounts of money to convert their domestic kitchens into commercial kitchens so that they fulfil those aspects of hospitality courses. In some cases, that is a quite unnecessary duplication, and it is extraordinarily expensive. They also have to retrain their teachers to move from being a TAS teacher in a school to being a hospitality trained teacher. There is a good mechanism to do that. In New South Wales, there is a program which the department funds and organises for those teachers to get the industry experience and to do the conversion. But you still do have replication of resources.

There are very few schools in New South Wales that have been built from day one with a commercial kitchen as part of their entitlement. As you can understand in a system as big as New South Wales, the schools tend to be built to a formula for a particular sized secondary school. With the senior high schools that are being constructed in New South Wales, they tend to have a commercial kitchen because the vocational component is being considered. But there is a lot of duplication.

The other part where duplication can occur in New South Wales is that schools which want to deliver a vocational component, whether it be in IT or hospitality, are frequently seeking skill centre funding. They are going into a skill centre funded partnership where they will construct

on their own premises a significant resource to deliver vocational education which, in some instances throughout the state, has duplicated a resource which already exists in TAFE. That does occur in quite a number of instances.

CHAIR—Given the extra cost that imposes on the schools, there must be fairly substantial reasons why they would choose to go down that path. Is it possible, for instance, that if the cost for their students to access TAFE courses was substantially reduced, that might swing the balance the other way?

Mr Fillingham—Not in New South Wales, because there is actually no cost to students or to schools.

CHAIR—What about the situation in other states?

Mr Fillingham—In other states I do not believe there is a cost directly to students. But in some states—and my colleagues from other states could comment—I think the billing is to the school itself. It is up to the school as to whether it retrieves that from the parent community or finds other ways of funding it. But in New South Wales the students do not pay the standard administration fee which is paid by the mainstream TAFE students. So there is no cost and the school can offer all these programs to the students in exactly the same way they would offer them on their own premises.

The major difficulty in allowing students to leave the premises, of course, is one of timetabling and scheduling the school day. In the vocational area, it is providing access to a meaningful work placement program, particularly those in school based traineeships where there is a one day a week requirement as a bare minimum. So that puts a lot of strain on the school in terms of its ability to reconstruct its timetable and curriculum around that. In some cases, with the development of vocational education in our schools, the proportion of the population in years 11 and 12 accessing vocational education is fairly small. So it is very difficult to justify a school rejigging its entire structure for the sake of 10 to 15 students when there might be 400 in years 11 and 12.

Mr Clarke—There is significant variation nationally in relation to whether schools pay fees to TAFE or some other financial set of transactions. It will not necessarily always be a fees type arrangement but there will be some mechanism. In some cases, it is probably more aligned to the capacity to access capital funds than it is to access operational funds.

On the operational side of the budget, if you are paying for access to an infrastructure, that is an annual cost to the school and they have to get that on an annual basis and build it into their operating budgets. If they have managed by some mechanism, either through sponsorship, government contribution, skill centre program or whatever the case may be, to attract capital funds to actually build their own infrastructure, there is often, from the micro perspective of just the school, an advantage in terms of duplicating that structure because they minimise their operating costs. That issue, at least in a number of instances that I am personally aware of, is a significant determining factor in whether the school would seek their own resource rather than look to partner with another.

CHAIR—What recommendations would you make that would help reduce that duplication and help encourage schools to use TAFE more? Do you think there are flexibilities there on the

TAFE side that could be put in place to make it more attractive for schools to access what you are offering?

Mr Clarke—I will get my colleagues to comment as well, but my experience in recent years has been that TAFE institutes are moving to much more flexible arrangements than they have had in the past. Additionally, schools are now getting significantly more flexibility in their programming. For example, in my institute's area a number of schools are scheduling, say, four days a week instead of five. That creates the potential for a full day program so that the institutes can then seek to match that simplicity or flexibility—

Mr SAWFORD—Mind you, tech schools did that 40 years ago, didn't they, in some states, particularly in South Australia?

Mr Clarke—So that flexibility is improving all the time. I think any mechanism that would encourage schools—and, in the TAFE system in particular, we already seek to do that—to do that would be extremely useful. There are also issues around the point that Kim made, which is the profile of VET in schools and the perception of VET in schools. If it is a mainstream part of what schools do, then it is typically a much more seriously approached set of solutions in the partnering arrangements with the TAFE infrastructure and school infrastructure.

You also have the situation where it is not just a series of bilateral partnering arrangements; you very frequently get multilateral partnering arrangements so that you have a TAFE infrastructure and more than one school—you may have two or three schools—and you may also have a local authority involved in that. I have an example in my own institute where we are looking at partnering with two high schools and a local authority to run art programs, which none of us would probably run in our own right but collaboratively we would be able to run a VET in schools art program that builds on the schools' traditional art program to get practising artist skills for those students for when they leave school. There are some good examples of how that can be done. Do you want to make a comment, Sheryl?

Ms Mackie—In Victoria, the TAFE institutes and any other providers charge the schools for the VET programs, and certainly in our regions the schools then charge the parents of the students, which can be up to \$800 for some of the high-cost programs such as hospitality where there are a lot of class materials involved in that program. So that is a deterrent for the schools to use the TAFE institutes.

I am from an institute that is in a regional centre, Geelong, so the individual schools often do not have enough students to run a program for themselves. We might get three students from one high school and four from another, and they come to the institute on particular days to access our facilities. Another way the model works in Victoria, because there are not the teachers in the schools who have the skills, is that if a school has a full group then one of our teachers will often go and deliver that particular VET program in the school using their facilities. There is lots of flexibility in the way that TAFE institutes work with the schools and vice versa.

Funding is certainly an issue in Victoria because if the schools contribute to the VET programs out of their own global budgets, that has an effect on them. They are not sending a whole class; they are sending two or three students from a class; and they still have to run the class as well. That has an effect. At the moment, the numbers seem to have plateaued in Victoria

at about 17 per cent of year 11 and 12 students; whereas the government target was expected to surpass 25 per cent.

CHAIR—Seventeen per cent are doing VET courses?

Ms Mackie—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Thank you for your submission. It is a significant contribution, and we thank you for that. It is interesting to make the point that we are at the very early stages of this inquiry. A number of us have been on this committee for a long time and I think this is about the first time that we can honestly say that none of us have a fixed view about where we ought to go; whereas in previous inquiries some of us have come along with a view of where we want to go. So we are pretty open-minded about where we should be going. I could not help getting the impression when I read the submission the first time that it was a bit defensive. Is that because you are under threat of funding in terms of the latter remarks that you made, Phil?

Mr Clarke—We certainly did not set out to write a defensive proposition. I should make that comment in the first instance. TAFE feels that—I suppose it is not a right—it has a very strong set of skills, capacities, infrastructure et cetera to bring to the discussion and we have been frustrated over time in being unable to get that—

Mr SAWFORD—Frustrated by whom?

Mr Clarke—I would not necessarily put that blame on any particular individual or organisation. It just seems to be a frustration over time of being unable to get a set of conversations that acknowledges the capacities of the TAFE infrastructure in the VET in schools environment. The issue around the lack of national consistency means that we have quite a significant variation between jurisdictions in terms of how VET in schools is operated and the level of penetration that it has had into the schools sector. So the defensive flavour that you allude to, if it is there, may well be just a reflection that we do not have a set of consistent propositions or positions that we come from in terms of VET in schools. There is a lot of variety of VET in schools across Australia, and that may well be reflected in the submission.

Mr Fillingham—I think we have a right to be defensive as far as TAFE is concerned, if that is the way the submission came over.

Mr SAWFORD—I may be wrong.

Mr Fillingham—No, I think you are right. I was not one of the authors of the document but I certainly support what is in there. That is why I am here today. I have an unusual background in that I have spent the majority of my career in education in the schools sector and was assistant director-general of school education in New South Wales prior to coming to an institute director's position with the amalgamation of the two organisations in 1997. So I guess I can speak with some authority both from the schools sector and from the TAFE side of it. I think the defensive part is that, as an educator, my wish for young people accessing vocational education is that they will get the best possible education delivered in the best facility by the best teacher. That has to be a totally non-territorial approach to education.

Mr SAWFORD—That does not come across in the submission.

Mr Fillingham—I know it does not, but I think the defensiveness is that, in many instances, TAFE has by far the better facility than that in the school and by far the more qualified teacher than the one in the school. With due respect to school colleagues, those teachers who have spent their teaching career in a school and have gone off for a several week placement in industry to convert—I am not picking on the home economics faculty whatsoever; it is one that probably makes the transition most successfully, certainly in the New South Wales sector—means that they cannot possibly match, even delivering the same program, the people who have had to have a minimum five years experience in the industry prior to being employed in TAFE New South Wales. And a large proportion of the teachers in our hospitality area tend to be currently working in the industry and delivering part time. So they know what the industry requirements are; they are delivering the competencies to industry standard.

We have teachers being retrained in areas in our schools sector where we sometimes have an oversupply of TAFE teachers. That is something we have been trying to work out as an organisation. Having one big Department of Education and Training, we are looking at how we can utilise that staffing resource more effectively across the school and the TAFE sector.

You may be aware that several years ago in New South Wales Ken Boston, the director-general, put forward a proposal which has been implemented for a single teaching award so that teachers in schools and TAFE have the same salary structure. They have different conditions, certainly, because of the nature of the job, but it took away one of the impediments to having people work across the two sectors. So in New South Wales we do have TAFE teachers who are delivering on school sites—not very many, but it is gradually starting to increase—and we have some school teachers, but again a very small proportion, who would deliver on a TAFE site.

One of the things that I think is the key to getting the best person delivering on the best site to get the best quality education has to be cooperative planning with our institutes, school districts and schools. That is what we are gradually moving towards. When you bang two big departments together, you have totally different cultures in some ways, even though they have the same focus, and it takes a while for that merger to be seen as one organisation.

Those of us who know New South Wales well enough—I see my colleague Jim McMorrow over there—would certainly be able to tell you that gradually there are cultural changes in certain pockets. I talked about the resource shift from schools to TAFE to deliver the vocational programs in New South Wales. We saw initially a huge swing away from TAFE delivered vocational education in schools. That pendulum is swinging back because the schools are realising that the ‘back of the bus ticket’ calculation of ‘how many teaching hours do I lose for so many students’ in many cases backfired on those schools where the students have voted with their feet and said, ‘We want to have a vocational component. We want it delivered through a TAFE.’ So instead of losing a few periods a week for half a dozen kids, we have instances where mum and dad have said, ‘We want them to do this course at the TAFE,’ so the kids have walked. So the school did not lose a few periods, they lost that whole resource for those students.

So principals are looking around and saying, ‘Hang on, we have to look at best possible education for it.’ The role of our superintendents is key and the role of our district vocational education coordinators in the schools sector and our TAFE institute coordinators working in harmony is crucial. I think in New South Wales we are starting to see a breakthrough in that regard.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I get this question on the record because then I have to go; I have to speak in the Main Committee. I apologise in advance for not waiting for the answer but I will read it in the transcript. Phil, you made mention of particular secondary schools that specialise in vocational ed, and that has been my experience, too. There are very few of those, and in many ways they often trace back to the qualities and the strength of the principal, often against the school system, for them to be a success. Does the comprehensive high school system militate against strong vocational education in schools for the simple reason it has been going for 25 years? While the academic high schools changed their name to comprehensive high schools, they did not actually change what they did very much. The vocational education in Australia seems to have occurred in schools where they have had a very strong principal, strong links to industry and strong links to TAFE. It has not happened system wide; it has happened in spite of the system. Would you like to comment on that?

Mr Clarke—I think the high schools have embraced the opportunity, where available, to develop local solutions with their local industry groups, with local TAFE infrastructure and, as I said before, it can involve local government. A range of multilateral relationships can be established to put in place very strong programs. The basis of those programs is generally the local social or economic needs of that particular community or the local economic structure of that community. Kim has an example of working with Toyota in South Sydney where he put in place programs that identify a local need. However, they identify more than the need; they identify the opportunity so that, if kids in that community go through a VET in schools program, they then at the end of that have an opportunity to get the outcome that the VET in schools program determines that they will get. The strength of the local solution is one that should not be lost in this discussion.

While we seek frameworks within which strengthening the relationship between schools and TAFE is promoted, I do not think TDA seeks a framework that puts a ‘vanilla’ solution nationally in terms of what happens at the local level. What we need is opportunities for schools, TAFEs and others to work together to identify the opportunity at the local level, embrace that opportunity and deliver something for a community, whether that community is small—and in some cases they are quite small—or whether the opportunity is big and in some cases is quite ongoing with a lengthy relationship.

CHAIR—How do we do that in practical terms? Are there substantial tangible barriers that prevent that happening or is it just a matter of sitting down and talking and better coordinating? Are there financial incentives that could be given to facilitate that process?

Mr Clarke—Kim, you basically set up your program at Toyota and others—

Mr Fillingham—I will come back to that one a little later because that one was more of a national need that we started at a state level and then went nationally. I would not mind addressing that a little later, if I could, about a particular program that has worked well.

If I can address the question Mr Sawford left us with, as to whether or not the comprehensive high school militated against vocational education, I do not believe that it does and I think we have good evidence to indicate that. In fact, the comprehensive high school should be opening up more opportunities for vocational education. One of the barriers to it—that is coming back to your question, Chair—is a cultural thing and a community acceptance. To a large extent, that is

based upon the mechanisms we have in our states for students at the end of their high school career to gain both the credential and their entree to further education.

In the case of New South Wales and the universities admission index, the fact that the universities recognise vocational education either grudgingly or not at all means something to the mums and dads of the world who always want something better for their children—we all do for our own children. If there is an opportunity for a vocational education course, which might be exactly what the student wants and be totally relevant to where they think they may want to go in their career but which does not give them the option of counting towards the UAI, then they stay away from the course even though their alternative course may be one that is inappropriate for that student and is not going to lead to the educational outcomes they desire. Many parents, I can assure you, would rather have a UAI of less than 15 than not get a UAI at all. That is an extraordinary cultural thing that we have to try and focus on.

In my experience, the problem we have with vocational education in the schools sector to a large extent, and certainly with those who are released from schools to attend TAFE, is that schools for a long time have sent the students with low academic ability, the strugglers who are in years 11 and 12 because mum and dad said they had to be there. They have channelled their students and structured their school timetable and their curriculum around releasing those students, in many cases for fantastic programs for that cohort. I am not criticising that because it fulfils a wonderful need. Phil in his opening comments made mention of the fact that we believe VET for schools rather than VET in schools is something that we cherish and we hold as a very important program, but it must not be seen purely as a program for those who are at risk of leaving school and of not completing their education.

In many of the programs in New South Wales, with the introduction of what is called the frameworks courses, which are vocational but do count towards the universities admission index, we are getting a large number of students taking those subjects on but their contribution to the actual universities admission index itself is quite small. So where the students do 12 units but only 10 count towards the higher school certificate and the universities admission index calculation, frequently you find that they get a very low weighting for the vocational bits—what we could call their sacrificial units because of the way they are treated by the calculation system by UAC—so their other subjects tend to count more. While they get wonderful life skills, they get terrific preparation for entering the work force, they get a qualification, usually at certificate II, which can lead to further study, it is not contributing to the UAI component. So we do find that there is a significant dropout of students who will take subjects at year 11 and not continue to year 12.

I think there are probably more cultural barriers and impediments to cooperation and increase of vocational education than there are those which could be structural or financial. Phil has mentioned a couple of times that I now chair nationally, but initially for New South Wales, a program called T3, which you may not have heard of in your travels. Do you mind if I tell you a bit about the program now?

CHAIR—Sure.

Mr Fillingham—It is a program which we initiated at the request of Toyota. Toyota Motor Corporation Australia recognised that they had a huge need: their sales were increasing; they were producing more vehicles; but they could not attract people into the work force to be

automotive technicians—we probably refer to them as mechanics. It is very difficult to get young people into it.

The young people they get in as their apprentices, they tell us, typically are the ones who have either just scraped through year 10 or often have left prior to the end of year 10. They had very little choice as to who they employed as apprentices, which surprised me. They said most of the apprentices they took on were as a favour either to a family friend or to a good long-term customer who said, 'I have this young guy. He is in year 10 not doing too well. He likes mucking around with engines. How about you give him a go in your workshop and put him on?' That is the story from Toyota. Subsequent to that, we have now involved General Motors, Ford and Mitsubishi in the program, and the story is identical from those three manufacturers.

What was the problem? They cannot get good quality young people into this program. They asked: how can we solve it; who can help us? So they came to TAFE New South Wales. The answer was that we have training programs and we can develop training programs. We came up with a solution of a school based traineeship, a two-year program in automotive vehicle servicing where they get a certificate II. It is a whole new course that we developed and we targeted students going from year 10 into years 11 and 12. These students complete year 12 and they get their higher school certificate. Part of that is a certificate II in vehicle servicing, so they have a qualification which in New South Wales is licensed. This means they can actually work from day one in the dealership when they have finished year 12. They complete that certificate. Also, the promise at the beginning of the program was that, if it worked out well—if the student liked the job that he or she was doing and if the dealership where they were working liked them—then they would have a guarantee of a job at the end of the program.

We have just finished the first program. We started in six sites in New South Wales, across rural and Sydney metropolitan. We started with 53 students. One of them dropped out because that student decided that he wanted to go into the automotive industry but wanted to pursue an academic pathway through university and wants to go through an engineering degree. So he is committed to the industry but not through our course, and that was quite appropriate. Another student dropped out because what he wanted to do was go full time and so he became a full-time apprentice at the end of year 11. He is in the industry, and Toyota are thrilled with him. He is a great employee.

The remainder have all finished and, out of the 51 who finished, 49, as I speak to you now, are employed by New South Wales dealerships and Toyota Motor Corporation Australia. They have all achieved their higher school certificate; they have all achieved certificate II; and they all have a job outcome. We promised them at the beginning of the program, and we said to Toyota and to the mums and dads, 'If we can design this program, you will have students who will have a higher school certificate, a TAFE qualification and a job.' We said to the motor dealerships in the Toyota network in New South Wales, 'We promise you good quality young people. They will be above the quality that you have had before. And we will promise you young people who are job ready and productive from day one when they enter your full-time work force.' And I am proud to say that every one of those things has taken place.

We had the graduation at the end of January at Toyota Motor Corporation in New South Wales. The senior vice-president, John Conomos, who has been a great supporter right through, was there and presented the graduations to these students. The outcomes for them are fantastic. The mums and dads are thrilled. The young people are wonderful, and the best thing was that

the feedback from the dealerships has been extraordinary. They said they have never, ever employed people of the quality of these young people.

These kids have had a really difficult time, because I can assure you that one day a week in the workplace, half a day a week at TAFE and 3½ days a week at school doing the rest of your full HSC program is not an easy effort. I have had two sons go through the HSC and, if you have had young ones go through that, you know it is a big task for them to balance all their duties, part-time work, social life, sport and everything else. But these kids are incredibly successful. They are a delightful group to meet. Not all of them are automotive technicians. Some of them are in business studies; in fact, one of them is now the coordinator of the T3 program for Toyota nationally—a young man who just finished his HSC last year. He is doing so well.

We have now rolled that program out. I have talked to Holden about it, and we started last year with Holden in New South Wales. We also rolled the program out to Victoria and Queensland. And this year the program has rolled out into South Australia as well. So in this year we have Toyota, Holden, Ford and Mitsubishi all operating in New South Wales; and we have Toyota and Holden operating in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

The manufacturers are thrilled. From my discussions with ANTA, they tell me this is the first time that an entire industry has worked with the TAFE sector to get a solution to a training problem. They have got what they want out of it. We have many, many more young people applying for these than we have positions in the dealerships. But the good thing is that the dealerships are having to think through their work force planning, because they have to plan three years ahead for when they put an apprentice on. These young people who finished last year are now going straight into their workplace as second-year apprentices and are doing their TAFE course. They will continue that through and they will be three years full time in that dealership until they are qualified.

We totally rejigged the training because the manufacturers were saying to us, 'What you guys do at TAFE isn't really in step now with what we do in our dealerships in the way we service vehicles.' With the changes in technology, as we are all probably aware, if something goes wrong in your vehicle in the early stages they just take it off, put a new bit on basically and away you drive. They need people who are qualified to that level to work with them. But they also want people who will go further and who have the academic potential to go into a master class for technicians and go on to university and further training. So we rejigged the whole program.

Now the national training for vehicle apprenticeships will change so that they will do a certificate II in vehicle servicing, then they will move on to a repair program and then they will move on to a diagnostic program. We have modernised the entire approach. It has brought the schools together. It could not have worked if we did not have a partnership between industry, TAFE and the schools sector, because the schools had to be prepared to have a structure which supported and released these young people for a day and a half a week.

In some schools, we had people who put their hands up and wanted to be part of it and were not able to because of the structures, and I gave the example before of getting the appropriate level of student. In several places, we had young people who were their top students, absolutely

dead keen to get into the automotive industry, but they also wanted to do high-level maths and high-level sciences. What did the school do on the day that it structured work placement for a number of its vocational students? That is when it put on high-level maths and high-level sciences. So these young people said, 'Please, we want to be part of T3.' The dealer wanted them; everybody was happy with the whole exercise; but the school was not able to organise the structure. It is a very big high school. You can understand that, for the sake of one student from that school who wanted to access it, they could not possibly restructure. But we have to change the mindset of people. And that student, whom I actually know personally, finished his HSC last year with a UAI of 97. So he is not your typical automotive mechanic that one would think of. This is a young man who is now going into a university course which will put him into the automotive area. He was desperate to do it but the structure did not make it possible.

CHAIR—Do you have some documentation about the program that you could send to us?

Mr Fillingham—I certainly have and I would be delighted to send that to the committee. I am passionate about it. It really is a very good program.

CHAIR—We would appreciate that.

Mr FARMER—I can relate to everything that you said from personal experience. One of the points that you brought up, which was confirmed through that student that you talked about who clearly was not suited to the program and went on to do an engineering degree at university, is that there is this stigma attached to the TAFE colleges as opposed to the universities. I know industry is trying to break that down, and we have already had input from industry in relation to that. That one typical example, which shines out amongst all that good stuff we just heard, would indicate to me there is still that stigma attached to it all. That student could easily have done that degree at TAFE, wouldn't you agree? Are the engineering degrees at TAFE secondary to what they can get out of university?

Mr Fillingham—TAFE New South Wales does not offer any degrees. The highest qualification we offer is an advanced diploma, and that is the agreement in our educational sectors in New South Wales. Certainly if you were to do an advanced diploma in an area of choice it would articulate to a university degree with substantial advanced standing, and in most cases diplomas and advanced diplomas give up to 50 per cent of a university degree.

Mr FARMER—Are there any TAFEs around Australia that do offer a degree?

Mr Fillingham—Yes, there are. The multisector ones do.

Mr Clarke—In Canberra.

Ms Fanning—And in South Australia.

Mr FARMER—Canberra and South Australia.

Mr Clarke—Victoria is working on—

Ms Fanning—And Victoria has adopted a policy which would allow the offering of degrees in certain areas.

Mr FARMER—Do you know about the size of classes in relation to that or the need in the community for people getting their degree at TAFE as opposed to a university?

Mr Clarke—The degrees that are set up in TAFE at the moment, as I understand them—and I will get my colleagues to correct this if they feel that it is not quite right—are in niche markets where industry has identified the opportunity or sought out an opportunity for those degrees. For instance, here at CIT, one of the degrees they offer is a degree in fashion. That degree in fashion design and manufacturing is a particular niche market. They also offer degrees in forensics, I think, which are particular niche degrees.

Ms Fanning—Forensic science, yes.

Mr Clarke—With respect to the idea that there is competition between TAFE and universities regarding the quality or the nature of their degree programs, I am not sure that is actually a characteristic of the system at this point in time. Instead it is focusing on what was once a diploma program. The industry, if you could call forensics an industry, has identified that they want a high-level qualification and a high-level set of skills. The CIT, rather than going to a university and developing that program, simply took their own program up to that level because they had the regulatory framework to allow them to do that. Not all states have the regulatory framework to allow them to do it.

Mr FARMER—Do TAFEs have a better capacity for working with some industries in the local area to take those students on into a degree than the universities do?

Mr Clarke—I think what TAFE would say, generally, is that we have a capacity which is very focused on the skilling of the individuals. So our degree programs, should they be put in place in TAFE, are very practically based qualifications. They tend to have a different focus or a different bias, so that they are biased towards practical skills rather than knowledge based skills.

Mr FARMER—Yes, with the emphasis being on practicality.

Mr Clarke—Absolutely, that is where our strength lies.

Mr Fillingham—In my institute, and particularly in one of my colleges, we have a 30 per cent university graduate enrolment. It is the college that offers the high-end ICT training with the telecommunications industry. People are coming along with a degree, in computing frequently, because they are unable to get a job. They are doing a diploma with us which is totally and utterly industry specific and provides them with the skills they need. They are employed during that program and at the end of it there is almost a 100 per cent job outcome. So it is the linkage of the two together rather than our necessarily wanting to get into the degree market.

We have quite a number of degree linked programs where we are jointly teaching the degree. We teach the practical components, for example, with the University of Western Sydney in a very good program in our IT area. It is taught and delivered at the TAFE face for the first couple

of years and then they finish their training at the university itself. It is working very well. I think cooperation is the big deal all the way through this.

Mr PEARCE—I would like to talk a little about teacher skill and professional development. A couple of times this morning you have talked about the unique skill set that people in your institutes have. I would like to ask for some comments about professional development and training. Do you think it is adequate? Is it good in your particular sector? Are there any comments you want to make about that?

Mr Clarke—It is a critical issue for us and it is becoming increasingly difficult. Our industry, vocational education and training, is not differentiated from the broad cross-section of the economy in terms of maintaining people, our professional work force, with skill levels to be able to deal with their clients.

There are two dimensions to it in a TAFE environment. One is the educational skill—in other words, people being good teachers, good educators—and the other is their particular industry skill set that they must maintain. As Kim outlined before, TAFE teachers are required to have a minimum of five years industry experience before they can be employed in a TAFE institution. We have a cross-section of staff—the lowest level of qualification to teach would be a certificate IV, workplace training and assessment, up to teachers who hold masters degrees, PhDs and all the rest of it, although they are a small proportion.

Certainly in Queensland, TAFE teachers are not required to be registered, although a large proportion of teachers do get registered for professional reasons. They seek to be professionally recognised and will get that registration for their own purposes. There is a discussion about the relative merits of whether you would seek to have that, and I do not know that I would put forward a TDA view on that—except to say that, as a profession of TAFE teachers as a subset of professional teaching, teachers jealously guard their professional educational qualifications of being quality educators; that is a strong thing. The other comment I would make is that it links to the resourcing issue. At the moment, there are specific national funding arrangements and programs available for skilling TAFE teachers, and it is vital that those programs continue.

Mr PEARCE—Are they adequate?

Mr Clarke—Well, one could always seek to have improvements in those programs, but the programs have made a major contribution in recent years and they cover areas such as reframing the future et cetera. They are excellent programs; they are submission based programs; they are sufficiently flexible that they can move forward with the industry as it moves forward. It would probably be true to say that if not all TAFE institutes nationally then certainly the vast majority would have benefited from accessing those programs. It is absolutely essential that they be maintained and developed even further, if that is possible. On the other side of the penny, those programs would probably constitute a minor proportion of the expenditure on professional development that goes on in institutes. Kim and Sheryl, would that be a fair comment?

Mr Fillingham—Yes, that is correct.

Ms Mackie—Absolutely.

Ms Fanning—It is probably important to note though that looking ahead with change occurring increasingly rapidly, as we say all the time, and with industry practice changing, professional development will be a real challenge for everyone to be able to do it well. It will be particularly important for TAFE institutes to have the resources to put into professional development programs to ensure that teachers' skills are maintained and refreshed on a continuing basis.

Mr Clarke—It has been particularly challenging in the last 10 years with the level of change in the vocational education and training system. There has been the introduction of national training packages, the introduction of the Australian quality training framework and a range of other change agenda items that TAFE institutes have been dealing with. It has been a significant challenge to keep enhancing the level of professional development of our staff so that we could continue to improve. We definitely have to continue to maintain as a minimum the level which we currently have and preferably be able to spend more on the professional development of staff.

Ms Mackie—Within our region, one of the key issues for us has been that our staff in the past had not been used to dealing with some of these young school aged children, and some of their behaviour is, to put it mildly, extremely challenging. So we have thrown a considerable amount of resources into giving our staff the skills to cope with the challenging behaviours of the young people who have been accessing the institute through the VET in schools program.

On the other side, when VET in schools commenced, the institutes played a major role in upskilling the teachers in the schools because they did not know about competency based training and they did not know about training packages. In my experience, it has been the institutes that have taken the leading role in providing professional development back to the schools. In Victoria, talking about VET programs counting towards the ENTER score use, VET programs certainly count towards the ENTER score and they have what is called 'scored assessment'. The institutes have taken the main role in upskilling the teachers in the school as to appropriate ways of assessing their students to enable them to come up with a scored assessment, which in Victoria actually counts to the same level as a normal VCE subject. There has been a big role for TAFE institutes in upskilling school teachers as well as needing to continually upskill ourselves.

Mr Clarke—We have had very significant benefit in the last 12 months—I am talking specifically about Queensland—with joint professional development programs with schools against the VET in schools agenda. Much of our focus in the upcoming rollout of the new white paper initiatives in Queensland—the education and training reforms for the future agenda that the government is progressing; in fact, I would say a majority of the professional development activities—will be focused around joint professional development of school based teachers and TAFE based teachers to be able to make an effective contribution to that policy agenda.

Mr PEARCE—I am unsure about the level of consistency that exists between the various states and various institutions. For example, if somebody were to enrol in New South Wales for a particular program and they were to enrol in Victoria for the same program or a very similar program, are they actually taught the same curriculum, the same syllabus or the same outline of the program, or is it actually institute by institute or state by state? In other words, what level of consistency exists for Mary Smith in Queensland learning to do X and Mary Smith in Victoria learning to do the same thing?

Mr Clarke—If the program that they study is contained within the training packages agenda—the training packages agenda is extensive and comprehensive; it covers a vast number of industries and qualifications—so that if the student is awarded a qualification that comes from a training package, then the national regulatory arrangements which are applied at a state level to the greatest extent possible give the student exactly the same outcomes because they are nationally recognised. If a student with certificate II in hospitality coming out of Sydney comes to my institution, I immediately without any question recognise that qualification with that set of outcomes, give the student credit for that and then give them entree into the next level of the program.

Mr PEARCE—So there is consistency within that framework. But if the subject matter is not within that framework, if it is something else, then it varies.

Mr Clarke—If the qualifications are delivered within the nationally recognised framework, then if Kim has developed a diploma of whatever—

Mr Fillingham—Say my diploma of photonics which is now on the national system and which any other registered training organisation can access.

Mr Clarke—If I chose to pick that up, I would be bound by that qualification. It does not stop me developing another set of qualifications. But if I deliver a national qualification, the rigour around the delivery of those qualifications is significant and, as I said, to the best level possible will guarantee identical outcomes nationally.

Mr PEARCE—Therefore, is it reasonable to say, Mr Clarke, that with the majority of courses and therefore the majority of students, there is a high level of consistency throughout Australia?

Mr Clarke—Yes. The issue that probably impinges on the VET in schools discussion though is perhaps a more challenging one than the comparison between TAFE institutes. It goes to the issues that Kim alluded to before about the relative industry experience of the teachers concerned, the infrastructure that is available to support the delivery of that program, the industry placement that would be there to support that program et cetera. All of those things have a vital impact on the competency of the individual exiting the program.

One of the issues that TAFE Directors Australia very strongly believes in is that the regulatory arrangements for all providers, if you are to achieve what I think you are alluding to, must be rigorously applied to all providers. If it is a school, it must be exactly the same regulatory framework that applies to a TAFE institute, a private training organisation, an enterprise based training organisation or whatever the case may be. And we do not necessarily think that is being done as well as it could be.

Mr Fillingham—If I can just comment on your question, the consistencies in the outcomes and the competencies attained are not necessarily in the way that you have reached those. That is just a natural part of good quality teaching. Your students are going to be different and it will affect the way you deliver—flexible delivery, different learning needs, learning styles et cetera.

However, I will revert to the T3 program for a moment. One of the things that Toyota wanted to guarantee was that any person who had gone through the T3 program nationally could put

their hand on their heart, and so could we, and say that they had all received the same tuition, the same program et cetera. One of the things I had to do was negotiate with my colleagues in other states so that the teaching program developed in New South Wales would be delivered through Victoria, South Australia and Queensland.

There were a few territorial issues and a few debates. The use of the word 'curriculum' was interesting. We have a different meaning for it in New South Wales compared with other states. Once we got down to actually what it was and then looked at the learning resources and the materials, Toyota was incredibly generous in working with us to develop our materials and in providing significant resources to the colleges that are delivering those programs. We looked for a consistent learning pathway as well as a consistency of outcomes.

At the national level across TAFE, we can certainly guarantee the outcome consistency in terms of the competencies. But I definitely share Phil's view in terms of there needing to be the same requirement for all RTOs, whether they be school based, district based, TAFE or private provider.

CHAIR—Is that not the case in theory at least?

Mr Fillingham—In theory.

Ms Fanning—We have some concerns that the outcomes do not necessarily match up—

CHAIR—Why is that? Is that because of different levels of equipment, different degree of industry currency of teachers?

Mr Clarke—All those issues I alluded to, yes.

CHAIR—And that seems to impact on industry and employer confidence in the qualification?

Mr Fillingham—That is absolutely correct.

CHAIR—I ask this question on behalf of Mr Sidebottom, who had to leave. Please expand briefly on your comments about quality assurance. You have said that the application of TAFE quality assurance models and systems for VET in schools would improve outcomes. How would you see that working? Would that, for instance, address the issue of the use of VET qualifications for tertiary entrance?

Mr Clarke—It is fair to say that most TAFE institutes nationally would hold international ISO certification for their quality systems, and they are audited—at least my own system at my institute is audited twice yearly to make sure that we are compliant with ISO certification. Those quality standards are then integrated into the Australian quality training framework, so the elements of our certified quality system are the national AQTF requirements.

We also audit against AQTF requirements because we are required to do that under our registration as a training provider. With that level of rigour in the TAFE system in terms of the requirements of being able to deliver, record and demonstrate ongoing quality, I suppose our

concern would be whether the same level of quality and rigour would be able to be demonstrated by our school colleagues. I do not mean that in a critical sense; I just do not believe they have the infrastructure and systems that are equivalent to what is available in the TAFE system nationally. My colleagues from other states might like to comment.

Ms Mackie—I would concur with that.

Mr Fillingham—Yes.

Mr Clarke—It is a grading thing. We are not saying that they do not attempt to do the best quality they can with the infrastructure, systems and people available to them, and in some instances you will find examples where they are extremely high quality programs. We are not actually targeting the individual instances; we are saying if this is about systemic outcomes where our major industry players have confidence in the outcomes, then the same sort of quality rigour that applies in the TAFE system, if that were universally available—and it can be made available quite modestly—should apply to the school sector.

For instance, we do auspicing of schools. So where we work with schools, we will auspice our quality framework into that school. We will register the teachers in that school under our own arrangements, provided they meet our quality standards. We will look at the delivery strategies that those schools have and essentially provide a quality framework within which the school, either through their own staff or on occasions in partnership with our staff, will deliver a VET in schools program. And we then issue that qualification on behalf of the school. It is a VET for schools model rather than a VET in schools model.

The school and the students in the school get the quality of outcome we feel very comfortable with certifying. It provides what we think is enhanced flexibility for the school, because they run the program when there is demand to run the program. They do not have the overhead of running their own quality system. We have that; we just need to expand it, usually in a modest way, because the programs in individual schools tend not to be a major shift for us. It also provides flexibility for us because we have a relationship with the school and we share responsibility in terms of the capacity of the individual partners. Auspicing is actually a very good model for dealing with these quality issues.

CHAIR—If there are no other burning questions, thank you very much. Both your submission and those comments have been very helpful. Kim, if you do not mind sending us the information on T3, that would also be very helpful. We have greatly appreciated your time and your valuable input.

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 10.15 a.m.