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**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Vocational education in schools

TUESDAY, 8 APRIL 2003

BURLEIGH WATERS

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Tuesday, 8 April 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, Mrs May, Mr Pearce 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.

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Committee met at 9.30 a.m.

ALEXIOU, Mr Sterling, Student, Marymount College

BAGG, Mr Stephen, Student, Marymount College

BARRETT, Ms Jessica, Student, Marymount College

BURNS, Ms Frances, Student, Marymount College

COLE, Ms Sarah, Student, Marymount College

DURIE, Ms Kathryn, Student, Marymount College

EMERSON, Mr Ryan, Student, Marymount College

JENKINS, Mr Brett, Student, Marymount College

KRAUSE, Ms Jema, Student, Marymount College

LOWE, Ms Mallory, Student, Marymount College

PALOMAR, Mr Andres, Student, Marymount College

PEARCE, Mr Matthew, Student, Marymount College

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for hosting us and for the guided tour through the school today. You have got a very impressive school. You are very fortunate to be studying here. I hope you all realise that. You probably do not get to visit too many other schools but, compared to a lot other schools that I and, I suspect, my colleagues have seen, you have got a great school here.

The aim of this inquiry is to get a handle on vocational education in schools. We want to see how it works and what areas can be addressed. There has been a rapid growth in vocational education in the last five or six years in our secondary school system, and we are trying to see how effectively it is meeting the needs of students, how it can be improved, what areas need addressing and so on. We would really appreciate your input into that.

You have been run through the Hansard process and will know how that works. What we say here today will be recorded forever in *Hansard*. You will be able to look back in 50 years time and say to your grandchildren, ‘There I am on the parliamentary record.’ We want to keep it fairly informal but we want to learn from you how you view vocational education. I really appreciate the time given by Jema, Matt and Sterling in showing us around the college and their input into how the whole system works.

I will get the ball rolling. Could a few of you tell us the course that you are doing and why you chose that particular vocational education course? Was it because you thought that that would lead most effectively to the employment that you are interested in after you leave school,

because it is a subject area you are interested in, because your mates are doing it or because your parents advised you to go in that direction? What prompted you to get into, say, hospitality, retail, construction or whatever?

Mr Alexiou—I am doing industrial skills. With my tertiary studies I am looking to do something in civil or constructional engineering when I leave school. Industrial skills give me a hands-on approach. If I had done another subject, I would not have had that. I figured that, if it is going to help me, I am better off doing that than another subject. I was going to do a study instead, but I knew I would not be doing much study and so I thought I would do something that would help me anyway. That is why I chose that.

Mrs MAY—Could you tell us what year you are in?

Mr Alexiou—I am in year 12.

Mrs MAY—Have you been doing this course from year 11?

Mr Alexiou—Yes, year 11.

CHAIR—Are you all in year 12 or are some of you in year 11?

Mr Pearce—I am in year 11.

Ms Barrett—As I mentioned before, I did my school based traineeship in retail. After school I want something that will support me with what I am doing. I am not necessarily going to go into retail operations, but this course has taught me a lot of life skills such as communication and customer service—a lot of things to do with retail. So it will support me in what I choose to do after school; it will be a back-up. That is basically where I was heading with that. It gives me something on my resume and I can say to an employer, ‘I have this behind me.’ I think it will support me in ways.

Ms Cole—I am in the same boat as Jessica. I am doing the retail operations traineeship as well. I started that at the beginning of last year, and I am just finishing it now. It has taken me a year. I was going to do my certificate III this year, but my traineeship is the only thing that has really kept me at school. I got to grade 10 and I did not know if I can do it anymore, and then I got offered my traineeship. It is one day out of school and it is really good. That is what has kept me at school.

Ms Barrett—It is just good support, I think.

Mrs MAY—So you are working outside school one day a week?

Ms Barrett—Yes.

Ms Cole—Yes, it is one day a week—on Tuesdays, when I am meant to be at school—and then sometimes on the weekends. I have another job, though, that is also in retail.

Mrs MAY—So, Sarah, you really believe that, if you had not done the traineeship, you would not still be at school?

Ms Cole—Definitely. That is the only thing that has kept me at school. I am going to do my certificate III. I am going to keep going when I finish school and do my certificate III then retail management.

CHAIR—You will do that through TAFE?

Ms Cole—Yes.

CHAIR—Very good.

Mr Bagg—I completed a traineeship in hospitality at Sea World Nara Resort. It went for 12 months, and one day each week I would go and do the traineeship. It covered a certificate III in hospitality, so when I gained my certificate I gained an OP13, which is really good.

CHAIR—Could you elaborate on what ‘OP13’ means?

Mr Bagg—An OP13 is your overall score after year 12. It gets you through to uni or TAFE as well. During my traineeship I covered the hospitality area. I spent six weeks in each area. I was doing concierge, gardening, maintenance, restaurant—everything. Out of it I gained time management skills as well. If I had not done this traineeship, I do not think I would have done as well at year 12. It has helped me mature as well. I have grown up a bit.

Mrs MAY—Did you find your own traineeship or did you get assistance through the school?

Mr Bagg—I got assistance through the careers office. Each day in the morning notices or in the newsletter they tell you what is available. So I saw that and I spoke to them.

Mrs MAY—You made contact with Sea World Nara yourself, then?

Mr Bagg—No, they did.

Mrs MAY—They did that for you?

Mr Bagg—Yes, through SCISCO, I think it was. That is where I got it.

Mr Palomar—I am coming into year 11 now and I am doing the school based traineeship at Sea World Nara, too. That has given me communication skills. I am doing hospitality practices at school, so that gives me a certificate II. That has helped me through school, too.

CHAIR—That is very good.

Ms Lowe—I am doing Business, Communication and Technologies. Apart from the fact that my teacher tells us every day that it is the best subject in the world, it really has helped me not only in my everyday life but also when it comes to doing other assignments as well because of the skills it has taught me. My sister did it when she was in grades 11 and 12 as well. She is two

years into university. Even now, she is now applying what she learnt through assignments she did when she was in grade 12 and what she learnt in BCT to her university studies. Seeing that, I thought that this would be a really valuable subject to do, and it has been. It has really taught me a lot.

Ms Barrett—Yes, that has been the same for me. I have found that I have used a lot of skills from BCT in my assignments and I can produce documents that I would not have been able to produce if I had not done BCT. It also goes along with my traineeship. They basically go hand-in-hand. That is what I have found for myself.

CHAIR—How many of you intend to go to university after you leave school? Is it most of you? Yes. So the vocational education course that you are doing will help you in that. In how many cases does it count towards your OP for university entrance? A couple of you have said it that theirs do, but some did not.

Ms Lowe—Yes.

Ms Durie—Yes.

CHAIR—What about the level of advice you are getting in school in terms of careers guidance and counselling? Has that been very helpful in encouraging you to move in a particular direction?

Mr Bagg—Yes.

Ms Durie—Yes.

Mr Pearce—Each year at school we have a careers expo in the Doyle Centre. The careers office contacts different businesses around Australia, including the Gold Coast. Basically, the owners come and have a stall or a desk which has the name of their business on it. You can talk to them about their industry and what they actually do. The careers expo really helped me in my career choice. I went up to the Defence Force display and spoke to a guy from the Air Force. I now want to go through the Air Force as a pilot. I spoke to him for about 45 minutes—I was pretty selfish with him. I had a good chat with him and he told me all the subjects I have to do for my senior course, all the grades I have to get, when to apply, how to apply and everything like that. After that they conducted a seminar. A few other people were very interested as well.

CHAIR—So that expo raised new opportunities for you and new possibilities you had not thought of.

Mr Pearce—Yes.

CHAIR—What about careers advice within the school? Is that pretty effective as well?

Ms Cole—Yes. If you have the questions, they have the answers.

CHAIR—That is a great advertisement—that's a good line.

Ms Krause—I want to get into the fashion industry when I leave school. As Mrs May knows, it is very hard to get into. In the notices the careers office puts in, I heard that they had a traineeship in clothing production and fashion design in Southport. I applied for it. Out of about 30 students around the Gold Coast, I was chosen to do the traineeship. I did it from April or May until August last year. It was a fair while. I took Wednesdays off school and I dropped physical education as a subject to apply for the traineeship—and I am a very sporty person so I missed it.

My host employers could not afford to pay me anymore, so I ended up going only once every fortnight and eventually they said, ‘We can’t take you anymore.’ So I didn’t go. I was really disappointed because I really liked it. They made formal dresses, wedding dresses, costumes and everything. It was really good because it was a step into what I wanted to do. I was doing a TAFE course. I thought that, if I am doing TAFE while I am at school, I am getting two things out of one, so I am killing two birds with one stone. I thought it would be good when I leave school. I will have done everything that most 19-year-olds doing the course will have done but I will be 17. I will still have what they have but I will be only 17. I thought, ‘It will be good. I will be able to do what I want to do when I leave school,’ but I couldn’t do it anymore.

So for the last six or seven months I have been trying to find a place to take me. I have been to Billabong and Ripcurl—all over the Gold Coast—trying to find somewhere, in conjunction with Group Training Australia, and I could not find anywhere. I have recently heard that there is a traineeship opening in the industrial estate in Burleigh, but it is in manchester—making furniture and that. It will still help me with my career choice and what I want to do. Hopefully, if it is still open, I will apply for that; but I will not get any credit for what I have already done. I am in a really tricky situation. I have a job out of school and I train a lot—12 times a week—out of school, so it is hard to fit in what I want to do. Ms Rebgetz has helped and guided me, and it has been really good. It has been a bit of a muck-up but the school has really been supportive. It is pretty hard to get into the fashion industry.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I think you will make it somehow.

Ms Krause—I have pushed basically every button I can push. If I can get into it, I will get into it. I have been to all the Bond University Headstart days because that is where I want to go. I want to be at Bond next year.

CHAIR—You have got the right approach.

Ms Krause—I will keep pushing until I get there.

CHAIR—Good on you. Good luck. Sid, do you have questions?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Yes, I have a few things. I might be the devil’s advocate too, while I am at it. Congratulations to you all and thanks for that kind tour. I could have stayed all day. First and foremost: can every student who wants to do a VET course do one?

Ms Barrett—Definitely.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is good. How do you find your employers and on-the-job trainers?

Mr Jenkins—I started work experience during our work experience week in year 11 and I went to a computer store. I had no idea what it would be like but when I got there I found that it was pretty interesting stuff. Not long after, I got a traineeship in the same store: a certificate III in IT. I always intended to finish year 12—with fairly high results if I can. But this traineeship is also helping me with my studies because I study IT at the school. They complement each other in some respects.

Ms Barrett—I do my traineeship at Big W. I am also employed at Big W and I have been for coming up to two years now. The help from my employers is very good. I go over there every second Wednesday—every fortnight. There is a TAFE room at Big W, so we go there. But then we go out into the workplace and our managers are there so if we have any questions we can ask them and then it relates back to our TAFE. So my employers are really good. They help me a lot and they teach me things that are accredited with my TAFE course. I also learn work skills on the job so it is a good match.

Ms Cole—When I first started my traineeship we went to a place up in Bundall. Our whole group went. There were about 20 of us. We had the one teacher and she had to try and rotate between all of us but it was not the whole day—it was from about 10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. I think. She realised that it was not working so now she comes to us separately once a month. She comes to visit me at school. That is good.

Ms Durie—I have been doing work experience at Radio Metro, a community radio station. It is a really good experience. As I want to get into the media industry it has helped me a lot. Although it is not a traineeship—and it will not be as it is a community organisation—it has given me a start. At first the employers did not seem to be that interested. I had to be independent and apply myself to what I wanted to do. So that will help me in the future with life skills. I have really enjoyed it. They can trust me now so I have been going in for a few afternoons and doing a bit of radio announcing, reception, music direction, casting interviews, writing up scripts for the DJs and organising—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—This is off your own bat?

Ms Durie—Yes. I just wanted to say, ‘I can do it; I don’t really need to be told.’ Through the morning notices a few weeks ago I heard there was a traineeship starting in the media industry with the Morrison Media Magazine so I am currently in the process of interviewing and organising a traineeship for myself in that area. Hopefully, I will get a start.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So did any of you feel that you might have been regarded as nuisances?

Ms Durie—No.

Ms Barrett—No.

Ms Cole—They offered the traineeships first, so I guess they have to just accept it.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is fair enough. Finally, I would like to say something before we tease this out a little bit more. I was wandering through your lovely college here and I came across a very small room which seemed to be almost the hub of this school and it was called the careers centre. It is very small but it has to generate a lot. Do you think you are well resourced in terms of your careers people?

Ms Krause—Yes.

Ms Barrett—Yes, very well. I know of one person who went to his career office in another school but they did not give him any help. Some other schools just do not have a careers office. He has found it very hard to get jobs and things like that. But as far as we are concerned the careers officers are really good in our school and have helped us. So I think we are very well resourced in that matter.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—How many do you have?

Ms Durie—Two officers.

Ms Barrett—We have two officers and one careers office. I think it has helped a lot.

Ms Durie—It is really accessible, even though it is so small.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It looked it. I was just wondering whether you thought it was enough of a resource.

Ms Durie—They are open and they have a lot of pamphlets there.

Mrs MAY—Can you make appointments to see the careers adviser?

Ms Durie—You can, but usually you just visit them.

Mrs MAY—You just drop in?

Ms Durie—Yes.

Mr Pearce—In year 11 and year 12 you do work placement, which is a five-day block in fields where you may want to go later in life. In year 11 the careers office organised for me to go to the Gold Coast airport, as I told them that I want to be a pilot. I had five days there and I was everywhere—for example, I had a day in aeronautical engineering, a day in flight navigation and a day painting the runway. I was everywhere around the airport, so I got to know basically the workings of the whole industry, which was good.

Earlier this year, the careers office organised the Defence Force to come to the theatre, and they gave a full guided talk to all students who were interested in going into the Defence Force later on in life. I think there were about 30 or 40 of us there. So they spoke to those who really wanted to listen, which was good because we basically got to talk to them one on one. We talked to them for about 2½ hours. It was really good.

Ms Krause—As was said yesterday, I am a frequent flyer at the careers office. Last year we had a different careers adviser, Mrs Muller. She helped me get a job at A Mart All Sports, which is over the road from school. It is an excellent job, and I love it. I love going to work. The pay is not as good as everyone else gets, but I love going there. I reckon it is the best job. The careers office has helped me to get to Bond University. I have been hassling the tutor at Bond University about me getting into the course next year, with the TAFE and my traineeship from last year. Mrs Auer has been really good in trying to help me, in conjunction with Group Training Australia, to get a new traineeship. Without the careers office at school, I would not even be doing this and I would not really want to be in the fashion industry.

I reckon we have a better careers office than any other school—it is the best. They are really friendly. You just go in and say hello and when you walk around the school you can stop and have a conversation. At any other school, the students do not really talk to the careers office.

CHAIR—Do you have friends in other schools who say that?

Ms Krause—Yes.

CHAIR—So you are well aware of the difference?

Ms Krause—Yes.

Ms Cole—As I said before, if it were not for the careers advisers, I would not still be here.

Ms Barrett—If it were not for the careers advisers, I would not have my traineeship.

Mrs MAY—Did you source your traineeships at the end of year 10? Is that when you started to look? Were you talked into coming back—

Ms Cole—Can you get them in grade 10?

Ms Krause—Yes, there is a guy in year 10.

Ms Cole—Most traineeships are offered in, I think, years 10, 11 and 12. I think it is only grades 10, 11 and 12 when you can have your traineeships.

Mrs MAY—So you identified yours in year 10?

Ms Cole—It was at the beginning of grade 11.

Mrs MAY—So you came back at the beginning of grade 11?

Ms Cole—Yes.

Ms Burns—I think it is an excellent opportunity to have a careers office in our school. On the notices, they announce what kinds of jobs are going and stuff like that, and if it is what we are into we can seek information from them. I am very interested in arts, photography and stuff like that. There was a job taking photos of children with Santa Claus over the holidays, and the

careers office was a great help with that in letting us know that there was a job going. It was really easy and accessible.

Ms Lowe—As much as I find the careers office helpful, I went in there on, I think, Friday morning just to inquire about Bond University's 'student for a semester' and I must have left with about 10 booklets of information—and I just went in to inquire. I have friends who are at Miami High School and they have asked me questions to ask my careers office about them because they do not have the opportunity that I do. The other day Ms Rebgetz actually chased me about 'vocational student of the year'. So they are not only waiting for you to come to them; they are going to come to you and give you the best opportunities that you can have. So in that sense they are fantastic.

CHAIR—How many of you are doing traineeships? So a lot of people are doing VET courses but not traineeships.

Mrs MAY—With your traineeships, do you find any trouble balancing that work and school? Is it a compromise sometimes? Is it difficult to balance the studies with going to work?

Ms Krause—I train 12 to 13 times a week out of school.

Mrs MAY—When you say 'trained'—

Ms Krause—I am a rower.

Mrs MAY—You are a rower too. You are a master of all.

Ms Krause—I do everything after school, and I have found it hard. In a way, I am sort of glad that the traineeship is not going anymore. I really want to be there and do it, but not doing the traineeship has given me more time to do more school work. I am doing six OP subjects, which will count towards my final year 12 score. To do the year 12 subjects that I am doing at the moment, it is hard to account for training, for getting my assignments and my study done, for a job on the weekend and on Thursday nights on top of that and then for taking a day off school for the traineeship. If I get it I really want to do it and I will accommodate to do it, but it is hard to slot it into my time.

Mrs MAY—You are doing a very heavy load.

CHAIR—It certainly is. Is it hard to catch up on the work in the other subjects that you miss on the day off school?

Ms Krause—Not for me because I have four studies.

Ms Cole—Most of the time when you do a traineeship you are allowed a study, which is your spare during the day, and you have that time to catch up.

Ms Durie—When you are going for a traineeship, they normally find out the best day for your subjects. For instance, I had double art on Thursday. For my work placement with Radio Metro, they wanted me for a day. They said I could go in. My double art was probably my least

demanding subject—I could probably catch up on that fast. It was not an OP subject, and they said that you could easily catch up on it. So they accommodate you by working out your best day. I know some people do it on Wednesday afternoons during sport, because they are not the sporty type.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You do not have a differentiation in the school between OP subjects and the rest—VET and whatever? Is it seen as a matter of students moving between them and there are no status problems?

Ms Cole—When you are in grade 8 and 9, the first you think is, ‘I am doing an OP and that is it.’ But then you get to grade 10, your career advisers and Ms Rebgetz explain that you have just as much opportunity doing a non-OP as the people who do them.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Excuse my ignorance for this question: if you do a VET subject and get certification and so forth, does that give you a tertiary entrance score to get into university?

CHAIR—That is the OP.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So it gives you an OP?

CHAIR—Some do and some do not.

Ms Krause—It will give you a ranking, so it is an equivalent to your OP score.

CHAIR—You have to do certificate III level, don’t you, to get an OP score?

Ms Barrett—As I was saying before, I and II don’t affect your OP.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So who got OP13?

Mr Bagg—I am doing a ranking score. It is equivalent to a ranking as well.

Ms Cole—If you do not do any board subjects and if you do not have your traineeship but you are just doing your subjects, you will still get a ranking which is equivalent to your OP score.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—To follow that through, where does OP13 sit in terms of a ranking to get into uni?

Mr Bagg—I think it is 72.

CHAIR—What sorts of courses at university would that score get you into? Where does that fit in the scale of things?

Ms Krause—You cannot get into university without an OP. You can get into TAFE.

Mr Bagg—It would take me six months at TAFE to get a diploma of hospitality because I have done the certificate as well.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Do you get recognition of that?

Mr Bagg—Exactly.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—But not at university?

Mr Bagg—Yes, that is right.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Do you think that is fair?

Ms Cole—In some parts, you still have your path into university.

CHAIR—To clarify, you said that OP13 is a ranking for university.

Mr Bagg—Yes.

CHAIR—You said that that is the equivalent of, say, 72. What sort of course at university would that get you into? Is the OP72 an overall result for your senior certificate?

Mr Bagg—Yes, as I was saying. I am not too sure about university, but I know about TAFE, and it will get you into hospitality.

Mrs MAY—Wouldn't you need to do TAFE first as the pathway before going to university?

Mr Bagg—Exactly. You would do a diploma of hospitality and then you would be able to get into university.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So that would give you a recognition of that learning to get you so many points to get in?

Mr Bagg—Yes.

Ms Krause—Yes, it would boost your OP. If you have a low OP and you want to get a better OP, you can go to TAFE and do a similar course that you want to do in uni. It will boost your OP, so the following year or two years you can go to uni with the OP that you want and you already have the skills that you got from TAFE but you are still doing a uni course.

Ms Cole—Even if you just have that ranking you can still get into a university course but you have to start from the bottom of a university course and then work your way up. You can still get into uni with just your ranking.

CHAIR—Mr Pearce has just arrived. Do you have any questions?

Mr PEARCE—What would be the advantage of going to TAFE for that two years? What extra would you gain? It would boost your OP score, so therefore you could get into it, but do you actually think that, having done a traineeship, you would get much more out of a couple of years in TAFE? Wouldn't it be better to just go straight into university?

Ms Cole—With my traineeship, when I finish certificate III, that takes six months off my TAFE course, so then I guess when I finish that I could go to uni and it would bring me up higher at uni.

Mr PEARCE—You would get almost six months of credit.

Ms Cole—Yes.

Ms Barrett—I think any bit of education that you can get is worth while. It is just about getting you out there and getting as much experience as you can, so any way that I can further my studies is a help to me in a lot of ways. Even if it does not help in the long run, you still have that behind you.

Ms Krause—In a way I believe it is better to do a traineeship than to go to TAFE, because at TAFE you do not have the work experience. You do not know what it is really like. I have never been to TAFE so I do not know whether you sit in a class or with a tutor or whatever, but when you have a traineeship you are on the job. You can look at what everyone is doing, how they do it and how they organise themselves. I reckon it is better to do a traineeship than to sit in class or a tute and just learn. When you do a traineeship you get hands-on experience; that is what I found was really good when I did mine.

Mr PEARCE—I do not know whether this question has been asked, but will most of you continue in the area of study that you are doing your traineeship in?

Ms Cole—Yes.

Ms Krause—Yes.

Ms Barrett—I will not. I am doing a retail certificate II, but it will not help in what I want to do. I want to do drama. The study has given me further education so, while it is not necessarily going to put into what I really want to do, it is there behind me.

Ms Cole—It gives her something to fall back on.

Ms Barrett—Exactly. As everyone probably knows, drama is very hard to get into. So retail is something to fall back on, something to support me as another job, and it is good to have that.

CHAIR—Are there any ways that you can think of in which the system is not working as well as it could? Do you have any suggestions about how we could improve the system from your point of view in terms of how it affects you and your learning and linking to work?

Ms Krause—My host employer could not afford to pay me any more. I would still have done it without the money, but I had to travel for an hour on a bus just to get there because it was in Southport and if it had been somewhere closer it would have been better. The money does not matter because I am getting the experience. I was not paying to get TAFE—I was getting the TAFE experience basically for free. If they could offer that or do something more with that—work experience but not getting paid for it—that would be good. I would jump at the opportunity because it is better than no opportunity at all.

CHAIR—Is TAFE free?

Ms Krause—With my traineeship I did not have to pay to get the TAFE tuition that I was getting. I was taught TAFE work and I was paid to work. So all the bonuses were on me.

CHAIR—So basically it is working pretty well?

Ms Cole—Students just need to better understand that there are a lot of benefits in traineeships.

CHAIR—But obviously that message is getting through here.

Ms Cole—Yes.

Ms Krause—It should be offered at more schools. The other schools do not have what we have. The students in other schools are missing out on what we have. They should have as good a chance when they leave school as we are going to have.

Ms Barrett—And they should have as many opportunities as we are going to have.

CHAIR—That is one of the aims of this committee. It will make recommendations to the government as to the sorts of areas where improvements can be made, with that aim in mind.

Mr Emerson—You get opportunities through the careers office. If you open up the paper, the jobs that are advertised say: need not apply unless you have experience et cetera. The careers office gives you a chance to go out into the industry and get the experience you need to apply for the jobs, which is what I have done. I am employed at one of the local commercial radio stations. If I did not get the opportunity through my school to go there, there is no way that I would be able to get employed without spending thousands of dollars on radio schools et cetera. Without the careers office, you cannot get the experience to apply for the jobs that you want to apply for.

Mrs MAY—So you are virtually getting that experience while you are at school, it is on your resume and you can say that you have had the experience even after you have left school.

Mr Emerson—Yes. When I leave school, the experience I have had means that I will be able go straight into the industry.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Do many employers tempt students into going for full-time jobs when they get them through this experience? Do they, in a sense, put pressure on you not to complete your more formal education?

Ms Cole—I have been told that at the end of my schooling I will be asked whether I want a full-time job.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So they encourage you to continue schooling?

Ms Cole—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. That has been really helpful. Good luck with the rest of the studies and your careers. If this morning is any indication, I am sure that you will all do very well.

Proceedings suspended from 10.07 a.m. to 10.19 a.m.

BAIRD, Mrs Joy, Business Studies Coordinator, Marymount College

BRESSAN, Ms Toni, Teacher, Marymount College

JENKINS, Mrs Gayle, Home Economics/Hospitality Coordinator, Marymount College

LAIDLER, Mr Michael, Deputy Principal, Marymount College

MCCARTHY, Ms Barbara, Computer Coordinator, Marymount College

PAHOFF, Mr Michael, President, Parents and Friends Association, Marymount College

PEACOCK, Mr Robert, Principal, Marymount College

REBGETZ, Ms Ann, Assistant Principal—Administration, Marymount College

SESSARAGO, Mr Jason, Vocational Education/Careers Coordinator, Marymount College

MCDONALD, Mr Neville, Area Supervisor, Brisbane Catholic Education

POWER-WEST, Ms Gabrielle, Executive Officer - Post Compulsory/Curriculum, Queensland Catholic Education Commission

CHAIR—Welcome and thank you for your hospitality this morning—it has been tremendous. Congratulations on what is obviously a great school. There are some very impressive students here. They have a very clear idea of where they are going and are very confident and articulate in expressing it. We are very impressed. This is part of an inquiry, as you know, which will make recommendations to the minister regarding vocational education and training in schools. We really value your input. Bob, did you want to make some introductory comments before we start?

Mr Peacock—Firstly, we would like to say how pleased we are to welcome you to Marymount today. It is the first time we have had a visit from a parliamentary committee, and we are pleased that you were able to come and to share in some of the work that we are doing here in the school. Our aim as a Catholic school—and this is probably how we set the philosophy here for voc ed—is to provide an inclusive enrolment policy. By inclusive we mean that we will take students from those who want to go into the professions—perhaps even up to the highest levels, even to become Rhodes scholars or whatever—right through to those who suffer a handicap of one sort or another. We certainly have a Down syndrome student here at the moment who is mainstreaming with us and we have quite a number of other students with significant disabilities. So we have students with a very wide spectrum of abilities coming into the school. Certainly, when it comes to senior schooling, we aim to provide multiple pathways through the curriculum that are going to be suitable for the abilities and the interests of the students that come through.

The continuum of courses that we have in senior secondary range from the pure university entrance type course, where you do six A subjects—or the old board subjects—plus religious education, right through to students that are doing no category A subjects at all: they are doing entirely a voc ed sort of curriculum. We have students that are doing five board subjects—five A-level subjects—so that they can get their OP and they are also doing a voc ed subject for interest and to develop job skills. It really is a continuum that we are offering to students. We have well over 40 subjects in total and we feel that, with 70 per cent or so of kids electing to take one or more voc ed subjects, the kids are interested in the sort of pathways that we are providing.

We have tried very hard to provide maximum linkages with industry. The reason for that is that we know how difficult the job market is for students—even if you have got a university degree now, that is no guarantee of a job. So we need to form strong links with industry and we need to equip students with job skills that are going to be generic and that they are going to be able to use, even if it is only in a part-time job at uni. Of course, many of our students, may not want to go to university, but we want them to have the opportunity to enter into school based traineeships and to undertake more extensive work-and-school links. So we are trying to offer a smorgasbord. I guess the secret to it is to have an excellent voc ed coordinator and to provide the funding to be able to provide the secretary that is needed to keep the operation afloat. Without that sort of funding, it is going to be difficult to sustain the effort.

That is probably all I need to say at the moment. I think that the architect of what we have done here at Marymount has been Ann Rebgetz. Ann was our voc ed coordinator for probably five years or so and is now our assistant principal in charge of the senior curriculum. I will hand over to Ann and she will continue the story.

Ms Rebgetz—I would like to draw your attention to the handout that I have given you. The yellow and green pages are taken from our handbook and outline the general program that you were briefed on beforehand. I sat in on the student session, so there are some areas there that I might refer to that may need some clarification. I want to pay tribute to Bob, who had the vision in 1997 to push to introduce seven VET embedded subjects, which was a pretty big challenge because of the resources needed and the upskilling of teachers needed at the time. However, it was a very successful initiative.

I decided when I got into the position that the way to get productivity in careers was to use the very small amount of ANTA funds that we had to employ an assistant. That way, I felt that I could service the needs of our clients. The model expanded from there. The other factor that we had is that I was appointed as a vocational education coordinator and a careers advisor. This is not a model that has been used a lot in Queensland, but I think it is gaining support. Because of that, it was a unique combination. At the time, I also probably had more time to do it than my equivalents in some other schools. I still had a pretty heavy teaching load—about half a teaching load—but I know that many of my colleagues would not have been in that situation.

From that there was expansion. We started in an even smaller office than the one you saw on your tour and that office is still very tiny. If we were more resourced, I would certainly like to see a room with computers et cetera to complement the small office that we are operating from. But that was a bigger office than we started in.

In terms of our partnership, SCISCO is our local workplace learning cluster. It started to take off at the same time. So we are all working together and the spin-off effects of that allowed us to be very successful. You can see our school based trainee statistics. They went from 16 to 59 yesterday. The employer incentive certainly helped with this expansion. We also had the expansion where we have category A, category B subjects, where we have over two-thirds of our 360 students in year 11 and 12 studying some embedded VET courses.

To clarify something from the earlier session, the students all achieve a ranking. That ranking can take them directly to university. You were asking the question: what would an OP13 equivalent get you to? There is a handout on this one. To give you an example, those equivalents would be around the bachelor hotel management because it came in in 1974. We get a regional OP bonus point and that transfers into the ranking numbers as well. There are still quite a number of courses that the students could get into. Bachelor of IT was a 69, so they would still get into that one with the bonus. Although the cut-offs came down last year in terms of the places available, it still gives a lot of opportunities.

Our partnerships with industry were fostered by the careers expo. They are in your attachments; there is a copy of the program in blue. That involved a lot of our parents and employers. In our vocational commitment week, everyone in years 11 and 12 goes into placement or goes into a course to further enhance their vocational skills.

In respect of our excursion based program, we are very strong on that industry relationship and that is outlined in the area of tourism. We have had participation and training awards with 26 finalists in four years, tourism student of the year and a number of others. Another area that was not spoken about by our students because of the stage of the year is the direct entry program into Gold Coast TAFE and Griffith University. Sixty-three students got direct entry. To gain that, it is not only their scores in school but also the amount of vocational experience that they have had. Griffith University runs a scheme like this also. We had 10 students accepted into Griffith in September last year. This means that, at the end of year 12, we had 60 students in certified places before their results came out.

The promotion of a positive school culture has had a huge amount to do with it. If you do not have a culture that supports the infrastructure, you will not go far. You could see from what students said this morning that that culture certainly exists. The culture comes from promoting our successes. Everyone wants to be part of a successful operation. As I have outlined, this comes through our advertising. It comes from our careers office—and you heard of our strong relationship there this morning. It also comes from our award wins and the encouragement to go through the process of applying for the Queensland training awards as we have been doing for five years. Even though we were there in the days when there were no separate schools entries, all the students went against all the TAFE students. We knew we would not win but we got to the finalists stage anyway.

To get into the infrastructure again, on our awards night there was recognition of awards in vocational education. We have been involved in a range of conferences. I have included a paper there that Toni, who was the voc ed coordinator last year, and I presented at the national VET NET conference, and there are slides and some student feedback that may be of interest to you as well. Also, there is the promotion of part-time work through the careers office. As Bob said, in our senior school over 70 per cent have part-time jobs, linking down to year 10s.

There is the involvement of students in special events that are real life events. That is very significant at the moment. We are looking at hosting a huge state carnival in rugby league and netball, so a lot of students are involved in the promotions and making accommodation kits—doing things the whole way through—so that they get that real life experience. I am sure Mrs Baird will speak of the small business venture that the year 10s are currently involved in, the construction of web sites, our art show and the hospitality students who were here this morning doing the catering. Whenever we can do things in a real life situation, we do, and that makes everything more successful.

Similarly, we were able to incorporate the training awards in tourism, which I teach, as a piece of assessment. So the students get the real life experience plus they get assessed in the classroom. I have listed many of the other aspects of it. Our teachers get regular upskilling. While we put all our kids out in the work placement, we also put our teachers out. That satisfies both needs. And then there are our community partnerships in a range of subject areas and our generic competencies through our student leadership structures and committee pursuits. As I said initially, a third of our students in year 12 had places before the end of the school years of 2001 and 2002.

CHAIR—Thank you. You certainly have a comprehensive program here. One of the points that the students made very strongly was that they were very appreciative of the quality of the careers advice and counselling they get. They said that, compared to their friends in other schools, this was miles ahead. Our inquiry has only just started but, the indications we get from other schools are that what you are doing here is a long way ahead of what they are doing. I want to clarify something. You have one workplace coordinator, two teachers and an administrative assistant. Is that right?

Ms Rebgetz—We have one vocational education and careers coordinator and one assistant to that person.

CHAIR—Is that your role, Jason?

Mr Sessarago—Yes. I am the Vocational Education/Careers Coordinator, and I have an assistant.

CHAIR—Is your teaching load half a load?

Mr Sessarago—Yes, it is half a teaching load. That is 13 lessons plus two sport plus an assembly lesson a week.

CHAIR—Would most other schools have that assistant position?

Mr Sessarago—I believe not.

CHAIR—So how does the school fund that?

Ms Rebgetz—The school has funded it through the amount of money that we get from the traineeships, through some ANTA funding and by charging the students a levy. This levy goes towards their placement. If they get placed through SCISCO, we are charged \$60 by SCISCO

for those placements. The levy is currently \$80 a year. If we place the students ourselves through our partnership, which SCISCO are very happy with too, we end up keeping about half that money. One of the big issues I see is the funding issue. We are totally underresourced for the work generated. To have 60 school based trainees and not have one dedicated person even monitoring them is a big problem. But where do we get that money? On school based trainees we get \$500 at the most. If we do it through SCISCO, we pay them an amount. If we do it in certain industries, we get much less than \$500. So even for 60 students at \$500, the maths tells you that the most you would get would be \$30,000 over two years, which is not going to fund a teacher to supervise. We do work and job placement activities which we have taken over from the public sector outside of school, but no infrastructure has been put in place to keep up with the demand.

CHAIR—A recurrent theme in the submissions we have had is that the pressures on the workplace vocational coordinator leads to burnout very quickly because you are expected to teach, to coordinate and to support students in their activities in their workplaces and that is unsustainable. Would you agree with that, Jason?

Mr Sessarago—At this stage, yes. I have only been in the role this year. Toni Bressan was before me.

Ms Bressan—I was the vocational and careers coordinator last year. It was a huge task that took all of my day, all of my spares, all of my holidays. It involved meetings outside school and building links to get these wonderful positive outcomes for kids. The motivation is to seeing the outcomes for the kids; that motivation keeps you going. But there comes a time when you say, ‘This is all really tough.’

CHAIR—So it should be a full-time job without face-to-face teaching.

Ms Bressan—It should be a full-time job with an assistant.

CHAIR—With an assistant as well?

Ms Bressan—Yes.

CHAIR—On a slightly different angle, could you elaborate on the industry experience that your teachers have and tell us how that works? How much time does it involve? How do you pay for release from classroom teaching and so on?

Ms Rebgetz—We have Quality Teacher Placement funding that we have been able to access in the last couple of years.

CHAIR—Who is that funded by? Is that out of ANTA?

Ms Rebgetz—Yes, it is through that program to Brisbane Catholic education. We also had some ANTA funding in the early days. It never really covers the amount that we need so we have to be smart about the way we put out teachers into industry. We did that vocational commitment week. That means that a lot of teachers are free from classes and we do not have to cover them so much during that week. That is another way we have got around it. During that

week we also send them out on visits and that gives them a lot of contact with industry in terms of structured workplace learning. It is a really big issue in terms of time away from the other classes that they teach. It is also important to get the right industry placement. There have been cases where teachers have gone out and they have felt that it has not been very productive. Some of the staff might like to comment on that.

Mrs Baird—I am the coordinator of the commerce department at the school. I have a comment on industry placements. This year I happen to be going on industry placement next week. I am going to a real estate office, which is one of the contexts for the teaching of business communication and technologies. In previous years, I have either covered my industry placement through conferences, in-house programs with the students and work experience. I have also done industry placement on Saturdays in my own time because there just has not been time during the year to leave the classes.

CHAIR—How much time do you think ideally you ought to be able to have in industry to really familiarise yourself fully with what happens?

Mrs Baird—I am in a fortunate position in that my husband has his own business; I have a lot of industry experience doing things with him. As a teacher and having been in industry myself and having industry experience in other ways, I feel that I am more than adequately equipped and skilled to be passing on industry experience to my students. Perhaps somebody else would like to talk about how much industry placement they feel they would need to keep up to date.

Ms Bressan—The certificate level that the kids do at school is usually certificate I or II, which is very much entry level into the work force. I think—and others might agree—we would have those skills anyway, irrespective of our industry experience. The value is in making links with industry and being aware of what is going on out there, but not particularly for the skills for the certificate.

Mr Sessarago—I am teaching industrial skills in the trade area when I am not in the careers office. It would be near impossible for me to get correct industry exposure. We teach in a variety of trade areas. For me to get adequate exposure to all the trade areas that we teach, I would probably need at least two days every term—so eight or 10 days a year solid exposure—to understand fully the new practices in each trade area, to relay the correct message to the kids.

I was an electrician by trade. A lot of kids and apprentices were coming into the trade very raw; a lot of the skills they were being taught were not totally correct. The kids were very naïve about the trade. They were entering the trade and then finding out what it was about rather than finding out at school when they needed to make the correct decision. I do not know how we get around that as teachers.

Mr Laidler—I am the deputy principal of the school. Enormous costs and a lot of time go into all those things. We are very lucky here; Bob does not knock many people back on professional development. We have work placement. Ann goes off to conferences delivering papers. Those things have a big effect on the chalk face. Having a larger school is an advantage in being able to cover those things. Smaller schools would really struggle with that, as we

struggle. There is an enormous cost with that. It is not just the placement. There are a number of things to worry about at the chalk face. It is very expensive for the school.

Mr Peacock—The thing that really concerns me about the voc ed area is the enormous amount of paperwork that is involved. I am not involved in the office area, but the amount of paperwork that seems to be required to facilitate and support the voc ed initiatives is overwhelming, and I really question whether all of it is necessary. Let us face it, it translates into time and time translates into staff money. It would be good if there were some way that the whole procedure of involving kids in voc ed could be simplified, that the accountabilities could be simplified. No-one is suggesting that we should get rid of the accountabilities. Obviously, that would not be possible.

The whole paperwork process needs to be simplified and reduced. Otherwise it is a barrier for other schools, for smaller schools, to take up this vital area in the way that it should be taken up. It is a discouragement, in fact. I am sure that was never the intention when the systems were put in place. Someone or some group needs to take a really hard look at what is happening there. Maybe this committee is the one that needs to do it.

Mrs Baird—I would just like to confirm and add to what Bob Peacock said regarding the actual record keeping that the teachers have to be involved in for the students who are doing vocational education subjects. It takes up an enormous amount of time. There is a huge amount of work that has to be done for the record keeping in order to be able to have evidence and documentation to show that they have achieved the certificate II in whatever area that it may be in. And now with certificate III, there will be as much if not more record keeping.

I teach a category A subject that has vocational competencies embedded in it. I believe in the subject and I believe the skills that the students gain out of this course are wonderful. I know a lot of teachers in other schools in general are saying, 'We just can't cope with all the record keeping and paperwork involved in category A subjects with vocational competencies embedded in them.' It seems such a pity that something so essential and vital for the students might not be taken up because of that.

CHAIR—That is a good point; thank you.

Ms Rebgetz—If that is going to be streamlined, though, we need to keep the same standards as industry. There is always this tension between schools and industry. For example, in the tourism area I have been involved with the professional association for tourism teachers, and we have had to have meetings to say, 'This is what we really do in schools.' The tourism industry outside schools is still very reluctant to accept that we have these standards and to accept the level of outcomes within schools. So, if we change things within schools to make it easier but do not do the same in industry, we would again set ourselves up to be classified as not being as good as them. Overall, I think that to be streamlined would be excellent, but it is very important to maintain parity with the outside. I know there are a lot of people in the tourism industry, for example, who really do not know what is happening.

Going back to the question about teacher experience with industry, I think we have been pretty smart here and have economised as much as possible. In tourism we would have a very strong excursion program, so that every time the teacher takes the students into an industry base

they are getting an update on that industry at the same time as the students. That sort of model in a range of subject areas has worked extremely well. It is instead of teachers' having to go out and work there. It is pretty easy to gain the skills otherwise.

Mrs MAY—I just want to tease that out a little bit more, Ann. It follows on from something Jason and Joy said. Joy feels that she has the right skills to deliver the course and teach it. I was wondering about the links with employers and the feedback you are getting from employers about what you are teaching. How closely do you work with industry—you have just touched on tourism there—to make sure that what you are teaching is relevant to industry? We have heard through the inquiry that sometimes the courses in schools are not relevant to the workplace. How do you keep that link going with what you are delivering in school?

Ms Rebgetz—I think the strongest way we keep it going is that we have an internal review process that operates within all VET areas under the legislation. It has also been increased to a full audit that will happen under the new AQTF regulations. That means that every year we go through every area, and have industry representatives go through and basically audit what we are doing. We seek feedback from those industry representatives all the time to say what we should be doing, what they think of this or that, and what the trends in industry are. Students and staff are present at those meetings. Jason or Toni might like to expand on those as well.

Mr Sessarago—We had one internal audit last year, for which I was a member of the committee. We invite the industry rep, and he examines our assessment, what we are teaching the students, our assignments, what our set-up is in the workshop and how we go about things on a day-to-day basis, and he tries to keep us on track. It is very difficult. We are restricted in the trade area—I can only speak from my experience there—due to the limitations of students with the machinery and equipment we have. We cannot totally represent what is done in industry because of the safety requirements. If we did that we would have disasters everywhere, to put it bluntly. So we try to do it in the best possible way we can. Our industry skills area is excellent at the moment in the way we try to simulate the construction industry. It could be better, but in a lot of ways our hands are tied with the students. From my exposure with employers—when I go out on worksites and through working at the weekend and that sort of thing—I find a lot of them are very reluctant to take students on. I do not know whether that is a legal thing or—

Mrs MAY—Is it insurance, maybe?

Mr Sessarago—There is a real concern there. I have asked a number of them whether they would take someone on for work experience with no obligations and no pay required, but they are very worried about it. I see it as a major issue in getting the kids industry aware. How do we overcome it?

Ms Rebgetz—We have had pretty good success rates here. As you can see we have an industrial community all around us, which gives us great access to employers, and then we have SCISCO. But those sorts of issues are real issues. I think the workplace health and safety requirements really do worry a lot of people. I think the hospitality area is another huge area where there have been a few tensions with industry. But, again, the people we have representing us on the internal review process are very good and feed us back. Gayle, would you like to comment on that area?

Mrs Jenkins—I am head of department for home economics, early childhood, tourism and hospitality. We have two hospitality courses running here. We have ‘studies’, which is an embedded vocational subject—so it is a category 1 or category A subject. We do food and beverage service. You will see two of our senior students when you have morning tea. This is the second year that it has been running, and the students are doing very well. A number of them are trainees with different organisations. They are finding that the work that they are doing at school is complementing their traineeships and their traineeship work is complementing their school work. In some cases, with the assessment pieces that we require from the school, we can RPL them through from their traineeship. The working together of this subject is great.

We have ‘practices’ running, which is a school based course. Students do the whole of the certificate from school. We do functions and events catering, and by the end of year 12 our students are very apt at being able to run a kitchen to a certificate I level. Most of our students, if they are interested, will pick up apprenticeships. A number of our students are in apprenticeships right through the big establishments on the coast. Hospitality is doing exceptionally well with respect to our students.

The early childhood area of study is much the same. Our students in year 11 and year 12 go out on compulsory placements for one solid week. By the end of year 12, if any of them seem to indicate an interest in the area, we will have them in traineeships or full-time work. Most of our students are picked up in those areas. We have a number of students who will go on through TAFE and then go on to do their diploma. So all of the students in early childhood, if they choose to go in that direction, are always placed well.

The tourism area is very interesting. The students come into this area because it is an attractive subject. Again, we have exceptional results with those students. The students could end up anywhere. They will generally not go into tourism as such; they go into management or go to university and do diplomas in hospitality and all sorts of areas. Tourism opens the world for them—they see the picture.

Basically, I have no problems with the interest of the students and I have no problem with filling classes. The enthusiasm of the students tends to be a problem because they keep on driving me to do more. The problem I do have is with staffing. Staffing is the big issue that I have in hospitality. I need to have staff who are qualified before they can deliver the modules—and there are not many of us out there who can do some of the subjects. The early childhood area is a big problem at the moment because we now have to deliver certificate III if we want to deliver a full certificate. That means that we need to have the equivalent of a certificate IV—we have to be one certificate above. I think you will find that most schools deliver modules rather than the certificates because it is the only way we can work with it.

CHAIR—But you said that, even students with a certificate I qualification, find it relative easy to get a job when they leave school in a related area.

Mrs Jenkins—In hospitality we only take students to certificate I. It is actually easier for the students to enter the work force with a certificate I qualification than it is if they enter with a certificate II or III. The work force prefers them at that level because we have taught them the basis skills of the kitchen or food and beverage and then the establishment can teach their future

skills. Every hospitality establishment does things differently and they like them at an entry level.

CHAIR—So are you suggesting that, if two students are applying for the same job—one with certificate I and one with certificate II or III—the student with a certificate I would have a better chance of getting that job?

Mrs Jenkins—Possibly if they are entry exact in everything else. Other factors would also be considered—work experience, school results and all of the other things—but if they were exact across, a certificate I would be a better entry for the work force because the employer can then train them in their own procedures.

CHAIR—Is that the same in other fields or specialities?

Mrs Jenkins—No.

CHAIR—It is just in hospitality?

Mrs Jenkins—It is in hospitality only.

Ms Rebgetz—I think it is changing, though. It would be interesting to ask the employers that when they come in the next session, because I think it is changing with the advent of school based traineeships. Sea World Nara, for example, have 60 of them and they are producing them at certificate III level. That would be a challenging area to get to with them.

CHAIR—All right, thank you.

Mr PEARCE—The mind boggles with a number of questions I could ask—you clearly have been very successful in this area. Bob, I think it was in 1997 that you first introduced this.

Mr Peacock—No, we have been in voc ed for a lot longer than that. Certainly Ann came into the role in 1997.

Mr PEARCE—Okay, so the seven embedded subjects were in 1997?

Mr Peacock—Yes.

Ms Rebgetz—Yes.

Mr PEARCE—And you, Bob, I think, started in 1996 here at the school?

Mr Peacock—Yes, that is right.

Mr PEARCE—Given your experience since 1996, what would be the key two or three pieces of advice that you would give to other principals throughout Australia that could possibly replicate the success that you have had here? What are the fundamental things that they should do or could do to get the success that you have achieved here?

Mr Peacock—I think that you have to put the money into it as a school, which means that it is a priority of the school. If you do not put the money into it—either through ANTA funding or whatever other source, whether it be a levy—then you have not got the staff and without the staff you cannot do the miles required to be able to get the scheme up. So the key is the money and then the right staff in position. If you can get that going then I think you are a long way in front. But there are so many other things in a Catholic school that you can do with the money, so it becomes a matter of priority. We have chosen to go in and to build better facilities in a certain direction. We need not have gone that way; we could have gone another way and spent our money in different directions. So it is prioritising.

Mr PEARCE—You said ‘in a Catholic school’. What did you mean by that?

Mr Peacock—I do not know about other schools, but my budget is pretty limited and it requires some fairly careful husbanding of the resources that we have got and very clear prioritisation of the direction we want to go in, because we really only get one chance to do things. If you are in an expensive, fee-paying school, I guess more things might be possible. I am not sure what happens in a state school in terms of their funding, but in a Catholic school where we are operating on very limited budgets and limited government funding, I guess, and fairly low school fees, you have to be very careful and prioritise very carefully. Once you make a commitment to look after the needs of all the kids that you have got in your school and not just some of the kids you have got in your school, it seems to me inevitable that you are going to be looking to go more into vocational education.

Mr PEARCE—I have one final question. As I understand it, you have the students, the employers, yourselves and SCISCO. I can understand those four groups working together, but why has it been so successful for you? What is it that has brought those four disparate groups together to come up with a very good result? Has it largely been the people running SCISCO and their interface with the local industry or has it been your advocacy directly into the local industry? What do you put that success down to?

Mr Peacock—I can give an opinion first and perhaps Ann would like to comment after that. It is having the right people at the school level who have got the skills to be able to drive this particular agenda, it is having linkages between a number of schools that wanted to go in a like direction and it is also government funding that became available at the time. All those things were moving us towards a particular outcome. That is the way that I would see it. What do you think, Ann?

Ms Rebgetz—Yes. When I came into the position, SCISCO was a really good springboard for things to take off from. As for my own interest, I spent 10 years in the Northern Territory in a range of situations, from Darwin to Indigenous communities. I had a lot of experience in vocational education and I was very keen on that area. I worked a lot in industry. I only came into teaching full time when I took this job as vocational education coordinator; I was working in industry as well at that point. Vocational education was my passion. In the Territory we were quite well funded—much more than in Queensland—and when I lived in Jabiru I ran a vocational education centre for the whole of the community, catering to a wide range of needs.

So I could see the potential coming into this position, and at the same time all these government changes like the introduction of the VET subjects and the SCISCO partnership

allowed things to happen. Then it was just a question of how to go about things most productively. Within the school infrastructure I worked with people—and they are all sitting around me now—who were also very keen for things to happen. Not every teacher wants those sorts of things to happen, so you work with the people who you know you are going to be successful with and then—as I said initially, everyone wants to be part of a successful model—everyone comes on board. Our parent community was also very supportive with the careers expo and what happened there.

Mr Pahoff—I am the president of the P&F, so I represent the parents of the Marymount community. The reason why the program is successful at this school is quite simple: it is purely based on the staff. You have heard how staff are not just doing what they are paid for; they are going way above that, and we as parents are very grateful for what they do. Vocational education programs allow these kids to get out into the outside world and experience what is going on. What that does—and you saw the results of that earlier today—is give them some self-confidence; their self-esteem goes up. Therefore, when they leave this community it is an easy progression. We are totally supportive of it. The parents do get involved—for example, we are involved in the careers expo. It is a great set-up. The parents gather in the hall over there and represent different professions, communities, trades or whatever, and talk to kids who are interested. That is how we get involved.

But it seems that when you do this in a school you put stress on your finances, and I do not believe you should. I think that funding for this sort of program should certainly be expanded, but not to the detriment of an academic program. What happens here is that funds come into a pool and, as Bob said, the pool is only so deep. If, for example, you expand your voc ed, you have to be very careful that this does not mean that, as we have heard, some teachers cannot spend the time they want to spend on other programs. So it is imperative that funding to this area is improved. I guess that sums it up. I hope that I have conveyed the feelings of our parent meetings, and I hope that the gravity of the situation is something you take away with you. It is very important.

Ms Power-West—I support what Bob, Ann and the P&F president have said. Ninety per cent of the success of a VET program in a school comes from the generosity, commitment and support of the staff. If you do not have that, you will not have a good VET program. Organisations such as SCISCO—and we have many very good organisations like it servicing all of the 74 Catholic schools across Queensland—help and support you in getting some students into structured workplace learning and into SATs, but they are a small part of the equation. Without those groups, it would be much more challenging for the schools to get students into the workplace. But the drive, initiative and commitment come very definitely from the top down in the schools—from the vision of the principal and the ability to harness the goodwill and generosity of the teachers who are behind it.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—This is a bit of background. I come from a college system in Tasmania which is devoted to year 11 and 12. They were very much pioneers in VET, so I fully appreciate the issues that you have raised. We met with your students this morning and they are a fine bunch and a testament to your college. However, I have to point out to you that they see no resourcing issue in your careers area. I did ask them specifically about that. They think you do a marvellous job—everything is fine. I do take on board the resourcing issue. There is no doubt about it; it is a major issue, and that is replicated in every place that we go to. Questions were

raised about equity of access to courses. That issue is very much a nationwide one. We certainly take quality assurance on board, because that seems to be the tension there.

I would like to ask you about a couple of things—one of them is a very down to earth issue. I assume that your computer system is networked. You talk about people accessing your vocational education material through your very limited area there—which is very busy. Are they not able to access it on any computer in this college?

Mr Sessarago—They are able to access the network via the library, but there are certain programs that come on CD-ROMs that we use in the careers office.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So you cannot put it on to the network?

Mr Sessarago—No. They access that through our office.

Ms Rebgetz—Plus the fact that, often when students are researching that information, it is good to be talking to them about it and saying, ‘Have you thought about this?’ et cetera. They were not critical there because I guess they have just not had that experience. But if you were to come to them on a certain day when they had been in the supermarket queue at the careers office waiting for their ticket, they could get very stroppy. They can sometimes, can’t they!

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I think how you have developed this very supportive program with that resource is fantastic, but I just thought that might have helped in terms of trying to overcome a practical thing. Is it a Catholic education office here—if that is what that thing is?

Ms Power-West—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—ANTA funding comes through your systemic—

Ms Power-West—It comes through the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, and I manage that program for the Catholic sector in Queensland.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I will go to the individual schools and colleges. Do you think it would be more advantageous if you could access ANTA funding via your school and your projects rather than going through the system? You cannot answer that probably.

Mr McDonald—Be careful.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I suppose it is an equity issue. I have put that on the record because I think it is an interesting issue. You talked about leadership and commitment to VET and the right people to do that as being absolutely crucial in schools. In establishing VET in schools, do you think there is a tension in a school and among its staff over what the purpose of a school is—education—and what VET is setting out to do?

Mr Peacock—I think that there would be some in the community who might see that a school heavily involved in VET has a very instrumentalist view of what education is about. I do not believe that that is true. I think that is a rather old-fashioned concept of where voc ed fits into the broad vision of education. We do not hold an instrumentalist view of education but we

do see as vital the need to articulate our students toward future employment. The days are gone when you can simply sit back, offer an academic program, send large numbers of people to university and pay no regard whatsoever to what employers will want from those people by way of skills and attitudes when they graduate. Those days are gone. We do not hold an instrumentalist view about education; we hold a view that is the broadest possible view of meeting the needs of kids and valuing knowledge for knowledge's sake.

Ms Rebgetz—One of the big issues is convergence. I have never thought of VET as being dedicated, being separate, whereas a lot of people have thought about it and that is the way it has been approached in a lot of states. I have always strongly believed in a convergent approach. That is what we are seeing happening now in terms of the category A subjects with embedded VET. So that convergence is strongly linked to our need for a high skills economy base—the link between high skills and a flourishing economy is so strong. In that sense looking ahead and projecting that vision is very important.

On another point that Michael made, I have seen so many students whose self-esteem has improved. They have chosen the correct subjects for them in year 11, they have got VHAs and many of them are now at university and they never thought they could be at university. So that other concept of what I call the McDonald's degree, where you are trying to get them a degree but with all the work skills as well, is crucial to the vision as an educator.

Mr McDonald—We have said a lot about the key being having the right staff, and by having the right staff you create a new culture in schools. That is what we need to do to have the success we have had here. I had seen the change in the culture of getting that combination; as Ann said, it is not either/or but a combination of students taking on the traditional academic subjects and the newer industry skills type subjects. To do that you have got to give those subjects the same status within the school, and that has happened. The students that achieve in those areas have to be given the kudos, and I have been involved in many activities at Marymount where that is very evident, in everything from their awards night to weekly assemblies where that kudos is given to students across the board, and rewards also for good work. And there is the spreading of the resources across all the subject areas. They are all the things that create a new and right culture for it to be successful. I think to try to change structures or change the culture without really creating a new one is the difference between very successful programs, successful programs and not so successful programs.

On funding, one thing that is not directly in the vocational education funding is that our systems are funded through a once a year grant from the Commonwealth government. We rely very much on our Commonwealth grant, which is about 70 per cent of our income compared to about 30 per cent from the state. That is a once a year funding that is based on August numbers. The more we go into alternative pathways, the more we are finding that, for example, one of our schools will drop 30 or 40 students in a year between the beginning of the year and August. August is one of our lowest enrolment points, which means that, while we have got to staff for the number of students we have at the beginning of the year, if we are very successful in the industry placement area and putting kids into industry and traineeships then we are being punished. I have got schools that lose up to 30 or 40 students during the year, and a lot of those students will be going into jobs that have been provided through the school programs. Schools need to staff to accommodate those kids at the beginning of the year but we are only funded per student in August.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is a good point.

CHAIR—The time has gone. We would like to pursue a lot of those issues further but unfortunately we have some employers waiting outside. Thank you very much for your time and some very valuable input. Again, congratulations on the tremendous work you are doing here. It is very impressive.

BEAUFILS, Mr Raymond Anthony, Managing Director, RJ Beaufils and Son Pty Ltd

BROWN, Mr Robert James, Assistant Store Manager, Big W

GRAHAM, Mrs Karen Lee, Education Services Officer- Work Experience Coordinator, The Gold Coast Bulletin

HANNAFORD, Mrs Karen, Director, Lollipop Lane Child Care

LINDSAY, Mrs Robyn Margaret, Company Director/Owner, Sunburn

RAMSAY, Mr David, Career Consultant, South Coast Industry Schools Coordinating Organisation (SCISCO)

WARD, Ms Fran, Training Manager, Sea World Nara Resort

CHAIR—Let me introduce my colleagues: Chris Pearce, the member for Aston from Victoria; Margaret May, whom you know—your local member here; Sid Sidebottom, who is about to come in, the member for Braddon in Tasmania; and I am Kerry Bartlett, the member for Macquarie, which is the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. We are trying to get feedback on how vocational education and training is working in schools, and we appreciate your time as employers. To begin with, perhaps we might ask you about the benefits you see for yourselves in having students placed in your employment. Do you do it just to provide them with training, or are there benefits for you? Does that lead on to employees for you—do you take many of those students on as employees after they leave school? Do you see it as a valuable means of recruiting future employees? Perhaps you might just elaborate on that to begin with. With your first comment, could you mention the name of your business and what sort of work you do.

Mrs Hannaford—I am from Lollipop Lane Child Care. We take students for work placement. Yes, we do see them as future people to employ. We have employed two from here last year. They came on as school based trainees, but we knew them previously. So we do see them as being people whom we do look to employ. In child care you really need to have a certain personality, so it is great to have them come over so you can see them work and see what sort of people they are and how they interact with the children.

Mrs MAY—It has given you an opportunity to evaluate them while you have had them with you.

Mrs Hannaford—Yes, and it is great for us to see what type of people we would want to employ, because you can see their personalities and how they work and their work ethic, which is really important for us in child-care skills. When you are dealing with children, you cannot make a mistake when you do employ people. So, having them there beforehand, we can ask not to have them back if they do not work out. Once we employ someone, it is very hard for the children for staff to be swapping. Parents do not like it either.

CHAIR—So some of them start as trainees while they are at school; they are doing traineeships?

Mrs Hannaford—We have had quite a few come on work placement and, yes, we did take some on as school based trainees. They finished year 12 last year and they work full time for us now.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That would help with the transition for your organisation and the school here?

Mrs Hannaford—Certainly. The parents knew them, the children knew them. It was not like we were bringing in anybody new; it was gradual—they used to come over two days a week, so the parents would see them. When they started to work five days a week, the parents knew who they were. Yes, it is certainly great.

Mrs MAY—Did your centre grow to warrant those positions being there? Did you have more numbers or did those vacancies arise?

Mrs Hannaford—We actually needed just some extra hours. We have to have enough people to cover the number of children in attendance and we needed people who were willing to work shorter hours. It is very difficult to employ someone who might just want to work two until 6.30. However, a student at school does not have to give up much of their school day and then they can come in and work the afternoon for us. That worked out really well for us. The school was great, I have to say, with the way that they interacted with us. We did work with other schools and trialled two others from other schools, and it did not work out with them.

Mr PEARCE—What was the difference between the schools? Was it the people involved?

Mrs Hannaford—The other schools did not, I guess, see us as being the girls' priority. With Marymount it was, 'Well, that is their job and they must turn up,' whereas some of the other schools would ring on the day and say, 'Oh, we've got a sports carnival this afternoon and they can't come.' I would say, 'They have to come; I have to comply with regulations.' They were not very flexible, whereas Marymount were. In addition, I said, 'This day suits me best,' and they moved their classes around a little bit and let the students change the days and the hours they did their studies. So it worked out.

Mrs MAY—So you found the school very flexible in that way in working in with you?

Mrs Hannaford—Yes, plus the students had a really good attitude—but that is because I chose them for their attitude.

Ms Ward—I am from Sea World Nara Resort. We have 60 school based trainees on our property at the moment. We trialled the program last year, primarily as a recruitment program. We took students from years 11 and 12. A lot of the students who completed their Senior Certificate last year are still working on our property. Some of the year 11s are still working on the property and some of them have elected to concentrate on their year 12 studies. The benefit to us was in hospitality. We had this pool of students who were available in school holidays, at weekends and of an evening, which were particularly our busiest times. The way that the

traineeship was structured was that they would actually work in different areas of the hotel throughout the year. At the end of their certificate III, they were multiskilled and could work in several different areas, which made them a lot more employable as well.

A number of students from Marymount were engaged in the program. From the schools that were supportive last year, we then looked at the schools that we would work with this year, and obviously Marymount was one of those. I think the difference here is the support structures for the students. There is a culture within the school that makes it possible for those students who are not just academic students to be positive about their learning and their career paths as well, even if they are not planning on going to university. There does not seem to be that line drawn in this school as it is in some other schools regarding vocational education compared to more purely academic education. The school is very supportive.

Mrs Graham—I am from the *Gold Coast Bulletin*. I look after work experience at the paper. We are basically giving year 12 students the opportunity to see whether they would like to take on journalism as a career path. They come to us for a week. Basically, they go out with a journalist during that time and experience the news room. They are asked to write a story, a news report that is usually printed in the paper. They experience the whole journalism side of things while they are there, so they can make a decision for their future.

CHAIR—So you have a one-week block rather than an ongoing number of hours each week?

Mrs Graham—Yes, so they have the continuity of the week; they can follow a story through from start to finish.

Mrs MAY—How many students in each year would you take?

Mrs Graham—I run on a school calendar, so I have usually one high school student and one university student coming in each week of the school year.

Mrs MAY—Every week?

Mrs Graham—Yes.

Mrs MAY—That is a big commitment; it is a lot of work.

Mrs Graham—Yes, it is. We also look after photographic for years 11 and 12 students who are looking at taking that, but they only go in there for three days. They observe. They follow a photographer for the three days to see what the job entails. I also take students from universities and colleges who are doing graphic art. We cannot incorporate the high schools into that, unfortunately.

CHAIR—Do your new employees, when you need them, tend to come from people who have had work experience there?

Mrs Graham—We have employed students who have been on the work experience program. They get a definite idea as to whether or not that is what they want to pursue as a career. We

find that, after a week, they have an idea from that and know whether they want to make the commitment to be a journalist.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You have separate photographers from your journalists; they are not required to take photographs at this stage?

Mrs Graham—That is right, yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Most of your cadets—is that what you call them when they start off?

Mrs Graham—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Are they coming straight in or do they do journalism university degrees or whatever?

Mrs Graham—We have two cadets at the moment who will need to take part in a university course. We offer a scholarship with Bond University on the Gold Coast: they come to us for a semester and go to Bond for a semester. Most of the cadets we have in the news room are university students.

Mr PEARCE—Are you all involved with SCISCO? Those who are: what is good about it? Those who are not: why are you not involved in it? I would be interested to know the answers.

Ms Ward—Sea World Nara is involved with SCISCO. We use SCISCO as our first point of call. Particularly with the size of the operation that we run with trainees, SCISCO helps to do that first cull. They know our property and they know what we are looking for.

Mr PEARCE—So it saves you time, effort and money?

Ms Ward—Yes. The savings are huge.

Mr PEARCE—Is everybody involved with SCISCO? Is most of your work directly with the school, then?

Mrs Lindsay—Yes.

Mrs Hannaford—No.

Mrs Lindsay—I only recently used SCISCO to employ someone in a full-time traineeship. We put an ad in the paper with direction to SCISCO. I think we had 100 applicants, of which 10 were sent to us. We now have a very good full-time office traineeship. We also have a number of school based traineeships. Two of the three have gone on to full-time traineeships since last year and to certificate III. The third one was our daughter—we did not want her to work for us, and she did not want to work for us. They are working out very well. We see them as, hopefully, long-term employees and we see it as bringing a young generation through into the business.

Mrs MAY—Sunburn is swimwear and costumes, is it?

Mrs Lindsay—Yes. We have 10 retail stores between Noosa and Coolangatta.

Mr Brown—I will just turn to the first question that you raised about the benefits for Big W with the traineeships that we currently run. It is good for both the employee and employer in the way that we have done a structural change nationally in our company. We are looking at developing trainee managers and moving people up through the ranks. At the moment all the trainees are doing retail training, through which they reach levels and get certificates. It is good because we can see that these people are putting in the hard work in retail. Retail is not easy, although a lot of people think it is easy. It gives these people the chance to prove themselves; it gives them a bit of ownership and the responsibility of turning up for work. It develops them.

We have only just gone to this new structure. It only took place last month. We are looking at recruiting a lot of people at the moment because we do have a shortage of people. So, with this traineeship, once they develop and go through their certificate in retail operations it will give them an opportunity to move through the company. The opportunities we have are enormous at the moment. Before we had the new structure it was not that big. We had a full team in most stores. But, now that we have gone to a new structure, we are looking at bringing up the younger generation through traineeships and giving them an opportunity in the work force in that sense.

CHAIR—What are the advantages for you in taking on a student as a trainee while they are at school compared to taking on someone who has left school as a trainee? Are there advantages or are there disadvantages?

Mr Brown—There are advantages. At the moment we do not have very many trainees at all in any of the stores, because it is a new structure. For someone who is going through their retail certificate, by the time they have finished their certificate and done all their training, the traineeship gives them more experience than someone from an employment agency who wants to start off in a store. Have I answered your question, or do you want me to elaborate?

CHAIR—Do you as an employer get a payment from the government for starting a trainee?

Mr Brown—Yes.

CHAIR—If they have started when they are at school, do you still get that payment?

Mr Brown—I am pretty sure we do. I am not 100 per cent sure, because the trainees are dealt with by HR at our head office. It is all looked after through our head office.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I am interested, because it has national implications, in what you said about a shortage of trainee managerial retail people. Why do you think there is a shortage?

Mr Brown—The reason is that, as I said, we have just gone over to a new structure. Under the previous management structure we had managers who worked through the day, the department managers—they are now called business managers—and we had sales managers. Basically these people have all been promoted and moved up in the ranks. Some of the department managers who worked through the day have become night managers. We are trying to improve standards within the stores by having more people work at night, when the majority of the work gets done,

and we are trying to get trainees to fill the positions of people who have moved on. A lot of our sales managers have now become assistant store managers and assistant store managers have moved up to management. We have just had a national restructuring of the whole company, which has made opportunities for all the school based trainees and all employees in general. Everyone is getting moved up and we now have all these positions for trainee managers to come into, follow through and work their way up from into higher positions in the future.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Exciting times.

Mr Brown—Yes. There are a lot of opportunities and that is why this traineeship is a good thing. It gives the students an opportunity to see what it is like, and there are a lot of benefits for them in the future.

Mrs MAY—So you would envisage a lot of these students coming on board full time when they have finished school and had that time with you? You would be looking at taking them on?

Mr Brown—Yes. They do work for us.

Mrs MAY—But will they do so when they have finished that school to work program?

Mr Brown—Yes. A lot of the trainees at the store I worked at previously are casuals or permanent part-timers and some of them are already asking to be in certain roles, which is good. We see that these people are looking for certain positions and, if they put in the hard work with their study and pass their exams or whatever they have to achieve to get there, the potential at the moment is just enormous within our company because the restructuring that we have just gone through is massive. As I said, we have a shortage of trainees at this stage and we are looking for trainees.

CHAIR—Ray, how does that work in your business?

Mr Beaufils—We are electrical contractors. We have had a couple of school based trainees. From our point of view it is good because the kids come and see if they like what they are doing. That is a big plus, because no-one does well if they do not like what they are doing. Also, with their school work they can choose subjects best suited to our field, which helps them with both their tech work and their school work. I did not want apprentices, because for six months they are no good to you. If you are getting them one day a week, at least you can train them up so that by the time they are ready to come to you they are useful and can get straight into it. I now have four apprentices. We originally had one from Marymount, and he is just about to come through as a tradesman.

CHAIR—So you take them on as apprentices after they finish year 12?

Mr Beaufils—That is right.

CHAIR—They have done a day a week in years 11 and 12?

Mr Beaufils—Yes, and they do a day a week at tech. So they are into what they are doing, and they know whether they are going to like it and what they are doing. You find that after it they are ready to go. Those are their growing years, too.

CHAIR—So the day a week they do at tech is while they are at school?

Mr Beaufils—Yes. It helps us a great deal because when they come out they are ready.

CHAIR—One point that a number of our submissions from employers have made is that there is still a degree of uncertainty about school based vocational education compared to, say, qualifications earned through TAFE, tech and so on. Would any of you be able to comment on that? I suppose it is a bit hard since you are taking on students who are doing vocational education at school. Do you think, Ray, that the school based training is equivalent to the tech based training?

Mr Beaufils—It is probably different because they are concentrating on one field. At school they are still doing all their sports and all their school work, but they would take up a subject that was suited to the trade they are going to go into from our side. They do not waste time doing subjects. Most kids do not know what they are going to do anyway. If they have an idea, at least they can concentrate on the subjects that suit them. It does not muck the school around, either. Instead of having kids in classes who are wasting their time, the kids are doing subjects that are going to help them in the long run.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Do you think the kids bring you something, apart from just the labour side of it? Do you think they bring something to your business?

Mr Beaufils—Of course they do: enthusiasm.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So it has a positive spin. We do not hear a lot of that; we always think it is a one-way street.

Mr Beaufils—No; they are fantastic.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is great. It is nice to hear.

Ms Ward—The energy levels throughout our property have risen. Also, now that our department trainees—who felt that they were at the bottom rung—are teaching and going through the learning process with school based trainees, it has brought them up as well. Everybody is going up. The students who are on the school based traineeships are really proud to be there as well.

Mr Ramsay—We at SCISCO are sometimes an employer, of course. We need staff like everybody else. In those cases we do the same process. We get students coming in from the schools to do work experience at SCISCO. Of course, you would be mad not to check them out while they are there to see what their skills are like. If someone comes along who is very keen and interested in what we are doing—recruitment and all those sorts of areas—we can take them on in school based training as while, and we do. I think we have two of them at the

moment, whom we are fostering and bringing along. We are hoping that one of the two will stay with us in a full-time role at the end of year 12, which is next year.

Apart from that, after talking to a lot of employers on the Gold Coast, we have found that most of them are very impressed with the school based traineeship program. For example, we find that they sometimes lose their full-time apprentices for a block of up to six weeks or that sort of thing. With the school based traineeships, the trainees do not go for a whole block. They are with employers for one day a week and they do their TAFE during that week as well—so employers are not employing someone who will all of a sudden take off for six weeks so that they do not see them—and then they come back and do that, so the employers love that. They like having their students and their employees on-site most of the time. Some of the training is done on-site as well, so they certainly appreciate all those sorts of things. I find that they are more than happy with the training and the standard that is being provided.

CHAIR—There are some obvious benefits; what about the downsides? Are there any costs in terms of supervision and that sort of thing, or are they negligible?

Mrs Graham—I would say they are negligible.

Ms Ward—I think the federal incentives you receive cover the downtime you have with the trainees. So, while they are learning a new task and need a lot more supervision and direct instruction, those additional wages you need to cover the trainer or supervisor and the trainees while they are non-productive are covered by those federal incentives.

Mr Beaufls—There is another thing with tradespeople. When I was growing up we had to leave in year 10. That was it: ‘Get out and do your trade.’ Now it is encouraging kids to go on and do year 12, which helps them so much when they get older.

Mrs MAY—So you would say they are better employees, then?

Mr Beaufls—Yes. Going on to year 12 is so much better.

Mrs MAY—We heard from students this morning who said that, if they had not had that traineeship, they would have left school at year 10, but that had kept them at school.

Mr Beaufls—That was encouraging: ‘Get out and get a job.’

CHAIR—It is obviously an area of rapid change, and the growth in the number of students doing vocational education in schools has risen rapidly in the past few years. Do you have any suggestions about what we can do better? From your point of view as employers, what are the aspects of VET in schools where we as a government can do something to improve the way it works?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is apart from giving them more money.

Mrs Graham—A lot of the schools I deal with on the Gold Coast do not have a permanent person looking after these students. They have someone in another role, whether it be a teaching role or an office position, doing it as a part-time part of their work. The schools that have a

permanent person in such a role are much more organised. The students are very keen and they are better prepared when they come in. I get a lot more of those schools coming in than the other schools. So encouraging it more in schools and giving each of them the opportunity to employ a person in that role would, therefore, encourage the students to take part in it.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—What about the paperwork and administration? Is there much of that to do? Do you find it a burden?

Mr Beaufils—No.

Ms Ward—I think the Registered Training Organisations and New Apprenticeships Centres probably do the majority of that for you.

Mrs MAY—Were you all approached in the first instance to take on trainees or did you already know about the program? How did you all first find out about it?

Mr Beaufils—I was approached about it by the school. One of the bigger things with the school was that they followed up. They did not just give you someone and then say, ‘Okay, then.’

Mrs MAY—They stayed in contact with you?

Mr Beaufils—Yes, they rang and said, ‘How’s he going? Can we do anything to help?’ That was a big plus, too, because you do not want to just be lobbed with someone, and it is your responsibility.

Mrs MAY—But that would be a two-way street if you were having problems.

Mr Beaufils—Yes, that is right.

Mrs MAY—So you can discuss any of those sorts of problems that arise?

Mr Beaufils—For employees, if you got into trouble you would be doing it straightaway anyway. You are not going to put up with it. But for them to chase it up, too, was fantastic.

CHAIR—Has that ever been a problem, though, Ray?

Mr Beaufils—In other areas; yes.

Mrs MAY—But not with these people?

Mr Beaufils—No, not with this; with Centrelink and places like that. They just do not care.

Mrs MAY—That is interesting.

CHAIR—Are there any parting shots, if you like—any key message you would like us to take back to the government about how we can make it work better?

Ms Ward—I will just mention one of the problems we find. I deal with 16 high schools on the Gold Coast at the moment. Some of the schools seem to have a fairly seamless pathway between vocational education and its credibility, and the academic subjects. But there is an inconsistency within the schools about the value of vocational education. I know that some of the trainees we have come from a very supportive school environment for that, such as Marymount. Some of them do not have that support structure in the school because their maths or geography teachers do not see that they do not have a day off school a week; that it is actually another pathway for them to complete their senior certificate. That is a little bit inconsistent throughout the school system.

CHAIR—It is; you are right, Fran.

Mrs MAY—It is a status problem.

Ms Ward—Yes, I think so.

CHAIR—There are some schools where VET is still seen very much as a second-tier or last option for less academic students.

Ms Ward—Yes, that is right.

CHAIR—But there are schools, such as this, where it is an integrated part of the program and held in as high esteem as the more academic courses.

Mrs Hannaford—We had one student who said to the staff, ‘Is this all you’re ever going to do? I’m going to be doing something better.’ She did not last long. She had come from a school where exactly that sort of thing was going on: ‘I’m just going to do this for the moment because I really want to get a real job and be a real teacher.’ Of course, the teachers in the child-care centre were very put out that that was, I guess, coming from what they were telling them at school.

Ms Ward—I think, too, that there is a perception that kids who choose to do a school based traineeship are non-academic and that they are doing that because they are not studying for an OP. Last year, out of 60 school based trainees, 28 of them were OP eligible. We had kids from supportive schools who balanced the school based traineeship with their academic studies and came out with OPs as high as 4 and 6, which is very high. So it can be balanced. It is not just the kids who are not going to succeed anywhere else who go into voc ed.

Mr Ramsay—I think it comes down to the training culture within schools as well. Some are very supportive, as we have talked about. We visit a lot of schools and talk to a lot of teachers and vocational people in the schools, and I am surprised daily at the number of teachers who do not understand how the vocational system works. Sometimes they may even talk to the students and say, ‘No, don’t do that. That is vocational education; you need to go down this path and do these sorts of things.’ I think the kids pick up all these vibes that come through from different people. In a supportive school, like this one here, for example, all of them understand exactly what it is all about, and there is equality between both systems.

I think we should let people know what school based traineeships are and what a vocational education is. There are still a lot of people out there in the community who probably do not even know what a school based traineeship is or have not even heard of it. Employers we talk to say, 'What's this? What's this vocational stuff? What's work experience?' They are still very unsure about how it all works and they are very timid: 'We're not sure. We don't want to take on people because we don't understand what's available and what's out there.' Once they do they usually come on board and are great supporters of it, and away they go. They are up and running with that training culture, and it develops very rapidly.

CHAIR—There is still a communication problem, but the culture is changing in many schools and in the community generally.

Mr Ramsay—I think so.

Mrs Lindsay—Our daughter did a traineeship and certificate III in business administration, and she got a first offer through QTAC for the Sunshine Coast University. So it is not necessarily just for those who want to go on and be employed. There are opportunities through the rank system to get in in the same way as the OP students.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. That has been very helpful. Thank you for the work you are doing with these young adults, too.

Committee adjourned at 11.58 a.m.