HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Factors influencing the employment of young people

SALE

Tuesday, 8 April 1997

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Members

Mr Charles (Chair)

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

Matter referred for inquiry into and report on:

Factors influencing the employment of young people.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SCHOOL FORUM

Factors influencing the employment of young people

SALE

Tuesday, 8 April 1997

Present

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mrs Elson

Mr Marek

Mr Mossfield

The committee met at 9.07 a.m.

Mr Charles took the chair.

PARTICIPANTS

Catholic College, Sale
Claire Balwin
Liam Hogan
Jess Jones
Daniel Millane
Brett Speed

Catholic Regional College, Traralgon
Dan Blake
Prue Bergmeier
Aimee Glowacki
Kate Lyons
Ryan O'Doherty
Josh Pearse
Mr Peter Schneider (Head of senior campus)

Gippsland Grammar School

Sallie Bowen
Josie Graham
Shannon O'Donnell
Bronwyn Richards
Jacqui Smith
Tim Wallis
Allison Warren

Maffra Secondary College
Brad Bennett
Hayden Burgiel
Simon Dyce
Natasha Gieschen
Belinda Tricker

Sale College
Cassie Gilmore
Diana Neumann
Leah Staker
Matthew Wheeler
Rachael Wheeler
Les Willis
Mr Ian Wallis (Principal)

Traralgon Secondary College
Kelly Dunstan
Lauren Gillam
Leonie Harris
Donna Healey
Nicole Langley

[9.07 a.m.]

CHAIR—Good morning. I declare open this school forum on the inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people. The purpose of the inquiry is to consult widely and to produce recommendations for government action that will help promote the employment prospects of our youth. The committee has conducted similar school forums in Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania. Students and members of the committee agreed that the forums are a valuable opportunity to share concerns and express views about this important issue. This school forum is one of a series with students in Nowra and Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, Sale and Seymour in Victoria.

The committee considers the school forums to be an important part of the inquiry process. So far the committee has received over 100 submissions and conducted public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Alice Springs and several regional centres in Queensland and New South Wales. For the most part, the evidence collected has come from employers, government and non-government agencies. Through this school forum all of you will have the opportunity to voice your views and your opinions on this important matter.

The agenda and issues for discussions have been sent and you have had prior opportunity to study the issues. Some of the issues we wish to discuss include the effectiveness and appropriateness of the secondary education system, vocational education in schools, employer perceptions of young people, apprenticeships and traineeships, youth wages, income assistance and any other issues you may wish to discuss. To help structure the debate I will introduce each section with a few comments based on evidence that has already been provided to the committee. I will then seek your comments and your views on the matters under discussion. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand and when you have been given a microphone please give your name, your age and the school you are from. Thank you for coming today.

If I could say at the beginning that this is a committee of the House of Representatives. It is an all party committee and the people sitting up here in the front represent the Liberal Party, the National Party and the Labor Party. We are not a government appointed committee but we self-nominate and get elected to do this job so we are here because we want to be here.

We have had a number of these forums and they have gone very well. If you are bashful and shy then we will not get very far so we really need you to stand up and say what you think and not what you think we want to hear. We really need to know what you think. If you are active then we will not only enjoy it but we will learn heaps and it will help us to come to recommendations that will help make you more employable, we hope, and help make more job opportunities for our young people.

Having said all that, why don't we get under way. The first topic, as I recall, is the

secondary education system. We have had lots of comments from your peers in other states, in other schools, in other regions and in the cities that indicate that perhaps the school system is too structured towards university and offers not enough opportunity for the approximate 70 per cent of you who will not go to university or who certainly will not complete it.

Having said that, I have probably talked enough. Who would like to tell us, to start off with and keep it going, what you think of the school system and the opportunities it affords you to get the kinds of base training and understanding of the workplace or work issues that you are going to need to find satisfying jobs and to hold careers that offer you opportunities in the future? Hullo? Are we all awake?

RACHAEL WHEELER—I am 18 years old and I am from Sale College. I would agree with what you have just said about how the school goes about directing us towards university. We have a lot of seminars on going to university and how we go about getting into the university but we do not have a lot of seminars about how we apply for jobs and how we get into traineeships. Usually we have to go about that ourselves and go over to the CES and apply. In order to get kids going for traineeships a little more and not getting depressed because they do not want to go to university, we could have a few more seminars about traineeships and jobs.

LAUREN GILLAM—I am 17 years old and I am from Traralgon Secondary College. I think that the reason that there is so much focus on university is that the government is scared. There are no jobs for anyone out there and they focus so much on university because they see this as a way of patching up the problem. There is nothing else they can do.

CHAIR—I see. If we told you that there were unfilled vacancies for cooks, for chefs, for fitters and turners, for mechanics and for carpenters all over the country, what would you say to that?

Mr MAREK—It is incredible. We have been talking to people who have got jobs and want people and no one applies.

RACHAEL WHEELER—Because we do not realise that they are out there.

Mr MAREK—How would you feel about grades 10, 11 and 12 if the schooling system catered more for a process of being able to do more vocational work? In, say, grades 10 and 11, if you wanted to go into the mechanical field, you could be farmed out to host employers and still come back to school on Wednesdays or Fridays and do the mandatory subjects like maths and English. How would that sort of thing go with people?

JOSH PEARSE—I am from Catholic Regional College, Traralgon and I am 18. I think that would be a far better idea for a majority of people. I want to be a chef and I am

finding it hard to stay at school in my last year. I do a TAFE course as well and just the one day I am away I would rather go away to a TAFE college than a school because at school it is so structured and all the subjects you do are towards getting into university courses and they are not giving you the hands-on training you need to get into a job. You need to be in the industry working every now and then doing what you want to do, so you can get an overview of what you need to do to get a job. That is what the schools are not allowing us to do, or at least they are going the wrong way for a majority of people.

DAN BLAKE—I am from Catholic Regional College, Traralgon and I am 16 years old. I believe the same thing as Josh does. I believe that some people are not as academically bright as others and you should be focusing more on what they are better at, such as trades and vocational training and help them in that way.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Could I ask a question about literacy and numeracy. We have been told by some employers that they feel young people coming out of school now are not equipped well enough in literacy and numeracy skills. Would you agree with this? Are there any comments on that at all?

JOSH PEARSE—I agree with that in a lot of cases because at present the schooling structure is so structured that they are going off in the wrong way. In maths they are teaching us very complex things which a lot of people such as chefs and mechanics are not going to need. All they need to know how to do is add up a bunch of numbers or multiply a few things to work out costs of things. They do not need to know complex things that they are teaching at the moment. Even with English there is a lot of complex work. I agree that there could be a less structured thing.

LES WILLIS—I am from Sale College and I am 16 years old. I have seen a lot of examples of fellow students who have trouble spelling simple words and having maths skills. I do not know whether it is actually a secondary institution problem or whether it is from the primary schools or lower learning areas.

SIMON DYCE—I attend Maffra Secondary College. My father is a builder and a lot of people are in the fitter and turner area. Most of them do not use centimetres, they only use millimetres, and all we are taught at Maffra Secondary College or any other school is centimetres.

CHAIR—How many of you plan to go to university? How many do not? By the show of hands, it is about equal.

Mr MAREK—Those going to university, is it because you want to, is it because you feel you have to—is there any particular reason why you have decided to go to university? And do you know what you are going there for? I have spoken to a lot of people who go to university and still do not know what they want to do, they just want to go to university. Will somebody talk on that?

BRONWYN RICHARDS—From Gippsland Grammar, 16. I want to go to university not because I really want to go but because my course that I want to do, which is veterinary science, is only offered at universities. I reckon it would be really good to have it as a TAFE course where it is more hands-on, because at university you do lots of theory and have one week on big farm animals, and that is what I want to do. So I do not know why I am going to uni, but I am.

Mr MAREK—Is anyone going to university because they feel as though they have to?

AIMEE GLOWACKI—I am 15 years old and I go to CRC in Traralgon. I am going to university because I have to for the job that I want to do. I have to go through the proper training academy, through the university to actually get to what I want to do.

CHAIR—What do you want to do?

AIMEE GLOWACKI—I would like to try and become an officer in the Royal Australian Navy, and I need to go through the training academy to get into there.

CHAIR—Out of interest, what made you decide on that for a career?

AIMEE GLOWACKI—Just my interest in the navy, and it seems like a really good job to have, to defend your country and to do stuff.

CHAIR—Did the fact that the navy is here help make your decision?

AIMEE GLOWACKI—I did not really understand that question.

CHAIR—There are not many facilities for rocket scientists around Sale, are there?

AIMEE GLOWACKI—No, there are not.

CHAIR—Do you have much idea about what rocket scientists do?

AIMEE GLOWACKI—No, I do not.

CHAIR—But you have a pretty good idea of what a career in the navy is all about?

AIMEE GLOWACKI—Yes, I do. My dad was in the navy as well, so that has given me a better idea.

CHAIR—That makes sense.

Mrs ELSON—What do the ones who are not going to university want to do when they leave school?

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I am from Catholic Regional College, Traralgon and I am 16. I am not going to university because I would like to do a trade—a fitter and turner or a mechanic or something like that. I applied for a few apprenticeships last year, but I was knocked back because I was too young. I did the aptitude test and that, but they wanted year 11 students. I am not really interested in university; I would rather go and do a trade and start work.

Mrs ELSON—What created an interest in that trade? Did someone show you what went on in that industry?

RYAN O'DOHERTY—My brother is a mechanic and I do a lot of that sort of work, living on a farm. It is what I am interested in.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What about career advice while you are still at school—are you given any advice as to which jobs are available and what subjects you need, to get into particular jobs? How is the career advice in the schools?

RACHAEL WHEELER—I am from Sale College. The advice given to us at our school is extremely good. If ever we need any help, we always have a careers adviser to go to. So I have nothing negative to say about the careers advice. We always have someone to go to if we need help.

Mr MOSSFIELD—How many career advisers are there in your school?

RACHAEL WHEELER—I know of the one; see, it is all a new school. There are a few. I know of Mrs Arnup. She was the one at our old school, and she is the one I go to. We have more, but she is the one I talk to.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What about the other schools that are here?

JOSH PEARSE—Our careers office is a really big thing. But, once again, it is all pushing towards university. If you ever want to know anything about university, it is always there, readily available, and people know everything about it. But, if you want to get into a trade as a fitter, a turner or a chef and you go to your careers officer and say, 'Are there any jobs around? Where can I go?', they will not know as much as they know about university.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So there is an imbalance there—is that what you are saying?

CHAIR—One of the things we have heard consistently across the country is that the world of work has changed and is still changing, very rapidly. Years ago only about

30-40 per cent of young people finished high school, and everybody else went off and had an entry level job where they got training on the job and perhaps went back to school. Those times are gone. Many low-paid labouring jobs do not exist any more. So it becomes more important for you to have some idea of what jobs are available and what work out there is like. There was a time when almost any young person could get a job as a clerk or a teller in a bank and could then go up through the banking system. Those jobs are not there any more, because we have ATMs, and you push the card in and get money out. So those jobs are not available—do you have a good idea of what work is available, what careers you might pursue? Do you have to leave Sale in order to follow a career path that you think you would enjoy? What do you think about that?

LEONIE HARRIS—I am from Traralgon Secondary College and I am 16. I did an industry placement a couple of weeks ago at the Australian Securities Commission. We found that it was much more about working in a work environment than doing work experience programs. We found what it was really like to work in a corporate place, and it was really interesting.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do any of you work part time now? Whom do you work for—what organisations? Would somebody like to tell us whom they work for and—

CHAIR—We would like to hear from all of you—what you do.

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I work for Wesfarmers Dalgety in Traralgon and do a bit of farm work, say, eight hours work. I also do a bit of part-time work for Summerset Motors in Traralgon as a mechanic, and whatever other work is around. I do a bit of work experience occasionally in school holidays to get an inside look at different jobs.

JOSH PEARSE—I am working in the hospitality industry. I am doing a bit of waitering at Gastronomy and More but I am finding it hard to find a part-time job as a kitchenhand at the moment. I try to do as much work experience as I can whenever I can and I am doing work experience at the moment.

LES WILLIS—I am part time at a service station. It may not seem a glamorous job, but I find it great in developing communication skills and meeting with people. It is just great fun.

LAUREN GILLAM—I work at McDonald's just casually. It has got nothing to do with what I want to do, which is journalism, but it is a job and it is money and it is part of learning about the real work world—getting up in the morning, going to work, dealing with people. It is a job; it is all part of experience. I do not mind work. I am willing to do most jobs even if they have nothing to do with my chosen career, but it is not that bad.

CHAIR—Do they treat you well at McDonald's?

LAUREN GILLAM—It is not that bad. I should not start saying bad things about McDonald's—it is a job. It is more the customers that are horrible than anything else.

CHAIR—Can I tell you what employers have told us? I would like to tell you young people this because sometimes a job at Macs is really seen to be the pits and, theoretically, they abuse young people because they only want the youngest because they are the cheapest. But they have such a terrific training system that if three of you decide to apply for a job and one of you had experience at McDonald's and the other two had not, the chances are the one that has the McDonald's experience will get the job every time. That is what employers think of the McDonald's training system—whether they like the food or not.

LAUREN GILLAM—That is why I went for a job there. I know that employers make a big deal about people working at McDonald's and I see it as a bit of a stepping stone in my future, as well.

CHAIR—Well done! Who is next?

RACHAEL WHEELER—I also work at a service station and I would agree with Les that it does help with your communication skills. I love that customer contact and talking to the customers. Where I work, at Mobil, there are a lot of big traders that have big accounts and you get to know these people. I have done work experience with some of them just from working at the service station and getting to know them. I love it, yes.

CHAIR—Good.

SIMON DYCE—I am a baker at the Brigalong Bakery and I do food preparation and washing dishes for the counter meals at Brigalong Hotel.

CHAIR—And how do you find that?

SIMON DYCE—You get all day to do what you want. I work from six o'clock until midnight and get up at two o'clock to work at the bakery. The money is not too bad.

NATASHA GIESCHEN—I am Natasha Gieschen from Maffra Secondary College and I am 17. I have got two jobs. I work at J & P Plumbing and there I just do secretarial work and invoicing. I have learned heaps from there. I also have just got a job at the Maffra Swimming Pool where I work in the kiosk and as a part-time lifeguard. I went through an interview and everything, but I think that we need more information on interviews and how they actually go in getting a job.

CASSIE GILMORE—Cassie Gilmore. I am 16 from Sale College. I work at Pinky's Pizza. I take all the orders. I also volunteer for a lot of waitressing because I want to go into acting and you need something to fall back on. That is why I do all that sort of

stuff.

CHAIR—Those of you who do not have part-time jobs, is it because you have chosen not to, or have you just had heaps of knockbacks?

AIMEE GLOWACKI—I have actually tried to get a job. I have tried for the cinemas and Target, and I have put applications in everywhere, but people have just beaten me to it. I either get told they are full up, or that I will go on a waiting list.

DIANA NEWMANN—I am from Sale College and I am 15. I have not tried to get a job at all. I would rather further my education and do the best I can. I have a lot of sporting interests and that keeps me quite busy, as well as my school work.

TIM WALLIS—I am from Gippsland Grammar School. I am 16. I have put in applications to get jobs everywhere but I have only started that in the last couple of years. Because of my age I am finding it a bit difficult because they always want younger people rather than me. The reason I left it so late is because I have got a junk mail delivery round that I have been doing since I was about 12.

CHAIR—That is a job.

TIM WALLIS—It does not pay nearly as much money.

CHAIR—But it is a job, mate.

SHANNON O'DONNELL—I go to Gippsland Grammar School and I am 16 years old. I have been putting in resumes and application forms at various stores around Traralgon where I live and have had no reply. I have been doing this for a couple of years now, and I am not getting any reply for casual work. I am really keen to do some work and have not been contacted.

BRONWYN RICHARDS—I have not applied for any jobs, but I live 24 kilometres out of Sale and 10 kilometres out of Stratford. My parents work, and I cannot get to any jobs because there is no public transport. If I wanted to do an apprenticeship, I could not get to Sale on a school bus, I would have to get my parents to drive me every day or board in Sale, so I have not applied for any jobs.

CHAIR—That makes it a bit tough. One of the things some employers tell us, and in fact I have got to say that some of your colleagues in other schools in other regions have told us, is that there is a certain proportion of young people that just do not want to work. In fact, some of your colleagues at a similar forum yesterday said, 'If you really want a job you can get a job. If you have got the right attitude, if you are willing to plug at it day after day, you will get a job.' What do you think about that?

DAN BLAKE—I believe that in some respects that is true, but not in all respects, because you can try as hard as you can try and sometimes you still will not get a job. I know; I have applied for two jobs and been knocked back twice, but I also know that I do not have the time for a part-time job. I am a musician and I do not have much time for anything but practice. But if you try hard you will probably come up with something. I started up my own string quartet and we get business every so often, but it is still money coming in.

CHAIR—That is a job, mate—and a good one. You are self-employed.

LES WILLIS—I think there is a lot of confusion about with employers thinking the students do not want jobs. The kids find it is harder to find the jobs, and others are searching around but they cannot get a job. There is a lot of confusion.

NICOLE LANGLEY—I am from Traralgon Secondary College and I am 15 years old. I think there are jobs out there if you are willing to look, and travel, and find the jobs if you really want one. But the government makes it too easy by allowing people to sit back and get the dole. Most of my friends just sit on the dole and they do not want to look for jobs because the dole is there. They can sit at home and drink all week, and the government is paying them to do that. They have no need to get a job when the government is making it so easy for them.

Mrs ELSON—Can I ask a question further to that? Has anyone else in this room got friends that do that, or is this just an isolated case?

CHAIR—Let us hear some more about that.

BRAD BENNETT—I am from Maffra Secondary College. I am 16. What I did—I have got a part-time job—I asked everywhere around the town, probably every shop in the town, and they all knocked me back. And then I went into Maffra Tyre and Radiator Service and they said that they would call me back if they needed me, and they called me back and now I have got a job. So I kept on looking and I got one.

CHAIR—Are you going to hang onto it?

BRAD BENNETT—Yes. I have been there for two years so far.

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I was the same. I went around and put my name down at a few places and eventually got a job that I really like, and I have stuck with it. I work most of the time before and after school, and on the weekends I work with my Dad on the farm. Most Saturdays and Sundays most of my friends just lie around home and do nothing and cannot believe that you work every day and most of the time do not get paid for it. Most of my friends would rather sit around and watch television, go out of a night time, have a few drinks, sleep in all Sunday. It is not really my go; I would rather go out

and work and do something constructive.

CHAIR—What do you think about that?

RYAN O'DOHERTY—About just lying around?

CHAIR—Yes.

RYAN O'DOHERTY—It does not really fizz me. I would rather—

CHAIR—Do you think it suits them?

RYAN O'DOHERTY—Yes, they love it.

CHAIR—Is it doing them any good—that is the question.

RYAN O'DOHERTY—No, not really.

HAYDEN BURGIEL—I am from Maffra Secondary College. I am 18. I also live in Maffra. I went to every shop asking for a job and they all knocked me back as well, but one shop said to come back in a week's time and ask again, so I did, and he said, 'Oh no, we can't'. So I kept going back and annoying him and asking him and giving him resumes and that, but he still would not give me one. He said there was a position, but then he gave it to someone else.

Mrs ELSON—Does that make you give up trying? Or are you still trying.

HAYDEN BURGIEL—I am still trying, but not as much.

Mrs ELSON—He did not give you a reason why?

HAYDEN BURGIEL—No, he just said he could not give me a job.

NATASHA GIESCHEN—With the swimming pool job, they said it started at the start of the year and I did not know about that, I only found out about it when I went to school and our careers teacher, Mr Staple, actually mentioned it at school. They had actually found out. So it is better for the people to come to the schools if they want to find more employment, so just put it through the paper to go to the schools and everywhere.

SIMON DYCE—I went for a job with a Land Rover specialist place and he said he would love to employ me but he could not because the insurance cost too much, and the work cover and everything.

CHAIR—We have heard that.

LAUREN GILLAM—You hear in the press all about how all these people do not want to work and they are lazy and so on, but the sad thing is why do they not put more focus on the people who do want to work—the kids that are here, for instance, that say that they would rather work. Give them more of a positive—and the ones that have not got jobs and want them. Focus on them instead.

CHAIR—Let me make clear to you that this is an inquiry about employment, not unemployment.

LAUREN GILLAM—I am not talking about you, I am talking about the media. I watch—

CHAIR—The media does what the media does.

LAUREN GILLAM—Yes, but that influences people who do watch these shows. Say they are employers, they think, 'Hang on a second; why give these people a chance if they are going to be lazy?'

CHAIR—Realistically, we are focusing on employment, and a whole range of employment from rocket scientists and brain surgeons to garden maintenance people or waitresses or helpers at McDonald's or whatever. The full range of jobs is what we are interested in trying to get you. But by the same token we pay a lot of people unemployment benefits because they do not have jobs. One of the things that we have to try and find out is whether you think that youth unemployment is as bad as it is because there really are not any jobs or because you have got lots of friends that just do not want to care or have the wrong attitude. How can we help change those attitudes to make them want to work and make them more employable?

LAUREN GILLAM—By the way, I think the work for the dole scheme is a really good idea.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Can I ask how many people would like to run their own businesses? Has anyone thought about that—and in what line of business?

CHAIR—Let this lady go with the last one first.

DONNA HEALEY—I am from Traralgon Secondary College. I am 16 years old. There are jobs out there, but each job requires a lot more skill. You can spend all year completing year 12 but you are not going to get a job because you have to be more qualified. Why can't the schools provide more education to get qualifications to actually pursue your career choice?

JOSH PEARSE—With the question about owning your own business, I would love to own my own business. My whole ambition in life is to own my own restaurant and that is why I have been working so hard going to TAFE one day a week and working at school, doing lots of work experience, things like that, just so I can gain the experience I need and eventually get my apprenticeship and work my way up to owning my own restaurant. However, just working in a restaurant and trying to find a part-time job in the hospitality industry is a hard thing because a majority of work can be done by one or two people which is usually the apprentice and the owner of the restaurant. The most they need a kitchen hand for is one or two hours during service when they can get busy—but a lot of the time they do not. So it is hard to find jobs in that area. But owning my own restaurant would be a great idea.

CHAIR—Who else wants to talk about what they want to do for their own business?

KATE LYONS—I am from CRC, Traralgon. I would like to own my own retail shop. At the moment I am doing retail at school one day a week—on a Friday. I would like to run my own clothing shop for teenagers, because there are not very many good clothing shops around at reasonable prices.

CHAIR—Are they teaching you how to buy? That is not as funny as it sounds because, if you are going to run your own shop, you have got to know how to buy the stuff you are going to sell.

KATE LYONS—Yes, we are learning about everything from customer service to everything. It is really good.

Mr MAREK—Are you learning about that at school?

KATE LYONS—No, I do TAFE one day a week.

Mr MAREK—Has TAFE worked right for you and been instrumental in providing everybody with the further education they need or is it a bit of a dinosaur which has not moved along with young people? I want to hear what people's points of view are on that? I went to TAFE, and it was an excellent institution. What I am asking is: has it evolved with you?

DAN BLAKE—I believe that TAFE is a lot better than school, because you are doing more hands-on things. I find you learn more when you are doing hands-on things than when you are sitting writing notes. You can sit there and write notes forever and not really know what the person is talking about but, if you are there experiencing what they are actually talking about and doing, you will find it is a lot easier.

NICOLE LANGLEY—I disagree. I reckon each individual learns a different way.

I find I learn more easily from writing notes and someone lecturing me than from doing a prac. I enjoy theory more than practical work. I would rather do paperwork. I think it is better.

JOSH PEARSE—The TAFE course I did is probably the greatest thing I have ever done in my education career. The TAFE—especially in the hospitality industry—gives you the basic skills you need to go out and get your apprenticeship. It teaches you how to do the simple things that your employer will ask you to do first of all. They are the first things you will have to do when you go into an apprenticeship. So, from my experience, it is the greatest thing I have ever done for my education.

CHAIR—I know you want to be a chef—you have told us that. Has anybody told you that there is a huge vacancy list all over Australia for chefs?

JOSH PEARSE—Yes.

Mr MAREK—Do you also understand that you might have to leave home and travel to find work? Someone touched on this a while ago. We have been up to Alice Springs and there are jobs everywhere up there—and in Western Australia. Everybody seems to migrate to the city areas on the coast and leave the regional areas. Does everybody understand that there might be jobs throughout the rest of Australia that you might have to travel to get?

JOSH PEARSE—Yes, I cannot wait to leave.

Mrs ELSON—Just when they need you.

JOSH PEARSE—I am looking towards heading up into a smaller community like Alice Springs, say, or somewhere up further away from the big cities. Because I have read papers, and the vast majority of jobs are around those areas.

Mr MAREK—If you are looking for that sort of work, there is a lot of that sort of stuff up around the islands—like Hamilton Island and so on. I have put a heap of people onto those areas.

DONNA HEALEY—Hopefully, my future career path is going to be in the navy as a hospitality steward. But the one thing that I do not like about the Australian navy is that they do not support the other defence forces. I am willing to go overseas to join the navy as a future career path.

KATE LYONS—TAFE is the best thing that I have done. I have learnt much more at TAFE than I ever did at school, because they treat you as an equal. You can talk to them and stuff, and you learn more. I find that it is a much better form of education than school. I would like to quit school and just go to TAFE.

CHAIR—We have six schools here today. Do all of your schools have programs where you can do vocational courses at TAFE and get credit for the courses at your school? Let us put it this way: is there any school here where that is not available?

TIM WALLIS—At our school last year they offered a TAFE course in computing which was good for us. I could not do it last year because I was not doing 1/2 VCE infotech. This year they cannot offer it because the government has closed it down. The school has to offer it itself and the school cannot afford to do that. It would have been good to actually get in and do that TAFE course.

Mr MAREK—Can you go a bit further with that? We are talking about dual recognition, aren't we?

TIM WALLIS—Yes.

Mr MAREK—Can you just elaborate on that a bit more?

TIM WALLIS—It was just a dual recognition course that would actually go with your TER with infotech.

Mr WALLIS—The Victorian government has recently taken over the funding of the dual recognition programs and that has been a major issue for us in the past. Some of the courses, and the one to which the gentleman referred a minute ago, the infotech course, now need to be delivered within the Victorian schools themselves. In the past I do know that the cost of some of the TAFE courses was prohibitive for some of our students. That has meant that some students have not taken on those courses in the past. I think that some of the courses now have been taken over by schools; others are being delivered by TAFE. Funding is now being provided by the Victorian government for the hospitality courses, for instance, but they in the past have been offered at a fairly prohibitive cost.

CHAIR—Are any of your schools ex-tech schools? Do they still offer vocational courses themselves within the schools? They do? Good. Are 50 per cent of the school population doing the tech courses, or 30 per cent or 20 per cent or less?

LEONIE HARRIS—Our school is very big in that area. We offer auto and welding and we have our own big mechanical shed. A lot of students do it and they really enjoy it.

LES WILLIS—Our school used to be Sale technical school and now it is the Sale College. I have noticed over the years I have been here that there has been a drop in the rate of people turning towards technology subjects. They are not glamorous and a lot of students are turning towards more university courses and other business courses.

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I go to CRC and I was contemplating changing to

Traralgon Secondary College as I want to do fitting and turning and mechanical. The Catholic Regional College does not really offer that apart from the TAFE courses. They do not really offer it at school, whereas the secondary college offers metalwork. We have only got woodwork and graphics. I do not know if it is just Catholic schools, but we do not really get it offered.

Mr SCHNEIDER—I am the headmaster of the senior campus at the Catholic Regional College. I would like to say to Paul: we have 170 students who are currently doing certificate 2 or certificate 3 in information technology out of our year 11 and 12 class. That is 170 students of approximately 350 in our senior school. We also have two courses that we offer internally and TAFE provides those courses for us. In other words, they come in and teach the courses. That is in retail, where Kate is, and also in agriculture and horticulture, which have just started up.

We also have automotive; we have engineering; we have hospitality; we have office administration; we have quite a number of courses that we are offering. We do have 74 students, at the moment, who are off campus one day a week at a TAFE college.

CHAIR—Thank you.

BRONWYN RICHARDS—I don't think our school offers anything vocational. I have never heard of anything vocational. I think mainly our school emphasises uni, uni, uni and TAFE. I have never heard of anything that you can do one day a week at TAFE or anything like that.

CHAIR—There is a South Australian task force looking into the same sorts of issues that we are, and they have made a recommendation that the school leaving age be raised to 17. What do you think of that?

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I think there should be really no age that you can and cannot leave school because, if you go to school and you don't want to be there, you are not going to learn and take in everything that the teacher tells you. My brother, for instance, got a job at the end of year 10 at 16 years old. He is doing his four-year apprenticeship. He is nearly finished now and is in his last year. They boosted up 17 job opportunities like that, but they are hard to get now around where we live. So how are they going to do it now?

BRAD BENNETT—Just on that, I do not think they should bring it up to 17 because you have the people who do not want to be at school. If they are just going to have to be there until 17 they are going to drag everyone along. The ones who do not want to learn are going to learn nothing.

DANIEL MILLANE—I am from Catholic College, Sale. I am 16 years old. Most of the students I have talked to who were in year 12 and have been a couple of years out

of school already have said to me that lots of things an employer asks of them are about work experience and how much work experience they had at school. Is that true?

CHAIR—Employers will always look for work experience.

DANIEL MILLANE—They would say it is not so much what you get on your TER scores and all that—obviously it has something to do with it—but if you are not going to university then work experience is probably the best thing to secure a job in whatever field you are doing.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Can I ask on apprenticeships if some of you feel that apprenticeships might be seen as a second-rate occupation compared with a university career? If you do, are you aware of the career opportunities by being apprenticed? There is the fact that you can go on and own your own business or you can get to be senior management people within major companies. Are you aware of the range of possibilities opened up by becoming an apprentice?

RACHAEL WHEELER—I think apprenticeships are ideal things. A lot of my friends who left in year 11 are doing apprenticeships now and they have already been guaranteed a job after they finish their apprenticeship. I think apprenticeships are great opportunities, and they should maybe make more kids want to do apprenticeships.

LAUREN GILLAM—I know of someone who got an apprenticeship through work experience. He hated school absolutely, he couldn't stand it, and he was failing miserably, and they offered him an apprenticeship a year after he left his work experience but he had been working there on Saturdays. It is the best thing he has ever done. He is in his second year now and he is earning a really great wage and he is happy. At the end of it he knows he will get a job. Also, they are offering him training in baking school in Melbourne and he is so much happier than he was at school.

I think apprenticeships are no way second rate to uni. That is not the point. The point is that this person is going to have a job at the end of it and they are happy with what they are doing. It would be really good if more places could offer apprenticeships because that is what a lot of people want. Not everyone wants to go to uni. If that is what people want, then that is what they should be able to have.

Also, about the school age being raised to 17, I reckon that is a good idea for people. It is better than sitting at home on the dole and not doing anything, but I think there should be exceptions made for people who can get jobs before 17. They should be allowed to leave school. Why make them stay there if they already have a job?

JOSH PEARSE—On the apprenticeships being second rate, I totally agree with her: I think that is just a load of garbage. They could be second rate to universities, but the skills that you are taught in an apprenticeship are so fundamental to your future lives.

The skills that you gain set you up, as you say, to own your own business, to do whatever you want to do later on in life. So, yes, to say they are second rate is just rubbish.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I am very pleased with the response, actually. Obviously, within this group, an apprenticeship is seen as a very high achievement.

AIMEE GLOWACKI—I do not believe that apprenticeships are second rate because apprentices are guaranteed a job when they leave. When you do a university course, you finish, you have got your degree and then you have got to go and find a job. You have got nowhere to go, except in that field. At least with apprenticeships you are guaranteed a job, you are experienced in that field of work and there are still jobs for you everywhere.

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I would like to get an apprenticeship and leave school at the end of this year or halfway through this year. School is all right. It does not really enthuse me—I would rather work. Last year about four or five from our school out of years 10 and 11 left school for apprenticeships in hairdressing, boilermaking, fitting and turning and that. I do not think that we hear enough about apprenticeships being offered while we are at school. They might be in the paper and that occasionally, but I think our careers adviser teacher should be told about them. We are not told enough about it like we are about the unis and all that sort of stuff.

CHAIR—Back on the question of being 17 to leave school: if we said you can leave school whenever you like, think about your friends that you talked about being on the dole now and enjoying doing nothing. Would we just push more young people into a life of no jobs and no work? What do you think about that?

JOSH PEARSE—I think, like you said, if you did not have an age range and you could leave school at any age, the way Australia would move with the jobs would rapidly decline. I know a lot of people from our school who would leave as soon as they could and just sit at home and do nothing. I think you do need to have a certain age, but I think there is no use raising the age limit. My parents will not let me go out and get an apprenticeship—they want me to finish school. But, if I were allowed to, I would leave. If I was not allowed to leave until I was 17, I would be pretty unhappy if I wanted to leave. But, once again, I think you do need to have a certain age limit so that you must stay at school just to gain the necessary skills.

DAN BLAKE—I think if people want to leave school they are going to leave school anyway. It does not matter what the age limit is, they are going to leave school. If you make the age limit higher, they are still going to leave school after they are 17; if you make it lower, they are still going to leave school. People stay in school because they want to and people leave school because they do not like it or they have a job opportunity.

RACHAEL WHEELER—I personally think that the age limit does not need to be

raised because for most jobs these days you have to be 17 or you have to have year 11, which is usually 16 or 17. So, personally, I think they should just keep it the way it is. If the kids are going to leave school, they are going to leave school. They will leave school when they are 16 or 17—it would not matter.

SIMON DYCE—I think it could be 14 to leave school as long as you have a job or you are doing a TAFE course a couple of days a week or some sort of course.

AIMEE GLOWACKI—I believe that it should be left at 16. Once you finish year 10 and you turn 16 then you have a basic education. There is no specialisation, but you do have a basic education, which is what you need to get by in the actual world. It should be left at 16 so at least they have that education if their apprenticeship does not come through.

MATTHEW WHEELER—I am from Sale College. I reckon they should just leave it. If they do not want to go to school they are not going to go anyway—they will just go down the street or something—so just leave it.

RACHAEL WHEELER—I would also like to comment that a lot of kids, when they are younger—say, 15—can leave school because they want to work on a farm. I live in a farming district, and a lot of kids want to leave early and work on the farm with their fathers. They cannot do that until they are 16. They do not want to be at school for that extra year. They want to leave. I think they should be able to leave when they want to leave. They will have a job if they leave school—they will have a job with their father or with family. I think there is nothing wrong with that.

CHAIR—One of the things that we are sometimes told by employers and, quite honestly, we are frequently told by some employers, is that the biggest problem they have when they go to select young people for entry level jobs—we are not talking about the second or third job; we are talking about entry level jobs into industry or a business—is that far too many of the young people who come to the interview do not really want to work. They come and say, 'I want a job.' 'Why do you want a job?' 'Oh, because the CES sent me.' They cannot fill out the form properly because they do not know how to spell and they have got poor grammar. Their literacy standards are poor.

There are tales of young people who are acting as shop assistants and who cannot make change without either a calculator or the till. They cannot take $7.95 away from $10 and give the right amount of change off the top of their head or even by writing it down on a bit of paper. Obviously you are a very bright bunch, but do you have a perception that many of your colleagues have those kinds of problems—your friends, neighbours, whatever?

BRONWYN RICHARDS—You lump all young people together and it just sounds like you are saying, 'You're young. You can't be literate and you can't do maths because

you're young.' You don't say, 'Some young people don't have good literacy skills,' or 'Some young people don't have good numeracy skills.' You say, 'Employers say "young people".' I am young, and I think I have good literacy and good numeracy skills: $10 minus $7.95 is $2.05.

CHAIR—Good on you! Well done!

BRONWYN RICHARDS—But employers see all young people as totally defective human beings because they cannot do anything.

CHAIR—No, I did not say 'all employers'; I said 'some'. I said that there were some people.

DAN BLAKE—I would just like to say one thing: you will find in most high schools that grammar is not taught any more. You will find basic bits of it are taught in primary school, but you will find it is not taught to a great extent, as it used to be. My grandpa reads some of the writing that I do for school. He does not like it because I do not know my grammar as well as he did when he was at primary school or at high school. He thinks it is not as good as it should be.

SHANNON O'DONNELL—I would like to comment on that. I think it is important that you stay at school for a certain amount of time to learn things such as grammar, basic mathematics and things. Also, I have just been on an exchange to France. In order to learn French to get on over there I found that, even though I go to a grammar school, I did not know the grammar in order to learn as much French as I possibly could have—which was a surprise, even to me.

RACHAEL WHEELER—I would agree with that. I went on an exchange, too—I was in Germany. I was in an English class and their grammar was a lot better than mine because that was what they were taught. It was quite embarrassing, actually. But I would like to back that up. We can stay at school for as long as we want, but we are not taught these things. We have to learn these things ourselves.

CHAIR—The requirements now for a TER or VE score that determines, for those of you who are going on to university, your college entry level opportunity—or lack thereof: does the curriculum make sense to you or is too much emphasis put on the subjects which you think you are not even going to use at university level? Do you have any views on that? For instance, we are told—and there are articles in the press frequently—that even for an arts degree you have got to have high level maths and one science subject just in order to get a high enough score to get in, notwithstanding that you may have had an A in English and an A in history.

DAN BLAKE—I am in year 10 and in this year level PE—physical education—is compulsory. That is not necessary, because some people do not want to do PE. They find

it a waste of time. You will even find that some people do not turn up to the class if they do not like it that much. If we had not made PE compulsory, you would find other kids would be in classes that they need; they would have catch-up periods where they could do their homework that they do not get done at home. There are subjects that we are doing that we do not need to be doing.

BRETT SPEED—I am from Catholic College, Sale. I would just like to say that the school puts a lot of emphasis on the CATs and on the TER score. You have to do well and if you do not you just might as well not do it at all. It is a lot of pressure on the kids, and they make it out to be a real big deal, when it is not. It is really not that important. It can be if you want to get really good scores, but if you just want to get an apprenticeship you do not really need to get a good TER; you just get what you need and that is it.

NICOLE LANGLEY—I think too much emphasis is placed on science-maths subjects, whereas it is not that much of a big deal if you get As in English and those sorts of subjects; you do not get the same mark with your TER. Some kids just are not good at those science-maths subjects.

BRONWYN RICHARDS—I actually think it is the opposite. At our school I think more emphasis is placed on English, because you have to do English; it is a compulsory subject in VCE. I do not like English. I do not think I am very good at English. I would much prefer to do a whole maths-science course, and just do maths-science, but I have to do English. No-one here has to do maths. They can all give up maths as soon as they hit VCE if they want to, and they can give up science, but I have to keep doing my English because I have to read books and be able to analyse or some odd theory—I don't know.

JOSH PEARSE—Yes, I am in agreement with that. As I have already stated before, I think a lot of the subjects are very highly structured and they teach us a lot of things that people who solely want to get an apprenticeship once they leave school really do not need to know. They are at school because they have to be at school.The things that are taught are excellent if you want to go to university, but most of us here—or a few of us here—do not even want to go to university. So I think there should be courses for us, like we have already all said here, that are hands-on and are the things that we want to do.

NATASHA GIESCHEN—I want to be a physio and we have to do maths to get into it. But I do maths methods, and we do irrelevant things—not what we are going to need in the future—and stuff that we absolutely will not even use into work experience.

AIMEE GLOWACKI—In response to what has been said about English, I believe that some of the stuff in VCE is definitely irrelevant to what we are taught. To be honest, how many of us need to know how to write a book report in the future? We know how to write a letter, we can write resumes, but we do not need to know how to do book reports or analyse books or tear them apart bit by bit. I think we have basically got all we need

by now, and that it should be our choice to do English or not. Certainly, university courses should have a prerequisite of English, but that is our choice.

SHANNON O'DONNELL—I think English is a very good course to take. I really think we do need that, as I said before. Also to comment on maths methods, I do methods as it is highly recognised for university and I want to go to university to do what I want to do. I am doing that as it is highly recognised. I think I could probably build a rocket from doing maths methods, but I do not know how that is going to apply to me in the future. It is really a highly strung course, I think.

CHAIR—How many of you can still do your times tables? Four? Come on, raise them up high. How many of you cannot? Some people are abstaining. Fascinating. One of the things that we have addressed or that has been around this issue of youth employment for a while is the issue of age based wage rates. For instance, in the fast food industry, the retail industry and parts of the hospitality industry the pay rates increase as your age increases, and that has been around in Australia for a long time. Could you tell us what you think of that system—is it good, is it bad, should we throw it out, does it help provide more opportunities for you, or is it exploitative labour?

RACHAEL WHEELER—I think it is not a good scheme at all. I do not like it at all because I work in a service station and I work harder than a lot of the older people. They sit on their butts and read magazines and I do the cleaning and stuff because, if I do not, I will lose my job, but they have still got their jobs. I get paid less and I think that is wrong. I work harder and I get paid less. I think that is wrong.

SIMON DYCE—I get $4.80 an hour to get up at 2 o'clock in the morning, and I do not think it is worth it, but I cannot make money any other way. But for the other job I get $10. I think $4.80 is just too low. It should not be on age because some people at 15 can work harder than anyone else at any other age, and it is just not right.

CASSIE GILMORE—I agree with what those two said. I get paid lower than what the 18-year-olds do and I work harder than them. It is just not right.

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I am the same as Simon. I get up and one and two every Tuesday morning to go to work before school. I cannot really complain about my wages because they are not too bad, but people that are five or six years older than me are getting half as much again and nearly double my wage and they are no different from me. They are not qualified; it is just because of their age. We can all do the same job. Most of the times younger people can do it better than older people, so how come we are not on the same wage base?

Mr MAREK—Do you understand, though, that you may not have got that lucky break to get that job if it had not been that the wage was down a little bit so the employer decided to give this guy a go because, 'He is not going to cost me a load of money; he

might break a lot at the start but, because I am not paying him so much money, he will get a bit of a work ethic, he will understand what he has got to do.' Do you understand that that could be part of the reason?

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I understand that, but if there was no wage base they have got nothing to work up to as well. They have to start somewhere.

JESS JONES—I am from Catholic College, Sale, and I am 16. I know a lot of kids that have been asked to resign when they have got to 17 or 18 because their employers do not want to pay them any more. They end up with nothing—they do not get any references for any other work; they end up having nothing because of their age. I do not think that is very fair at all.

JOSH PEARSE—With the age thing, as you say, that is the only reason a lot of us get our jobs, because we are cheap to employ. It is as simple as that. You get a job because you cost nothing, and when you turn 18 they have got to pay you almost twice what you earned when you started. A lot of the times you either get no work then or you are told to leave, sort of thing.

I used to work at Safeway supermarkets, and I viewed myself as a very hard worker there. I worked a lot harder than most people. Just before I left there I was a supervisor at night from nine to midnight and they put a huge responsibility on to me, but I was not recognised for that. I was still paid the same rate as the person that used to turn up to work and scan a few things when I was doing three times as much work. So I think each individual person should be recognised for the work they do, and I think they should have their own separate contract. I know that could be a hard thing to work out, but they should at least be recognised for the work they do because a lot of people are a lot harder workers than others.

TIM WALLIS—I agree that it should be on a work basis, but in some aspects you do need the age limit. But it is also a problem too if a person is just coming up to leaving school and has only just started looking for a job. They are going to find it hard looking for a job because employers are going to want to employ the 16-year-olds who are going to be paid less, and they have to pay them more because they are a bit older, 17 or 18, and they are still at school.

CHAIR—In Singapore they have a system where there is no formal structure whatsoever with respect to wage rate—the employer can pay anything they like—the theory being that nobody will take a job at any price that is less than what the individual thinks they are worth. There is no unemployment in Singapore. What do you think about that kind of a system?

DAN BLAKE—It is true that more of us are going to get employed if we cost less. But where people get paid for their age range, if you were not living at home any

more and you had to pay rent or board or something along those lines and you were only 15 or 16, you would have to work a lot harder than you would have had to if you were paid more.

DONNA HEALEY—I used to work at Westend Rite-way. I used to get about $7 an hour. My friends work at a lot of the fast food places, and they usually get roughly $5 an hour. I do not think that is fair. How can you justify that? You probably do exactly the same amount of hours of hard work and hard labour. How can you justify one person getting paid $2 more than the other?

JACQUI SMITH—I go to Gippsland Grammar School and I am 16 years old. I do not work because I feel that while I am at school I am going to try my hardest to do my best. I spend a lot of time on homework to get the best results possible and so I have not tried to get a job. But those who have have got to understand that they are in the real world, and the real world is unfair. A lot of executives get to the top of businesses and do not do much work; they just delegate things down but they get paid much more than others. But, if you are working, you have got to understand that it is the real world and, if you get paid $2 less, you should be happy that you have got a job at the primary stage of your life.

LES WILLIS—Is there a set rate for each age group? Or is it set by employers as well?

CHAIR—There are aged based awards in the retail, hospitality and fast food industries. There are a couple of others but not many. For instance, if a young person wanted to get experience as a builder's labourer on a construction site, the chances are they could not get a job because there is no age based wage rate. They would have to pay you at the full adult wage rate—$14 or $15 an hour—and they can get plenty of adults to do the job. In Victoria, you almost never see a young person of 16, 17 or 18 as a builder's labourer on a construction site, because nobody can afford it.

LAUREN GILLAM—I work at McDonald's, and I think that our base rate is very fair, because everyone in the store does an equal amount of work. The new kids get a lower wage, but that is only fair, because they are the ones that do not do very much because they are still learning, and it is a bit harder for them to understand what is going on. Their low rate is only for the first few months and then it goes up anyway. But I want to comment on what the other girl said about being in the real world: it is still not fair that some people in different areas of jobs work harder than the next person and get half as much—I am not talking about myself. It may be the real world, but it is still not right.

AIMEE GLOWACKI—Getting paid less may not be right, but I would be happy with any kind of employment and any kind of pay.

CHAIR—Well done.

AIMEE GLOWACKI—I only get $5 pocket money a week, and I would absolutely kill to get a job—I would not kill, but I would love to get a job. My friend gets $4.50 an hour and she gets about $50 for working two whole Saturdays and Sundays. She considers that to be nothing and still looks around for other jobs. But she considers it to be experience, at least. I would prefer that than sitting around at home doing nothing.

Mr MAREK—Do you understand that if you are out there doing work experience—even though you may not be getting a lot for it—you are promoting yourself, and employers can see you? This is much like the possible work for the dole scheme that we hear of: if employers can see you out there and you are prepared to have a go, they will probably take you over the kid who is sitting down in front of the TV doing nothing. It is promotion, you have got to promote yourself.

That is where we come to equality. Equality is probably one of the worst things that ever happened, because if everybody is the same who are you going to pick from? In the case of those people who have got the initiative to get out and do something different from other people—working in a bakery, doing all hours of the morning for little money, doing lifeguard courses and those sorts of things so that they get health or medical certificates—employers will look at that and they will say, 'This kid here is all right, he is prepared to have a go. That is the sort of person I want.' That is the sort of thing that some of you are touching on, and it is great.

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I agree with Aimee that any money would be all right. But who decides how much a baker gets compared with how much a lifeguard gets and a fast food person? Who decides how much each person gets? Most of the time it is all the same sort of work. Why are they different?

Mr MOSSFIELD—They are mostly covered by awards and, as the chairman has said, some awards, like retail and hospitality, have age based wage rates and others do not. But in the apprenticeship field you have wage rates for first, second and third class apprentices. When you complete your apprenticeship, if you stay in the same establishment, you then go on to a tradesman's rate of pay. It is all covered by the appropriate award in the industry in which you are working.

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I cannot complain: I get $10 an hour where I work. I work before school every Tuesday morning. But some of my friends that work at McDonalds—I cannot tell you off my head what the wages are—are getting very little compared to me and we are both probably doing work as hard as each other. I cannot see the difference.

CHAIR—How many of you, if you were offered a job for free—no wages—versus having no job, would take the job for free?

JOSH PEARSE—If it was what I wanted to do, if it was in the right industry,

yes, sure.

CHAIR—Well done.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Can I ask another question, probably changing the subject a little bit: how important do you see interview skills as being? We are not talking about the part-time job but a job for career entry where you are going to stay, hopefully, for a period of time? How important are interview skills and what do you think employers look for in young people when you apply for a position?

RYAN O'DOHERTY—I think they are really important. They are one of the main things that the employer is going to look at when he is sitting down listening to you. But we do not get taught enough about it at school. I have been taught nothing about interviews at school. I am in year 11. It is a time where I am starting to apply for apprenticeships and that. I sat an aptitude test at the Australian Paper Mill at the end of last year. I did not have a clue what that was all about. The main reason I put down for the job was to see what it was like for next year because I knew I was too young. It was just to know what I am in for.

LES WILLIS—I think interview skills are the main points that get you a job. It is the employer's first view of how you are and who you are. At our school the teachers sit down with you and they run through the interview session with you to give you an example of how it will be and show you what you should be prepared for.

AIMEE GLOWACKI—I think a lot does rest on interview skills; it is not just jobs. The La Trobe Shire was offering a trip to Takasago. Every student got an interview and then they decided on the interview as well as on your application whether you were going or not. I think interview skills are very important and it is something that we are not taught as much. They tell us to be confident, to be this, do not mumble, do not act down. You are taught that, but it cannot compare for the real experience. You do need to have that taught in schools.

CHAIR—Do they teach you how to fill out a CES form for unemployment benefits?

FORUM—No.

CHAIR—That is good; we have come from a school district where they do. If no-one else has anything to say about interview techniques, we are coming to the end of our session, so is there anything else that we have not covered that is important that you would like to tell us about or talk about to do with this issue of jobs for young people? Surely we are not that bright to have covered it all.

JACQUI SMITH—I am from Gippsland Grammar. Our education in going to

school has given us the key to our futures, and the doors are there for us. It is our job to use our skills and keys to open those doors to be successful.

CHAIR—Well said!

SHANNON O'DONNELL—I am at Gippsland Grammar. I would like to comment on the work for the dole scheme. I think that is a really good idea. I am out there trying to get employment, but I want to keep going with my education as well. I think that is important for what I want to do. It makes me angry that some people drop out. I think apprenticeships are a fantastic idea: getting out there and doing what you want. But I know of a lot of people who drop out, do nothing and get the dole. We should make them get off their backsides to do something for it.

JESS JONES—I am from the Catholic College, Sale. I would like to say that, up until a few weeks ago, I was working at a supermarket where I, along with a lot of other young people, received absolutely no respect from the manager, which is one of the reasons why I left. When we go in for part-time work, we need to know that we are respected as young people or as young people being employed by them. All these managers are really manipulating and intimidating. That behaviour is not going to give any confidence or any benefits to any young people if they want to go out there and actually make it in the work field.

MATTHEW WHEELER—I am from Sale College. I reckon some apprentices have been put on for the wrong reason. Some apprentices have been put on because the government pays the employer to put them on the apprenticeship. I reckon that is wrong how they put them on for that.

A STUDENT—I think the work for the dole scheme is a classic. You are saying that you have to make them work for the dole. Last year, there was a guy who had been on the dole for four years. He was a volunteer driver for the Red Cross, and he had worked his way up through the Red Cross, which is a totally voluntary situation with no pay. He had got to be some administrator or something—doing a stack of computer work—and the government said, 'No, you can't do that much work. You are not actively seeking paid work. You are just sitting around doing nothing on volunteer work.' But isn't that exactly the same as work for the dole? It is the same amount of time, and you are still not going to have the time to actively seek work.

CHAIR—The answer is yes, and it is changing.

LES WILLIS—I am from Sale College. I do believe that people out there can't get jobs and that they need to go on the dole, but I see it as unfair. My older sister was holding down two jobs: one was for five days a week and the other was a part-time job. Her boyfriend was on the dole and he was clearing more money than her per fortnight. I don't see that as fair.

CHAIR—I would like to thank you all very much for coming here to give us your views. You are a bright lot of young people. I can tell you that all the young people we have talked to around the country have given us encouragement. We are not amongst those who think that our youth are in dire straits and that we as a nation are in real trouble. We think you are enthusiastic and interested in the dynamics involved, and you have some pretty good strong views. Thank you for sharing them with us.

We will continue our inquiries until the end of June. We will deliberate in August to bring down a report, and we will probably finish the report in late August or early September. We will certainly make it available to you. You will have the opportunity to correct the *Hansard* transcript if there are any mistakes. *Hansard* has recorded everything we have all had to say today so that we have a record to refer back to as we deliberate on our report. Thank you for giving up your day off from school. Someone has just said, 'Only one school.' A thank you to that school, and a thank you to the rest of the schools for letting us share you for a while. Maybe you have learned something, as we certainly have. Thank you once again.

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

That, pursuant to the power conferred by paragraph (o) of standing order 28B, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at the school forum on this day, including publication on the electronic parliamentary database of the proof transcript.

Meeting suspended at 10.29 a.m.

WITNESSES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Factors influencing the employment of young people

SALE

Tuesday, 8 April 1997

Present

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mrs Elson

Mr Marek

Mr Mossfield

The committee met at 11.03 a.m.

Mr Charles took the chair.

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

The committee has received over 100 submissions and conducted public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Alice Springs and several regional centres in Queensland and New South Wales. The committee has also conducted school forums, including one in Sale this morning, in which young people discussed their views and opinions with the committee.

The committee is now conducting public hearings in rural and regional centres in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. This meeting is one of a series in Nowra, Merimbula, Sale, Seymour and Wagga Wagga which will give Australians outside the capital cities an opportunity to put their views and concerns to the committee.

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

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

[11.04 a.m.]

BOYD, Mr Keith Raymond, Managing Director, Keith Boyd Holden, 273 York Street, Sale, Victoria 3850

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have a statement you would like to make to the committee about these issues that we are here to discuss?

Mr Boyd—No, I will wait and answer the questions as they arise.

CHAIR—All right. Do you hire young people?

Mr Boyd—I do.

CHAIR—Many?

Mr Boyd—Currently, we employ seven people under the age of 25 years.

CHAIR—In what sorts of capacities?

Mr Boyd—In apprenticeships, traineeships and just as general employees not under any subsidy or apprenticeship type scheme.

CHAIR—Is there a major unemployment problem in this region with respect to young people?

Mr Boyd—I would not be an expert on that, but I would think probably no more than in any other region that I am aware of.

CHAIR—One of the things that we have heard this morning that we have heard over and over again around Australia, whether it is in the capital cities, in the regions or even in the outback, is that the education system, parents and you—business, industry and commerce, in a sense—are probably failing our youth in that the world of work has changed. We have had motorcar dealerships for a good while but, in many professions and in many occupations, career paths are now different from what they were 10 or 15 years ago—in some cases, different from what they were two years ago. Young people, for whatever reason, seem to be encouraged almost universally to go to university when we know that only 25 per cent or, at the most, maybe 30 per cent will. The others seem to have very little opportunity or have very little understanding of what jobs might be available, what work they might undertake and what career paths they might pursue. Can you comment on those issues?

Mr Boyd—Certainly. I think that, without doubt, for kids there is too much emphasis placed on going to university. In a lot of instances, they seem to think they have

failed if they have not achieved that aim. There is still a requirement out in the work force for dustmen, mechanics and tradesmen of various types, and I think that a greater emphasis needs to be placed back on that within the education system. That needs to be got through to children, I am sure.

CHAIR—I have to say to you that we had 45 young people from the region this morning for 1½ hours, and they said the same thing. Does that encourage you?

Mr Boyd—Yes, it does. It means that my perception of what is going on is the same as theirs.

CHAIR—When you decide that you have a job available, whether it is a traineeship, a position in the office or an apprenticeship, how do you go about advertising or letting it be known that you have a position available, and what is your selection process?

Mr Boyd—First of all, I ask current employees if they know of anybody. I believe that the best source of information is by a recommendation of somebody they know. In fact, in a lot of instances, that is how I have employed my staff—by recommendation of somebody I know. The people who refer somebody are then very conscious of their own assessment of that person in making sure that they do refer the right sorts of people to you. If that area fails, I have used the CES quite considerably to see what sorts of people are available on their books, and what sorts of subsidies are also available. They have assisted very much in the process of categorising the people that I look for, to narrow it down to a small number. They also offer their facilities for me to interview staff and are very helpful in that area. In conjunction with that, I will also advertise myself, but I find that you tend to get a lot more applicants who just apply without reading the ad and do not know what they are applying for. So referrals are my best source of employment prospects.

CHAIR—I am interested in your comments about when you advertise. Are most of those that apply genuine, in your view?

Mr Boyd—Yes. Well, when I say that, we ask them to apply in writing so that we do reduce the number of applicants considerably to those that we will ultimately interview, probably down to 10 or a dozen. Outside that number I am not really sure. We do write to them and respond. But without doubt those in the 10 or 12 that we finally interview are all genuine.

CHAIR—We are talking about young people, not adults, that you might employ. To what extent are any or all of these things—attitude, literacy skills and numeracy skills—a problem?

Mr Boyd—I have for a long time maintained that we need to get back to the three

Rs, reading, writing and arithmetic, because as far as I am concerned their literacy and numeracy skills are abysmal. I do not understand how a lot of them, and my daughter is one, can go to year 12 and cannot multiply simple, basic numbers together to come up with an answer that we used to by memorising multiplication tables off a list. It also seems that they are educated in school that if the word sounds right and you spell it that way, that is good enough; that will get you through. That seems to be still coming through, in interviewing people.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I have been told that a lot of young people actually leave the district to get work, which indicates there is not sufficient work for young people locally. What would encourage you to employ more people, and generally what do you think needs to be done at the local level to encourage local industry to employ more young people?

Mr Boyd—It all comes down to the bottom line, of course, and if you are not going to gain benefit from employing them there is not a lot of reason to employ. Obviously it is an expense and if that reduces your bottom line you are not going to outlay that expense, whatever it might be, employment or otherwise. If there was more potential for my business to grow, that is, I could sell more cars or service more cars, that would encourage me to employ more people. So it comes back to the economy, basically, as far as I am concerned.

Mr MOSSFIELD—How many people do you have working for you?

Mr Boyd—Twenty-three.

Mr MOSSFIELD—And out of that there are seven.

Mrs ELSON—When you received those written applications, were they abysmal in their grammar and spelling?

Mr Boyd—No, not at that time. I would say they have been well prepared and they obviously have been typed by somebody else in most instances. Very few are hand written. When they are hand written, they do in some instances write a summary or an introductory page—

Mrs ELSON—So you would not find out until you actually employed them whether they had skills—

Mr Boyd—Oh yes, I make them write out something.

Mrs ELSON—Is that where you have found the problem?

Mr Boyd—Yes.

Mrs ELSON—And what is the highest success rate you have with your employees: when they come from CES or word of mouth?

Mr Boyd—Both have been very good. I could not fail either.

Mrs ELSON—You have not made any mistakes, then?

Mr Boyd—I have made mistakes, for sure.

Mrs ELSON—What is the age group of the ones under 25? How young are they?

Mr Boyd—The youngest are 18.

Mrs ELSON—You do not take on apprentices before 18?

Mr Boyd—Yes, we start them, but currently they are above the 18 age group. They did commence, both the apprentices I still have, at about 17.

Mrs ELSON—Talking to students around Australia, we have found that there are some really keen young people who want to get into an apprenticeship at 16. We wonder why employers wait for that extra two years?

Mr Boyd—Again it comes down to the fact—particularly in the business we are in which is the motor mechanic area—that the days of the grease monkey are gone. They have got to be technicians and able to read—

Mrs ELSON—That is all I was trying to find—the bottom line there.

Mr Boyd—The repairing of motor cars today is electronics, basically. So year 10 is insufficient.

CHAIR—We are not a job placement agency, but there are a few kids here today that you could do with.

Mr MAREK—Do you get many work experience kids?

Mr Boyd—No. We would love to have many more. When there was another lady working here in the careers area, we used to have half a dozen a year, probably.

Mr MAREK—What happened? It just dropped off?

Mr Boyd—Yes. We hardly see anybody now. In fact, we probably have to ask for work experience kids. We generally find that, when we do get an offer, it is towards the end of the year: they have probably done their exams and have nothing better to do, so they send them out for work experience.

Mr MAREK—How would you feel about an education system that looked more towards vocational education, to the point that in year 10, 11 or 12 even they said they could do, say, two or three days a week at a host employer, such as you, and then they went back to work and did some mandatory courses like English or mathematics for the other two days of the week? Do you feel that would be more instrumental in teaching the kids about life and work skills and giving them an idea of whether it is too early to be leaving school or whether they need a better education?

Mr Boyd—I would encourage that. I agree with everything you said there. There is no doubt that they are not as prepared as they should be for the work environment. In private enterprise—particularly the way I look at it—the moment someone starts working for me, other than in a clerical area, they have to become productive. I am prepared to take into account the fact that we have to instruct them and improve those skills. That is our part of assisting them. But, if they were able to come out and decide—from a practical and an appearance point of view—that that was the career they sought, I am sure that everybody would benefit.

Mr MAREK—Years ago, when I was employing people in my panel shop, I found that kids did not really know what they wanted. They had the impression that a job was a job—'I will take that.' Then, all of sudden, they got into the panel beating side of it and thought, 'This is not what I want to do,' and then they found they were caught or stuck. So that is why I was thinking it would be better if we had a system, so that they could get a better feel for what they were going to do. As it is, we have kids going to university, finishing and still not knowing what they want to do.

Mr Boyd—I agree. I have had that experience in my own family. My son wanted to be a farmer. He started an apprenticeship and lasted one year. He went back to school for two years. Then he did a boilermaking apprenticeship. He has finished that and he still does not know what he wants to do.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Does your business ever experience skills shortages, when you cannot get skilled tradesmen?

Mr Boyd—My own does not, because I have adopted a policy of training the staff that I want from day one, rather than going with what I have got and, if I run out, finding somebody else's employee and employing them. So I have my own replacements coming through.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What about TAFE training facilities at the local level—how are they?

Mr Boyd—Excellent.

CHAIR—I understand that you are also the president of the local business

association. Do your colleagues in the business community in Sale make many jobs available for young people?

Mr Boyd—I have not pursued that question directly. I could not give an accurate answer on that really. I assume they would, but I do not know.

CHAIR—Do you get any grizzles about the kids?

Mr Boyd—About the same as I expressed myself. We feel that they are not quite as ready for the work force as we would like. That is a fairly general opinion I think.

CHAIR—Have you or your colleagues expressed any views on either the industrial relations system generally or unfair dismissals and procedures specifically?

Mr Boyd—It is raised briefly, but not pursued too greatly. I have experienced it myself and it is the greatest disincentive to employ that I have come across. I do not believe that the—

CHAIR—Can you tell us about that?

Mr Boyd—The experience was so one-sided. They did not even want to know that I existed. You just have to make a settlement to reduce the costs that you are eventually going to experience. There was no credence on any information I gave. It was not accepted as being reasonable. It was all totally one-sided.

CHAIR—Yet you still keep employing young people.

Mr Boyd—There is so much paperwork now. If someone does something wrong it is written out in book form so that there is no possible way that I will get stung again.

CHAIR—You have become an author.

Mr Boyd—Exactly.

CHAIR—Are you good at grammar? Excellent spelling, Keith?

Mr Boyd—I have definitely improved. I used to be a fairly ordinary speller, but I have definitely improved.

CHAIR—Well done.

Mr MOSSFIELD—On the unfair dismissal aspect of it, did you go through your own employer organisation or did you represent yourself. You are talking about in the commission, I would think.

Mr Boyd—I was involved with both the employer organisation, the VACC, and my own solicitor.

Mr MAREK—Federally, what sorts of things would you like us to be doing for you as an employer to help you employ young people? We have looked at unfair dismissals and we have changed industrial relations. As I understand the way it is, new industrial relations will take a long time to implement. People already have their business and they run it the way they want to, but on the other side of it—workplace health and safety, all those sort of things—I guess we are talking about some of the state issues as well. In your own personal opinion, are there any particular bugbears that you have got that the government could probably eliminate for you?

Mr Boyd—Abolish payroll tax, without doubt. Payroll tax has cost me, effectively, another person that I could employ. If they said to me, 'I will abolish your payroll tax if you employ somebody,' I would employ somebody.

Mr MOSSFIELD—That is a state tax, is it not, the payroll tax? It is, yes. I am from New South Wales and I know that the state government there did temporarily suspend payroll tax in some areas where companies employed apprentices or something like that. There was a period of time where payroll tax was suspended for that particular employee.

Mr Boyd—To answer the question, I do not know what else the federal government could do to help us employ more people other than, as I said, give the economy a boost so that I was able to sell and repair more cars and therefore make more money so I could employ more people.

CHAIR—Is business in Sale vibrant?

Mr Boyd—It has its moments, like anywhere else. We are going along all right at the moment but we have had some bad months in the last six.

CHAIR—Is the town growing, or stagnant?

Mr Boyd—Fairly stagnant, I think. Esso went and the prison arrived, so I think one has probably replaced the other.

CHAIR—A taxi driver last night thought that the population was about 44,000.

Mr Boyd—In Sale itself it is 14,000 I understand. The total area that it involves might hold 44,000.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Seeing you are in the motor industry, I think this might be something you would like to comment on. The question of tariff protection: would that help the motor industry? In the end it gets down to jobs, doesn't it? Have you got a view

on that?

Mr Boyd—It does. I would hate to see it abolished and, therefore, that it would not be viable for Ford and Holden to continue to manufacture—I would think it would not be viable for them to continue. I am a great one for buying local and buying Australian products. I think that if we had to buy fully imported cars—which I am sure would be the ultimate result—it could only hurt the country.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So you would not like to see it reduced any more than it is?

Mr Boyd—No, increased.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Would you like to see it increased?

Mr Boyd—Yes, I would.

Mrs ELSON—Do you work in with group training in finding young people—

Mr Boyd—Yes.

Mrs ELSON—Or do you prefer to train?

Mr Boyd—We currently have one group training and another is temporary at the moment.

Mrs ELSON—Does that take part of the responsibility off you and you then have someone job ready?

Mr Boyd—Yes.

Mrs ELSON—Yes, that is 100 per cent better for you. You said before that students are not work ready when they come out. I just want to find out which way you mean. Do you mean in an academic sense, an attitude sense or their work ethic? Which one would be the one that—

Mr Boyd—All three. It does not apply to all. I would be being pretty hard if I said 'all'.

Mrs ELSON—We were told by a young person here this morning, 'Don't say all; say some.' So those three problems cover what you mean when you say they are not word ready?

Mr Boyd—Yes.

CHAIR—Keith, thank you very much for coming to talk to us today. We will continue our inquiries until the end of the year. We will discuss a report in August and bring down a report in either late August or early September. We will certainly send you a copy of our report and our findings. We hope they will be relevant and that they will encourage you to employ more young people and help make them more employable. Thanks very much. Good on you.

Mr Boyd—Thank you.

[11.28 a.m.]

MAXFIELD, Mr Kevin Robert, Owner/Operator, Maxfield Engineering Pty Ltd, PO Box 1153, Sale, Victoria 3850

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for coming to talk to us today. This is an all-party committee of the House of Representatives—we are not a government committee. We work together to try to come to grips with this question of how we employ more young people and keep more of them off the dole. But the inquiry is about employment; it is not about unemployment per se. Have you got some things you would like to tell us about the issues that we are inquiring into?

Mr Maxwell—Basically just points that I have come up with over time. They concern educating and the restructuring of the work force. I am more concerned with the lack of employment opportunities than how we are going to get them—I suppose they come in together.

On the education side of it—particularly when young people come for a job interview—they tend not to research the type of work that they are going for. They come dressed in the standard 16-year-old's clothing of T-shirt, very tight jeans and a pair of moccasins or something. They walk into a welding workshop or an office situation without researching what would be the appropriate type of dress for that particular work force. That is, some—not all. When you try to relate some of the core studies at, say, years 10, 11 or 12 to a lot of the job requirements they do not really match, from what I can see. That is probably the biggest problem I see with the education side of it from my perspective.

The restructuring has had a big effect on employment opportunities, particularly in the public works areas—the power industry and offshore gas and oil. They have been restructured and this has cut out a lot of employment opportunities. The SEC has had the power generation privatised and all sorts of things like that, and that has also cut out massive areas of employment for young people.

The big benefactors in this situation would be the group employment schemes and the group training schemes. Whilst I do not believe that is probably the ideal way to do an apprenticeship or a traineeship, for a lot of workplaces, including my own, that is probably the only option because we are mainly construction based more than manufacturing based. I don't know how we would change that. That is the problem I see with employment, especially for youth.

CHAIR—Going back to what you said about the young people not being prepared, do the schools in Sale offer enough opportunity for young people to do vocational courses in addition to the academic studies, or are they too directed towards the VCE and TER scores and sending the kids off to uni?

Mr Maxfield—I think so. I think that is the whole system. It is not the schools in Sale particularly, but it is the whole system which is basically assuming, from my point of view, that most young people are going to go on to a university, or at least some sort of tertiary based training, rather than trade or traineeship type training. We have had the abolition of the old test school system, and there must be good reasons for that abolition, but I tend to believe it was probably the best system of the lot, especially for trade based traineeship training.

Mr MOSSFIELD—When a young person applies for a position in your company, does the fact that they are not wearing the correct clothes create a wrong impression with you?

Mr Maxfield—I think it does, naturally. If someone comes in looking for a job in a workshop situation and dresses as though they are going down the beach or just down the street for something, you start to wonder as to what they have listened to or whether they have been taught the right way, either from home or from school or wherever.

Mr MOSSFIELD—In your mind, does this indicate that there could be some weaknesses in the education system relating to career advice?

Mr Maxfield—I think probably in the system in general and not just in education. I think parents have to have some responsibility for that sort of thing as well.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What attributes do you look for if you want to employ a young person?

Mr Maxfield—I think someone who would have done some sort of research as to what sort of job they were applying for and come dressed appropriately. A pair of reasonable jeans, a shirt and a pair of solid shoes would be what you would look for with someone coming into my workshop. If it was an office situation then it may be a white shirt or a different type of dress. I think too much of it is governed on first opinion or first impression.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Group training companies have been mentioned this morning, and you have said that would be an ideal way for you to employ more young people.

Mr Maxfield—Yes, it is probably the only option for me to employ young people because, as I said, even though I am a small workshop, my work is mainly construction work.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Fixing troughs.

Mr Maxfield—Yes, it is fixing troughs. I am fixing a trough at the moment. I use the Morwell based training scheme a lot. As I said, I don't believe it is the ideal way to

do an apprenticeship, but I think it is the only option for a lot of kids.

Mrs ELSON—How many people do you employ? I don't know if you have mentioned that.

Mr Maxfield—No, I have not mentioned that because it changes. At the moment, I am it. I have one fellow hired out to another crowd, but generally it is me, a general hand welder and an apprentice. I am a tradesman welder, I suppose, as well as a bookkeeper.

Mr MAREK—I have asked this of quite a few people today, and I would like to ask you this as well. In relation to work experience for students, how would you feel if the education system adjusted itself so it was slightly more vocational in the later years—say, in years 11 and 12—so that students could possibly come and do work experience in your operation for one, two or three days a week, and then go back to school for the other couple of days a week where they could do mandatory subjects like maths, English and those sorts of things? Would you be happy with that sort of thing?

Mr Maxfield—I think the work experience system operates in year 10. That is probably a better age group than year 11 and 12.

Mr MAREK—So you are getting kids through work experience now?

Mr Maxfield—I have kids coming from this institution, from the Catholic college. They generally spend a week; some spend two weeks. It is a good scheme. It sorts out the problem with a kid who might think he wants to be a welder or a carpenter but who comes in and finds out that that is really not what he is not going to do. That is probably the major benefit of it.

CHAIR—Kevin, you were talking about the restructuring of the electric power generation industry. You said that is now preventing young kids from having jobs.

Mr Maxfield—I said it has limited it a lot. Those areas were probably traditionally the major trainee based areas, apprenticeship based areas—the public works instrumentalities. Esso used to take on quite a few apprentices. They take on very few now. They take them on through a group training system. The valley based power would virtually take an intake of their own. That basically does not happen now because it has all been privatised out. Some of them take them on, some don't.

CHAIR—We are still generating; in fact, we are generating more power than we were before out of the facilities.

Mr Maxfield—Yes. In general apprenticeship training has dropped, from what I see.

CHAIR—It has. We don't like it much.

Mr Maxfield—I do not really know what the answer is, because the type of work does not allow for a lot of traineeship type work on it. The jobs have changed. The industry structure has changed; it has become more package construction rather than on-the-job construction. A system developed overseas or something. In the joint venture situation with companies, they set up on site and build a power plant or a gas turbine or a compression situation from offshore. They bring a complete package out and the thing would be looped in here. All the interconnecting work would be done here and then shipped offshore or into the power stations.

CHAIR—But surely you have fabricated the building that houses it?

Mr Maxfield—No, they mainly come as a unit.

CHAIR—Including the buildings?

Mr Maxfield—Not the buildings so much.

CHAIR—Is that not your business, to make the buildings?

Mr Maxfield—It is not entirely mine. Mine is in a smaller area than that. That work is still covered, as it was then, by contractors. I am more familiar with the stuff that that goes offshore, which comes out in a package frame. Whereas the frame and the compressors would be built here and the pipe work would be done, it now comes out as a unit and it is just interconnected.

CHAIR—Have you lived in Sale all your life?

Mr Maxfield—Apart from three or four years, yes.

CHAIR—Is the employment situation for young people today better or worse than it was 10 years ago?

Mr Maxfield—I think it is probably worse, because so many of them have got to leave to get employment or education and so forth.

Mr MAREK—What do you think has happened to make the situation like that?

Mr Maxfield—You could probably ask that question for almost every regional area in Australia, could you not? A lot of industry has relocated back into the major cities. Fuel costs, transport costs and infrastructure costs would have to have a lot to do with that, plus the advancement of electronic technology.

Mr MAREK—I suppose you would agree that the drought and those sorts of

things have severely affected people. Banks have been fairly harsh on people out in drought affected central Australia. Therefore people are probably moving away from the regional areas—because they have got nowhere else to go—back into the cities. People are coming off the land because of those sorts of things.

Mr Maxfield—Yes, it would have that effect; there are not as many people working in the agricultural industries, because of the lack of work. The small farms have virtually gone; they have been incorporated into larger holdings. Whereas there might have been three dairy farms in this area of probably 150 to 200 acres, there is probably one of 600 acres. So that is probably three families that have been affected. That has had a big effect on my work.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Is there a shortage of skilled tradespeople around?

Mr Maxfield—Not all the time, but at times, yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I think your point about the restructuring of industry has meant that government departments in particular are not training the same number of apprentices as they used to. I am a railway trained apprentice, but now I do not think the railways in New South Wales train any apprentices as such. You could go through a range of industries—power would be one—in which major government and even private employers are not training apprentices now for various reasons. What can be done to overcome the skill shortage that will eventually develop as a result of the fact that these particular organisations are not training apprentices any more?

Mr Maxfield—I suppose the easy answer is to stop importing, but I do not think that is ever going to happen and that would not be a good idea anyhow. I do not really know what the answer is. Perhaps you can redirect a lot of these bigger companies back into the regional areas. I do not know how you are going to do that, other than give them their fuel for nothing and cutting their transport costs and things like that.

Mr MAREK—Even though a lot of people wanted to see the end of demarcation, demarcation is one of the greatest things for knocking bulk groups of employment on the head. We used to have boilermakers, fitter and turners, fitters, motor mechanics, carpenters and so forth. Now we have fitter welders who do everything—fitting, machining, tool making and welding. A lot of the large companies, like mining companies, have gone away from having all those different trades. Now they only need one of each. I guess society has changed with technology, which has been a great factor as well.

Mr Maxfield—It has. Technology and computerisation have definitely cut out a lot of employment opportunities. But do you go back to using square wheels on cars or something and riding horses everywhere? The thing is that multiskilling has obviously cut down avenues of employment but if single jobbing was the way to keep people employed it might be a better way to go back to. Demarcation had its good points as well as its bad points.

Mr MAREK—Yes, precisely.

Mr Maxfield—I do not know whether you can turn the clock back—you probably cannot—but I do not think we are ever going to achieve anything like total employment either.

Mrs ELSON—Has the population growth been great in the last five years?

Mr Maxfield—I would say it has been fairly stagnant. In Sale, I do not think it has grown much, probably, in the last 10 to 15 years.

Mrs ELSON—I thought maybe the unemployment went up because more people moved here and there were no jobs.

Mr Maxfield—I do not know how you count a lot of that. We have had a lot of moving in and out—

Mrs ELSON—I have got a massive population growth in one of my areas and I noticed it has caused a lot of unemployment—but not here.

Mr Maxfield—There is a lot of unemployment; regional areas are the same everywhere I think.

CHAIR—You may not be competent to answer this, but I will ask anyway. Yesterday, with respect to this issue called unemployment, we were told by a group that talked to us that apparently a large proportion of the unemployed population that receives benefits also works for cash in hand in the businesses in town. Do you think it happens in town?

Mr Maxfield—Does it happen everywhere else?

CHAIR—I do not know.

Mr Maxfield—I think you would know as well as I do.

CHAIR—I wish I did. If that is true, what do we do about it?

Mr Maxfield—I do not know how you would even approach that because it would be very hard to get anybody to be a witness to something like that.

CHAIR—It is pretty difficult.

Mr Maxfield—It is almost impossible.

CHAIR—It does involve the taxation commissioner and a few other people as well.

Mr Maxfield—We all like to keep a few secrets from the taxation commissioner, whether we are employers or employees. That is always going to be a problem. It is something that you are never going to stamp out totally. I wouldn't say it would happen very much. It does not happen in my organisation.

CHAIR—How many? We say there are roughly 800,000 unemployed in Australia. Would you reckon half of that is really unemployed?

Mr Maxfield—I really do not know. It would be a far greater percentage of unemployed who are genuine than are unemployed through working the system.

Mr MOSSFIELD—The large employers—have you had any actually leave the area? I think Esso was one.

Mr Maxfield—Esso was probably the main one, yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Have any other government establishments left?

Mr Maxfield—Yes. You have had Asset Services. In the last quarter there was the department of housing and construction and many other names.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So have jobs gone with them?

Mr Maxfield—Not as many as would have, but the avenue for employment has, yes. A lot of those people are walking around with private contractors now.

Mrs ELSON—What would encourage you to employ a young person—another one, I should say?

Mr Maxfield—Basically having something for them to do continually. That is the only thing that would encourage it. The biggest problem from my own perspective is getting a continuous throughput of work. I just do not get it because of the type of work I work in. I think, when I started up, I got slotted into a hole I really did not want to get slotted into. My work background was construction, and that was where I ended up getting slotted into when I started my own business.

Mrs ELSON—Is there something the government could do for you to say you could take another one on?

Mr Maxfield—Probably not.

Mrs ELSON—And you could not recommend to the government what they could do to encourage you to do that?

Mr Maxfield—I could recommend a lot of things to the government, but it would not help much.

Mrs ELSON—That is what we are here for.

Mr Maxfield—No, I do not know that there is any way that you can dictate that—

Mrs ELSON—Not with a subsidy or anything like that?

Mr Maxfield—Particularly in country areas, because country areas, if they have a development—and we have just had the prison development here, which is probably the first development we have had here for close to five, six, seven years.

Mrs ELSON—So if the government offered a subsidy, you would prefer to put off one of your workers and take the subsidised one then, if they offered you—

Mr Maxfield—No, because you would spend too much money training them.

Mrs ELSON—Right.

Mr Maxfield—Money and time training them. I am in that situation now with a fellow that works with me full time. I have spent a lot of time training him. Work got slack, so I took the opportunity to hire him to my opposition rather than put him off, because you do spend a lot of money training people to do things your way.

Mrs ELSON—Thank you.

Mr MAREK—I have just one other comment there. We have spoken to many different groups of people, and we have run this past quite a few people now. It has been a common statement that it might take 1.5 incomes per family to be able to survive because of the cost of living, because of lifestyle and those sorts of things. Some of the witnesses we have spoken to have said that they find there are lots more cases of men and women from the one family having to work as well to be able to support their family. Maybe there are so many more women entering the work force that it is holding up the ability for a lot of youth to be able to get jobs. How do you feel about that? Would that be right?

Mr Maxfield—It probably would be, but what do you do—tell the married women to hop out of the work force?

Mr MAREK—No, you can't. No.

Mr Maxfield—Also, the other thing that has an effect is that you have had a lot of change of gender in particular jobs. In a manual trade job, you are getting a lot more girls doing mechanical trade training, you are getting a lot more males doing say hairdressing or nursing and things like that which have been traditional male or female gender jobs. You are getting a lot more cross-gendering in jobs, and I think that has had an effect on it as well. Women are not opting out of the work force now as quickly to have families and, if they do, they come back just as quickly. That is their right; I do not think you can argue about that.

I think a lot of factors have got to do with unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, because people are staying in the work force longer, and particularly women. If you get a university degree, you are not going to run away from the job, are you?

Mr MAREK—That is right. There are so many factors. I guess in my own mind I am trying to picture exactly what it is that we need to do or where we need to go, and that is why it is interesting to hear everybody's point of view, particularly on that statement.

CHAIR—Okay. Thank you very much, Kevin. We intend to finish the inquiry about the end of June and we will work on the report in August. At the end of August or early September we will have a report, and we will certainly send you a copy.

Mr Maxfield—Thank you very much.

CHAIR—Thank you for coming and sharing your experiences and your views with us today.

Mr Maxfield—Thank you.

[11.56 a.m.]

CAMERON, Ms Diane, Executive Officer, Gippsland Area Consultative Committee, PO Box 537, Morwell, Victoria 3840

OSLER, Mr Tony, Employment and Training Consultant, Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 48 Webb St, Narre Warren, Vic 3805

WALLIS, Mr Ian Keith, Principal, Sale College, PO Box 231, Sale, Victoria 3850

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for coming to talk to us today. Is there anything you wish to add about the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Wallis—Yes. I have been assisting Ms Cameron's committee to put together the submission from the Gippsland Area Consultative Committee.

Mr Osler—I am an employment field officer with the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry and have been since March 1995 when field officer positions were created under the Labor government and 80 were appointed, through the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to go out and talk to employers and to try to get a message across of private enterprise talking to employers.

CHAIR—Thank you. You know that we are talking about employment, not unemployment. Do you have a statement you would like to make to the committee?

Ms Cameron—Yes. The Gippsland Area Consultative Committee covers the shire areas of Latrobe, Baw Baw, East Gippsland, Wellington and South Gippsland. In the paper I have given to you I have outlined the towns that we cover. The statement that I am going to make today is a compilation of statements from consultations across the region with various groups, most of which are listed.

I would like to run through a few statistics for the Gippsland region. Unemployment in this region is endemic. I know we are talking about employment, but you cannot talk about employment in Gippsland without talking about unemployment. Youth unemployment in Victoria is 34.4 per cent. Mr John Brumby has quoted that the Gippsland region has youth unemployment of 50 per cent. It is very difficult to get accurate figures, but in excess of 50 per cent is the accepted level of unemployment among the youth in this region.

From the raw data that I have been able to get from the CES, there are approximately 5,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 21 registered as unemployed. Koori unemployment is purported to be between 95 and 98 per cent—that is across the whole Koori community. School retention rates—and these are figures given to me last week by the Directorate of School Education in Victoria—have fallen from 77.9

per cent in 1992 to 62.7 per cent in 1996. This is partly due to the exodus of people from the region due to the economic restructure.

Youth unemployment is of grave concern to the Gippsland Area Consultative Committee and it is one of our priorities this year. Youth suicide in this region is among the worst in Australia. The Bairnsdale youth suicide figures that have come from the Victorian coroner's office say that in 1992 14.9 young people per 100,000 in Victoria committed suicide and 42 per 100,000 in Bairnsdale, triple the state average. It was 18.1 per 100,000 in 1994 and 53.6 per 100,000 in Bairnsdale. Bairnsdale is triple the Victorian average for youth suicide.

Violence in the Latrobe Valley, part of the region, is the highest against police in Victoria. We have endemic domestic violence, substance abuse, homelessness, crime and poverty. These are the major problems of the region.

Gippsland is a region that has suffered dramatically from the policies of economic rationalism and tariff reduction. It is claimed that every family in the Latrobe Valley has someone out of work, is fearing unemployment or has a business at risk. The downsizing of the power industry in the Latrobe Valley has resulted in a decrease of jobs from 11,000 to 3,000, with the obvious domino effect on service industries. Coupled with this are the Victorian government's policies of shire amalgamation and hospital and school closures, which heavily impact on rural areas. These institutions formerly employed young people in training positions. As a result, skilled people have moved out of the area and bright young people cannot find work. Graduates are continually lost to other areas.

Figures quoted to me are that 80 per cent of young people in Bairnsdale leave the area once they finish school. A study recently done in South Gippsland traced young people over the last four to five years after they have left school: 19 per cent are employed in South Gippsland; 43 per cent of those who are not employed in South Gippsland would like to come back.

Restructuring of the timber industry, and the decline in oil, timber and fishing have had an impact on East Gippsland similar to the problems that are faced in the Latrobe Valley. The restructuring of the timber industry in particular in East Gippsland has affected the rural and remote areas. Without retraining, both youth and parents are equally affected.

I would like to say that young people at the lower end of the education spectrum were in previous years absorbed into the sort of base grade positions that no longer exist. Although poorly paid, these positions, as well as earning profits for the companies—and I am talking about the big companies and the shires and places like that—in essence performed a community service by employing people and therefore indirectly allowing a cash flow in the local economy. Essentially, downsizing has destroyed industry's own markets. I think the core issue facing society and therefore the government today, and this

comes across with all the consultations I have had across the area, is to decide whether we have a community responsibility to provide employment opportunities for members of our community or whether, since we cannot allow people to starve, the choice is basically between paying unemployment rates to support the people or stimulating the economy to provide jobs.

If we accept the former, we accept that unemployment rates are never likely to fall. If we accept the latter, we must accept that unemployment is not the fault of the unemployed but a result of fiscal policy and therefore we must accept responsibility to take steps to remedy the situation.

Programs such as work for the dole, Green Corps and previous labour market programs in effect just bandaid a bleeding artery. They create false expectations of jobs that in reality just do not exist. We have heard from small business this morning, and I hear this constantly, that they simply cannot afford to put on young people because the markets for their products are not there.

Labour market programs have been described by one school principal in this region as putting a candle before the gale, so that any glimmer of hope is extinguished. This questions the values that are being passed on to the young people. A spokesperson for Monash University believes that Gippsland is experiencing a grieving problem but is reluctant to identify and discuss the problems for fear of bad press reports and scaring off investments. We need to accept as a region that we are in distress and that we need external help through integrated national policies to overcome our economic woes, including infrastructure investment to make the region more attractive.

Basically, the feeling across the region with youth employment or lack of youth employment—whichever way you want to say it—is that, if we do not accept the need to create jobs for youth and stimulate industry so that they can afford to put on young people, we will pay for it through juvenile justice, through vandalism, through mental health and through substance abuse. One way or the other, society pays.

The Gippsland Area Consultative Committee has a number of strategies in place to assist with youth unemployment, but not necessarily the dollars to back it. In particular, we are interested in employment creation through youth business incubators. A lot of kids want to work but have no idea how to start their own businesses. We have an example of a youngster in Bairnsdale who started washing windows to get off the dole, but his little business collapsed because he did not have the education and the wherewithal to do the accounting, the marketing and all of the rest of it. If we can pull kids in like that with that sort of zip and enthusiasm and give them some sort of support, we hope that we can help.

We are sponsoring the young achiever Australia program and, through one of the local secondary colleges, we are hoping to put a number of young unemployed people on that program. We are doing this in the hope that, when that business is collapsed in

October—as it must be as a result of the young achiever program—we can restart it as a youth business and give those people the opportunity to continue it.

We are, as an ACC, a member of the committee that has grown up in the Latrobe Valley which has called itself 'Unemployment is not an option'. This group, comprising business, VECCI and the local economic development unit of the shire, is working with the young achiever program to pick up all of the young achiever programs throughout the area to try to start them as businesses afterwards. It is also actively involved in trying to start business incubators in the valley.

We are piloting a schools life skills program whereby at risk students will be put through an intensive week of job search, not in actual fact to find them jobs but to show them how difficult it is to find jobs when they are thinking of leaving school, and to try to persuade them back into further education or training. As part of our regional employment strategy, we are also conducting a present and future skills survey to see what skills are needed in the area to try to link training to them.

We are also consulting with young people throughout the region, and we are conducting a MAATS road show, along with VECCI, to try to market apprenticeships and traineeships to parents, students, schools and business. Those are some of the things that we are involved with in trying to create work for young people in this region.

CHAIR—Is that it?

Ms Cameron—That is it. Ian wants to talk about—

CHAIR—That was pretty depressing, wasn't it?

Ms Cameron—Yes, that is the reality of this region.

CHAIR—Maybe it is and maybe it is not. I have to say that that is the most depressing report from any area that we have visited in Australia. I have to say that your attitude does not seem to reflect the views of the kids that we talked to for 1½ hours this morning.

Ms Cameron—But I have to say that we are the adults working with those kids once they leave school, to try to get them into employment.

CHAIR—Why then did such a range of the young people that we talked to—in fact, the majority—who wanted to have part-time jobs have them?

Ms Cameron—Perhaps you did not talk to the kids that we are dealing with. The zippy, bright young kids who can access the education system and who can access vocational education and training are not the people that I deal with on a day-to-day basis;

they are not the people who are the statistics on the CES records. I would say that the inquiry perhaps has not talked with the kids who could wallpaper their bedrooms with the number of letters of rejection, who have done the pounding and who are slipping into the hopelessness because they cannot find jobs. You are talking to the kids who have not hit that yet, and possibly will not.

CHAIR—Why the number of letters of rejection? What are the particular traits, characteristics, difficulties or lack of skills?

Ms Cameron—All sorts. There are lots of barriers to employment—personal presentation, skills level, substance abuse, social problems. We are seeing third generation unemployment with the kids in this region. We actually have some parents who actively discourage their kids to work because they have survived okay on the dole, thank you very much. So you have all of those sorts of barriers to employment.

CHAIR—How do we help those kids?

Ms Cameron—The committee I am working with in the Latrobe Valley would like unemployment—kids pulling unemployment benefits and watching videos all night and sleeping all day—not to be an option for Gippsland youth. We would like to see a responsibility to do something—training, further education, voluntary work or something—tagged to unemployment benefits. If you talk to brokers of labour market programs right across this region, they tell you that they pull kids in to put them on programs—with the Working Nation policy in the past—only to be told by the kids that they cannot afford to go on a labour market program because transport to work would cost them too much, and to be asked by the kids why they should work, since the money they would get on the program would be the same as that they get on the dole. We would like to see that stopped. The dole is a great disincentive to youth employment.

CHAIR—Accepting that, how do we fix that?

Ms Cameron—We should tie responsibility to the receipt of government benefits.

CHAIR—Keep going.

Ms Cameron—It is fine to accept government benefits to support you, but you must give something back to the community in return—that may be just a day or two a week. But, as a community, if we are going to support you financially, we require that you do something back in return—whether that is bettering yourself through training, working in old folk's homes or covering books in the local school library. But, as a community, we require something back

Mrs ELSON—You are talking about a work for the dole scheme in other words, but not calling it 'dole'.

Ms Cameron—Perhaps it could be not quite as structured as that. And perhaps as a—

Mrs ELSON—The responsibility should go back to the youth rather than to the government?

Ms Cameron—Yes. Because when you just hand stuff out to kids, you develop a welfare mentality—somebody else is always going to pay. When you ask for something back, you get self-esteem and self-respect: they do not feel as if they are getting it for nothing but they feel that they are actually giving something back to the community. We need to break the cycle of welfare mentality.

Mrs ELSON—Is this what the young ones want too?

Ms Cameron—I do not know. We have had young people say that they would happily work for the dole. In consultations, we have also had older people say that they would be happy to work for the dole.

Mrs ELSON—The group that you say we are missing seems to be the group that have got many more problems than the ones we are seeing here. They are the ones you are talking to. How do they feel about it? They prefer to get the money for nothing, and we have got to force those ones or make them obligated—is that what you are telling us?

Ms Cameron—It is not a matter of force; it is a matter of education in community responsibility.

Mrs ELSON—So you would say, 'If you do not do something, you do not get the money'?

Ms Cameron—It is an option.

Mrs ELSON—What do you think they would do then?

Ms Cameron—I think we would have all the civil libertarians in the country screaming.

Mr MOSSFIELD—We are in a chicken and egg situation as to which came first—the problems we have or unemployment. My view is that unemployment causes most of the attitudinal problems amongst young people. There would be a lot more enthusiasm and willingness to work if people knew the employment opportunities were there.

Ms Cameron—Yes. You always have a sector of society that society needs to support, for whatever reason. That has always been true, right through history. But we

have got an increasing number of young people who used to be absorbed as junior typists, guys who swept the floor in the factory and all of those sorts of jobs. They are the jobs that have gone. This is the group of young people that the CES have on their books. It is not the zippy bright ones who are going to go ahead and go on to university and who can knock on the door of McDonalds and pick up a job because of attitude, appearance, and work ethic. We have a group of kids who used to be absorbed into the work force and no longer are. That is the crux of the matter.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Are the Working Nation programs—or labour market programs, irrespective of what government has introduced them—being sold well enough at the community level. I ask that because, with the new work opportunities, for example, if somebody was employed under that, the employer themselves did not have to pay any wages for six months. So there was very little direct cost to the employer, except maybe in training. That was clearly an advantage, and that was a good period of time where an employer—particularly a small employer—could assess whether that person was suitable for that company. There was no obligation to keep that person in employment if they were not suitable. Irrespective of what labour market programs we have, are they being sold well enough at the business level?

Ms Cameron—Possibly. A lot of employers saw labour market programs as a free ride. We abolished LEAP and, for all of LEAP's faults, we did not replace it with anything. The major problem with LEAP was that it was seen by the previous government as a final step—to get kids from LEAP to work—when in fact for so many kids it was the beginning. The social outcomes of LEAP were not taken seriously enough. As far as employment is concerned, there were not good outcomes from LEAP programs. The social outcomes were quite phenomenal in this area. Obviously, the problem with labour market programs is that you get to the end of 26 weeks, you have raised expectations, you have taught them the work ethic, you have got them out of bed in the morning. It takes you the first 10 weeks to do that—to get them out of bed, to turn up, to ring in when they are sick and all the rest of it. At the end of 26 weeks, they were dropped straight back into the bucket. That would be my major criticism of the LEAP program.

CHAIR—We have been told by a couple of groups that in relation, for example, to the new work opportunities program, which dealt with the very long-term unemployed, you might have to offer a placement in that program to six people in order to get one starter—which took five people off the dole. Do you have any experience with those programs in this region?

Ms Cameron—I think one of the greatest things that labour market programs did in this region was pick up cash-in-hand workers who were pulling the dole and working cash-in- hand. I think that was a hidden outcome of labour market programs that was never measured. I was a broker of labour market programs before I took on the role with the ACC. Certainly, that happens. Job Club springs them as well. With those sorts of programs, you are talking about the mature long-term unemployed, not about kids.

LEAP was picking up the 15-year-old who was walking the streets and getting involved in the drug scene and that sort of thing. It was teaching them the work ethic, numeracy and literacy. A lot of LEAP training that I organised was simply numeracy and literacy in the end, as well as things like occ. health and safety and first aid and hands-on stuff. We could not put them through a LEAP curriculum because they could not read and write. These were the kids that we were saying LEAP was going to get them into the work force. LEAP was not going to get them into the work force. LEAP was the first step on the ladder that might have got them into the work force.

CHAIR—From your knowledge and information, would the newstart statistics for young people match ABS statistics?

Ms Cameron—I do not think there is much correlation between DEETYA's statistics and ABS statistics. I guess one of the problems I find, as executive officer of the ACC, is actually getting accurate youth unemployment statistics for this area. It is a criticism and a comment that I have made to Canberra before: I cannot get a base line to work out a percentage. When I talk to the regional manager of the CES, with all due respect, he cannot either. So anything that anybody floats as youth unemployment in this area cannot be refuted.

CHAIR—It is a problem, and your shock-horror statistics on page 1 of your presentation do give us cause to wonder. For instance, in Alice Springs there are youth that are on newstart or jobstart allowances—whichever it is. But we are told that there is virtually no unemployment in Alice Springs. If you want a job, there are jobs. It may not be the job you want, but there are jobs. There is work for everybody that wants to work.

Yesterday we heard that there is some concern that there is, in a sense, a huge rorting of the social security system by people on newstart allowances who have cash-in-hand jobs in the small businesses all over the regional towns. I guess what this committee is going to have to try and come to grips with, since nobody has had the guts to look at this before, is to what extent that is true. To what extent do we have not only people on public allowances who just do not want to work—that one is almost impossible to solve, I would submit—but also people on public support benefits who in fact are privately supporting themselves through the cash economy? How does that distort our picture of what the real unemployment situation is? How could we better allocate public resources which, as we all recognise, are scarce through the school system in preventative measures or through rectification measures where necessary in order to pick up those who have fallen through the safety net?

Ms Cameron—I would say that probably between five and 10 per cent of my labour market participants are cash-in-hand workers.

CHAIR—No more than that?

Mr Osler—I would go higher.

Ms Cameron—Probably. These—

CHAIR—Go ahead, Tony. How high would you go?

Mr Osler—I go to about 20 per cent. I run into it a lot; I see it a lot. I call on about 90 employers a week. I think the main reason for a lot of this is that the people are absolutely frozen with the idea of how to go about employing somebody. Who do you ring? Where do you get things from? You ring Wageline, they no longer exist. Nobody has ever told anybody they are finished, but they are finished. Then you have got to work out who you ring. Nobody will tell you that you have to ring DLI. The person is totally confused. What does the person do? The person turns around and says, 'To hell with all this. I'll give you a bit of cash. You can stay on the dole and keep your trap shut.'

Mr MAREK—To go further than that, Tony, I have spoken to a lot of employers about the same aspect. It is easier to give somebody a few dollars on the kick rather than have to worry about safety and all the other guff—the imposts on a small business. It is easier to slip them 10 or 15 bucks a hour or eight to 10 bucks an hour and be done with it. Would you agree?

Mr Osler—I brought up the problem a moment ago of the employers being aware of it. I do not pat myself on the back but, out of the 80 field officers across the ACCI scheme, I think I hold the highest figures. I am in a pretty tough area. I have got Morwell to Dandenong, Lilydale to Portsea and the whole of South Gippsland. It is no swell place; I can assure you of that. I find that if you get off your backside and get out and really talk to employers there are a lot of jobs out there. I did 44 traineeships and apprenticeships last month, and I filled 43 of them.

But also out there is the kids' lack of attitude. I do not care who I upset. I get sick of people saying to me, 'What're you going to do about the kids?' I just turn around now and say, 'What's the kid going to do about himself?' I think it is time they got off their backsides and were made move. Their attitude to going to a job—not all, but the majority—is pathetic. I will give you an instance of one, and this happens every day of the week. I had the opportunity to put two lads on a very good traineeship with a roof truss company in Hallam—I will not name him, but he is a very nice fellow.

CHAIR—There is only one roof truss company in Hallam.

Mr Osler—There are two, actually.

CHAIR—Where did the other one come from?

Mr Osler—He was prepared to pay $20 above the national training wage to start.

After 60 days he was prepared to bump them up another $20. Top equipment, excellent place, excellent boss, excellent staff. So we went into the system at Dandenong and we tried to find five people—plenty of people are unemployed in Dandenong, believe me—who were interested in working with him. We battled like hell for two days on the screens. I leave this to some very capable people. I have got great confidence in a lot of the people in the CES. Everyone has got their faults, whether they are in the CES or anywhere else.

We eventually found five to go out and face the job. We gave them times to go. The first bloke did not turn up and the second bloke did not turn up. The next day we asked them why. It was too hot. One bloke lived 1¼ kilometres from the building, the other one lived in Doveton, about four minutes away. The third bloke turned up with a stubbie in his hand, which is an old trick in Dandenong: if you do not want to get a job but you do not want to get reprimanded, you will at least go and have a look at the job. If you have a stubbie in your hand, they will soon pelt you out the door. This is a true story. The fourth bloke rolled up on a skateboard. He went up and down the office until this gentleman got so ruddy confused he did not know what to do. He opened the door and let him go straight out. We signed the fifth bloke up. He lasted a week. He got his pay on the Thursday and said to the foreman on the Friday, 'This is boring.'

The bloke said to him, 'Don't go out the front gate and tell the boss that, because he will land you in about the back of Doveton somewhere. You had better go over the back fence.' The kid took him seriously, went over the back fence and hasn't been back. On the following Monday, I rang his family and got his father. I said, 'Where's the young bloke?' He said, 'He's at work.' I said, 'He's not.' He said, 'He is so.' I said, 'He's not. I am here at the roof truss place now.' This is at a quarter to 12. He said, 'Hang on, I'll go and check.' He went to check. He came back and said, 'I'm very sorry. He's still in bed.'

The sad part about it is that if a kid genuinely goes and has a crack at a job, that is fair enough—he might not get the job but just so long as he has a go—but it is not good if you dodge like they dodged. I am a great believer that you have to be a little bit cruel to be kind at times, and I think they should be dropped off the dole for six months. They made no attempt to have a crack at that job.

CHAIR—We have had five sessions with young people and almost universally—not entirely, because one location wasn't quite that strong—in four sessions at least the kids have told us that most of their colleagues who are on the dole are only on the dole because they want to be on it because they just do not want to work. There are jobs available, and they could get jobs if they wanted jobs.

Mr Osler—There are some good jobs out there. I wish to get back to that point that nobody is really out there now selling apprenticeships and traineeships, other than ourselves.

CHAIR—What about group training schemes?

Mr Osler—Group training is good up to a point, but it has become too expensive. A first year apprentice costs you the cost of a third year apprentice. You get tricked with the old easy question. I have nothing against group training, and it has its place, but it is the old trick question of, 'We do all the paperwork for you so hiring from us is easy.' I can give you 10 reasons why you should employ your own. I think that is a very strong point that should be looked at. The situation is very sad.

The subsidy cuts that Amanda Vanstone brought in were drastic. The subsidies scheme was going along pretty fine when we took over under Crean, with $4,000 for an apprentice, and $2,000 for a traineeship at level 2, and $4,000 at level 3. They have been cut, and the $4,000 comes back to $2,750 and the $2,000 comes back to $1,250. That knocked a few people about. It costs money to train these people.

If only you would get out there, have a real good talk with them, lay it all out on the table and say, 'I am a one-stop shop. I will do the lot for you. It doesn't cost you anything—I am funded by the government to do it.' You would be amazed how many vacancies you would get and how quickly they would help you fill them. Hardly at times you have to really work hard on the CES. They find somebody to fill it. They didn't realise it was so easy to employ somebody when it is all put on the table for them.

You have your state training board now who have been told they are going to be privatised, so they have chucked in the sponge. They sit back and just mail you stuff if you want it. They will not go to see you, and I suppose you can't blame them because they can't get any concrete answers. There is no scrutineering of apprentices. Anybody can sign up an apprentice at the moment and bung him on. It is pathetic; it is like a meat market.

You have your traineeships and we are out there doing them. You have plenty of people who want to go around, talk babble to people about traineeships and get a stack, but they don't actually want to get off their bum and sign it up. They just want to talk about it and fill up the person with a lot of false ideas. Nobody wants to sit down with a person and say, 'All right. We've spoken about it; when do we sign him up?'

Mr MAREK—Let us get back to the real picture. All this started from the fact of the impost on small business. It came back to the fact that the employer has to worry about work cover, workers compensation, workplace health and safety—the list goes on and on.

Mr Osler—He doesn't understand the Workcare levy exemption. A lot of people just can't understand what it means. Workcare have been covering up a fair bit, too. For example, you can put on a young fellow at a dairy farm and, if he is the only employee you have, there is a minimum charge of $50 registration. Workcare tell the insurance

companies not to tell people about the special deal that goes with it. For an extra 25 per cent of the premium, you can cover yourself against the first $416 and the first 10 days off, but they don't want to tell people that. So the small business person is getting ripped off again there.

We have just brought it out into the open via the media with 3GG and 3TR. It caused hell, but I will tell you that it has made a lot of people in small business very happy. Once he understands Workcare and once he understands that a superannuation scheme can be done through an insurance company—

Mr MAREK—He doesn't want to understand it. He doesn't want to have to pay it because he wants the alternative—

Mr Osler—No, there are a lot who want to do it but they don't know how to go about it.

Mr MAREK—What I am saying is that they want the alternatives. A small businessman can go and do a deal with an insurance company and say, 'I want to get right away from workers compensation. I want to do a deal with you. How much is it per year to look after all my staff?' I employed people for nine years and I never had a workers compensation claim. Yes, I had people who got hurt, but the reason why I did not have an insurance claim is that I personally paid all their accounts, bills and everything. I never had a claim, yet I was still paying thousands of dollars to workers compensation insurers. These are the sorts of imposts on small business. This is what is knocking them around.

Mr Osler—Isn't it disappointing that they did not have the gumption to say that, for $12.50 extra, you could cover yourself against all that? It is pathetic. It is a different story now when they ring up and we book them in because we do the whole booking while we are there on the job but, by hell, I tell you that the first thing I ask is, 'Would you like to pay an extra 25 per cent of the premium?' Too right you would—at that price, you would be a mug to knock it back.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Tony, I think a lot of our industrial problems are caused by people not going through their respective organisations.

Mr Osler—But it is so confused out there in relation to whom to go to in the end—whom do you ring for wages information and so on? At the moment, the system is in disarray. You ask somebody, and you go and ring up to find out what you should be paying Joe Bloggs. They say, 'Ring Wageline.' Wageline is finished—it is gone. All right, there is DLI, but nobody has told anybody that this is what you ring now. I had a fellow sitting there one day and he said, 'I have made 11 phone calls. I have had a gutful of it. I think I will give it away.'

CHAIR—There's the office of the employment advocate.

Mr Osler—Yes, but how does the average bloke out there know about all this? Unless there is an advertisement, he does not know. He has not got a clue, and he does not have time to worry about that.

CHAIR—We must change direction because we are going to have to decamp shortly. While we are all talking about the finding of places, apprenticeships and traineeships for the kids, we also know that we have got a serious skills shortage in some of the trade areas around the country.

Mr Osler—Quite a bit of one.

CHAIR—Everybody tells us that we are failing the kids at an early age by not helping them to understand what careers are available in the world, and by parents, schools and everybody else overemphasising going to university. The kids were highly vocal on those issues today. What responsibility—or lack of responsibility—does VECCI take for letting the kids know—from primary school on—what the hell the jobs are.

Mr Osler—I do not want to tread on the toes of the schoolteachers—

CHAIR—What responsibility does VECCI take?

Mr Osler—I will tell you. VECCI is busting its boiler, through me, to get into the schools to talk to kids in year 10, because I am a great believer that, when a kid gets to year 10, there should be a decision made: you are an academic or you are a worker. A lot of schools are stacking kids into years 11 and 12 to get subsidies—let us not kid ourselves about that—and then when they have finished with the kid, they pin him. The kid has not got the gumption to come back and get a job—it is too embarrassing—so he probably takes to drugs and grog.

Mr MAREK—So would you say it is the guidance officers that are pushing—

Mr Osler—The careers teachers. I will be straight down the line in this regard. Not all of them—there may be a good one here. I cover a big area, and we cannot get into the schools. They do not want to know us. They supposedly know it all, and then you say, 'Do you know anything about the dairy farm traineeship?' They say, 'Never heard of it.' You say, 'Do you know anything about the small business traineeship?' They say, 'What is that?' They do not want us near the kids. What are they doing with them? Are they trying to hold them to years 11 and 12? Let a kid get out, if he is not an academic, in year 10 to become a worker, a trainee or an apprentice.

There should be no dole. If he has not got a job in two months, and it is going to be tough for some and this is where your parents are going to have to get off their backsides and do a bit, put him on sustenance. We will not call it the dole, but from day one he has to get off his bum and work for that sustenance. I tell you what: he will find a

job—make no mistake about that. He will walk until he finds a job at any level of life, even if it is in the slaughterhouse—there are great traineeships now in the slaughterhouse.

CHAIR—What is the matter with a slaughterhouse?

Mr Osler—It's great.

CHAIR—Good money.

Mr Osler—Big traineeships—

CHAIR—Fifty grand in an abattoir?

Mr Osler—Yes, it is great. These kids are convinced in school that it is a slum job.

CHAIR—Will you tell the kids that?

Mr Osler—I will not tell the kids that. I will tell a kid, if he wants to be a slaughterman, to get out there and make a buck for himself by getting a job.

CHAIR—If you cannot get past the careers guidance teachers in the schools, why doesn't the industry association find another way of reaching the young people?

Mr Osler—Just now the industry is going through our new body at VECCI called AEEC—another acronym that is hard to swallow—which is going to work very hard to help us open the doors to get in to talk to the kids.

CHAIR—Good.

Mr Osler—I think that is vital. It is very important that we get to these kids—I should not refer to them as kids but as children—and have a really good talk to them, because they are confused; they have not got a clue. I talk to a lot of long term unemployed nips around Dandenong and Cranbourne, and their attitude towards going for a job is pathetic. They have got no idea of dress or character. Not so long ago, I had a kid say to me, 'You are talking a bucket load of dribble. You are an old silver-headed bloke.'

I said, 'I am glad you said that, because most of the blokes who own businesses out there are old silver-headed blokes who probably talk dribble, but they are the ones who are going to employ you. If you want to look like a dill, front up wearing moccasins and seven rings in your eyebrow, but I bet that you do not get a job.' You almost have to try and embarrass them. It is a sad thing to say; they do not understand any better. I feel sorry for some of them. I come home from Cranbourne nearly in tears some nights, and I think, 'I have wasted my time.' They do not know any better. They do not understand

what dress is all about for a job. It is very sad. And one little bloke on his own cannot cure the world. I am doing about 14 hours a day, and I love it.

CHAIR—Tony, I well remember the day—years ago now—when a kid came to the door in a black leather jacket and a black T-shirt. He wanted a job as a carpenter. There were four letters across the T-shirt, six inches high, and the word started with 'f'. And he wondered why he did not get it!

Mr Osler—This is what we have got to try to educate these kids about. But I am not having a pick at careers teachers—overall, it is one of the hardest spots.

The other thing I would love to get in and talk to them about is that I am not a great believer in maths: it is so confusing. The kid is not going to know whether he is an apprentice or a student and will be confused. As you said earlier, instead of waiting until a kid gets to year 12 and says, 'What the hell am I going to do? I do not know whether I want this or that,' go back a step to year 10 and ask a kid to choose the two jobs he would love to do and let him go out and do work experience in those two, so he can get one out of his mind and be a bit straighter when he goes for that job.

Mr MAREK—So would you agree with the process I have been talking about today?

Mr Osler—Do you mean the process of work experience?

Mr MAREK—Yes. Letting them do work experience and then go back to school and do a couple of the mandatory subjects so that, if they fall over and do not like it, they are still in touch with the school system and can go back there—full time if they have to.

Mr Osler—I would work Saturday and Sunday to help you on that one.

Mr MAREK—Tony and I are going to go a long way.

Mrs ELSON—Tony said, 'Ask Ian,' about career advisers. Ian, could you tell us what you are doing?

Mr Wallis—I reject a lot of what Tony said about careers teachers in this area and about what is happening in schools. Our schools are very keen to develop formal partnerships. It is a solution I would put forward. We need to develop partnerships between schools and local industries. We are doing that in this region. We are coming to agreements with group training schemes and key employers to provide opportunities for students in the whole area of careers advice. We have career work education programs in the junior levels and the middle schools. I might only be talking about Sale schools, but I am talking about them because I know the careers teachers in the area have a very strong relationship with each other. I also have a much more optimistic view of youth than has

been expressed by some of our people today.

Yes, there are the sorts of kids that Tony has mentioned. They are there in all societies and, I suggest, they have always been there. As Diane said, they were soaked up in the work force requirements of previous societies. Those sorts of jobs have now disappeared, which means we have got a problem with those kids. But today you saw the sorts of kids we are dealing with—that is a fairly typical group of students. They are not all high achievers but they have a different viewpoint to the one which has been expressed here.

As the host here, I am very conscious of the time. An armada of parents is going to come through the door in about 20 minutes, and the room has got to be set up.

There are a number of practical solutions that I would like to see. One of them is the establishment of formal partnerships between schools and local enterprises—but they need incentives. Local enterprises need some sort of incentive to move into schemes such as this. We are developing pre-employment programs in schools, and we use local employers to do that. The dual recognition scheme needs to be developed and enhanced. It is a wonderful scheme. It has funding problems, which are currently being worked through, but it certainly provides all the sorts of strengths that Diane has listed there—and more as well.

We have problems in our primary schools in terms of what we call the overcrowded curriculum. Too much is expected of younger students there. Far too much is being foisted on primary schools. If you look at the amount of literacy and numeracy skilling that happens in primary schools now, it is something like three hours per week, which is totally insufficient. So we need to address that. There are a whole range of work shadowing and work placement programs that careers teachers are now developing which really move out into the community. We would welcome the sorts of relationships that Tony was talking about before, with VECCI or whoever.

You heard from Keith Boyd before. We are regularly meeting with Keith as a member of the trading association. I think schools are very keen to get out and seek assistance from society, and I think once you develop that dialogue—and I think it can be developed, and we have proved that we can do it here—the employers will see the real strengths of what is coming through the schools at the moment.

Those are just some of the issues that I would have commented on in terms of the paper that Diane has put together there.

CHAIR—Last question: did you learn anything from the kids this morning that you did not already know?

Mr Wallis—Those are the sorts of comments that kids talk about quite often here.

We have got to listen to those sorts of things, and I was very encouraged by what the kids had to say about the world out there. We have got to listen to that and make sure that our programs are consistently monitoring the student view. And the more we do that—the more we create that dialogue—the better chance we have got, I think.

Mr MAREK—Ian, I would go one step further and probably say that a lot of the kids here today in some ways did not really understand what their future needs are. Lots of those kids spoke today about the relevance of the courses they are doing. A lot of them said, 'I do not want to do any more history, I do not want to do any more maths, I do not want to do any more English.' I am a fitter and turner and, now I am in federal politics, I wish I had done more history. People change their careers or their jobs two or three times during their lives. They need some of that stuff.

Mr Wallis—And society is changing so much that it is very difficult to say, 'I am going to educate a child to do this particular job in society', when the job itself might disappear, so there is a whole range of employability skills that you need.

Mr MAREK—Kids are not being told why they need this particular topic.

CHAIR—We are going to have to go.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Mossfield):

That the committee receive as evidence and include in its records as an exhibit for the inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people the document received from the Gippsland Area Consultative Committee titled 'Response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training 8 April 1997'.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Mossfield):

That the committee receive as evidence and include in its records as an exhibit for the inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people a document received from the Wellington Shire Council titled 'In Celebration of Youth'.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Mossfield):

That the committee receive as evidence and include in its record as an exhibit for the inquiry into the factors influencing the employment of young people the document received from Adult Community Education, Sale, titled 'Youth Endeavour Project 1997'.

CHAIR—Thank you, *Hansard*; thank you, participants; thank you, colleagues; thank you, staff.

Meeting suspended at 12.41 p.m.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SCHOOL FORUM

Factors influencing the employment of young people

SEYMOUR

Tuesday, 8 April 1997

Present

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mrs Elson — Mr Mossfield

Mr Marek

The committee met at 3.24 p.m.

Mr Charles took the chair.

PARTICIPANTS

Broadford High School

Stacey Borg
Jaye Frampton
Amy Hughes
Renee Jarvis-Parker

Seymour Technical High School

David Chittenden
Erin Creswell
Matthew Fowler
Emma Hendy
Alison Henry
Renee Morgan
Rebecca Wallis

St Mary's College, Seymour

Annette Foster
John Kostopoulos
Jarrod Melican
Alyson Quadara
Briony Tobias

Yea High School

Alissia Barker
Chantal Daniels
Catherine Jones
Clare Walker

CHAIR—Welcome to this school forum on the inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people. The purpose of the inquiry is to consult widely and produce recommendations for government action that will help promote the employment prospects of our youth. The committee has conducted similar school forums in Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania. Students and members of the committee agree that the forums are a valuable opportunity to share concerns and express views about this important issue. This school forum is one of a series with students in Nowra and Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, and Sale and Seymour in Victoria. The committee considers the school forum to be an important part of our inquiry process.

So far the committee has received over 100 submissions and conducted public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Alice Springs and several regional centres in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. For the most part, the evidence collected has come from employers, government and non-government agencies.

Through this school forum you will all have the opportunity to voice your views and your opinions on this most important matter. The agenda and issues for discussion have been sent to you and you have had prior opportunity to study the issues. Some of the issues we wish to discuss include: the effectiveness and appropriateness of the secondary education system; vocational education in schools; employer perceptions of young people; apprenticeships and traineeships; youth wages; income assistance; and any other issues that you may wish to discuss.

To help structure the debate, I will introduce each section with a few comments based on evidence that has already been provided to the committee. I will then seek your comments and views on the matters under discussion. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand. When you have been given a microphone, please state your name, your age and the school that you are from.

This is a committee of the House of Representatives so we are all members of the federal parliament. It is a voluntary committee. That is to say it is not a government committee; it is made up of members from all the parties, Liberal, National and Labor. My colleagues include Paul Marek from Queensland, Frank Mossfield from New South Wales and Kay Elson from Queensland. I am a Victorian. My electorate is Mount Dandenong in the Dandenong Ranges. James Rees is the inquiry secretary.

You need not be bashful here. There is nothing very formal about all of this, except that it eventually gets written down but that is not going to bite you. The only way we can learn what you think and what your real opinions are is if you stand up and tell us. If you are bashful, we will just sit here and look at each other and you are not here to hear what we think. We are here to hear what you think but we may have to say few things to sort of wind you up so that we can find out what is happening in Seymour,

Shepparton and the surrounding area.

The first topic that we like to start with is the school system. Lots of your colleagues in other states and your colleagues in Sale this morning and, indeed, employers and employer bodies, and all kinds of representatives, reckon that in a sense the school system is letting us down or letting you down. There is a view that parents and teachers are encouraging young people to stay on in school and to go onto university. In some places, students have told us that they have been told that there is no other choice: it is either university or the dole. I hope you know that that is wrong.

We know that that is wrong and we are interested in your views about whether the school system prepares you only for an academic career or only to be a brain surgeon or a rocket scientist or whether it offers you the other opportunities that you need for filling careers in many other industries and in business and commerce in other walks of life. Having said that, some or all of you may have views about whether the school is offering you a curriculum that is appropriate to your needs.

Mr MAREK—How do you feel about the schooling system, do you feel as though, when you have completed it, you are getting adequate grammar, numeracy and literacy and those sorts of things? How many of your parents both work—mother and father? It looks like fifty per cent of the people here have parents who both work. What do you want to do when you finish school?

CHANTAL DANIELS—I want to become a physiotherapist when I leave high school and hopefully go to university for about four years.

Mr MAREK—Do you feel as though school is preparing you for that?

CHANTAL DANIELS—I don't know. Sometimes, because it is so small, they do not do the subjects you want. Therefore, you do something else that is not even going to help you become a physiotherapist. So it is preparing me, sort of, in a way.

Mrs ELSON—How many students would like to go on to university? Are there any that don't? What would those who do not want to go to university like to do when they finish their schooling?

BRIONY TOBIAS—I want to join the police force.

ALYSON QUADARA—I want to be an apprentice chef, or something like that.

CHAIR—Why do you want to be an apprentice chef?

ALYSON QUADARA—Because the food industry is getting bigger and bigger each year.

CHAIR—Has anybody told you that there are jobs available as a chef?

ALYSON QUADARA—I have got a job at the moment in the food industry and I enjoy it. I have had no problem in getting part-time jobs in that industry.

Mrs ELSON—Has anybody guided you as to what courses you have to take or where to go to to be an apprentice chef?

ALYSON QUADARA—Kind of. I have already been offered an apprenticeship where I work, but my parents are making me go to school until I finish year 12.

Mrs ELSON—Have you talked to a careers guidance officer about it?

ALYSON QUADARA—No.

Mrs ELSON—Do you have one at your school?

ALYSON QUADARA—Not that I know of.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What year are you in?

ALYSON QUADARA—I am in year 10.

Mrs ELSON—You have been offered a job as an apprentice now. You could get one?

ALYSON QUADARA—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—One of the criticisms we have had in other areas is that the literacy and numeracy skills of young people are not sufficient. A lot of employers complain about this. What are your views? Do you feel as though your literacy and numeracy skills are strong? What about your friends—do you have any friends who do not have good literacy and numeracy skills and so that might hold their employment opportunities back?

CLARE WALKER—It is assumed that by year 7 you will have a certain level of literacy and numeracy skills and maybe that before you get into high school you should all be on a certain level or try to be taught to be on the same level of literacy and numeracy skills.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Does that mean in the latter years you are not getting much tutoring in literacy and numeracy?

CLARE WALKER—It is just assumed that most people know that. Some people

have private tutoring and stuff.

Mrs ELSON—Can I have a show of hands as to who knows some young person who cannot read or write or who is not good at maths? That is not too bad.

Mr MAREK—How many have had part-time jobs? Nearly all, by the look of it. Whereabouts are you working part time?

RENEE JARVIS-PARKER—I work in a supermarket.

Mr MAREK—Is it Woolworths or somewhere like that—a big place?

RENEE JARVIS-PARKER—No, not really.

Mr MAREK—Who else does part-time work?

ALISON HENRY—I work in a delicatessen at the Safeway Supermarket.

ALISSIA BARKER—I work at a supermarket and a hotel.

CHAIR—Let us hear from the rest of you.

ALYSON QUADARA—I go to St Mary's College and am 15. I work at Harvest Home, which is a restaurant in Avenel, and also Plunketts Winery, which is also a restaurant.

CHANTAL DANIELS—I go to Yea High School and am 15. I work in the deli at Riteway, Kinglake.

CHAIR—This whole front row had their hands up.

DAVID CHITTENDEN—I go to Seymour Technical High School and am in year 10. I worked as a paperboy for a year. I have been after a number of other jobs but have been unable to get one.

Mr MAREK—How many of you want to do an apprenticeship?

CHAIR—Only a couple.

STACEY BORG—I go to Broadford Secondary College and am 15. I want to maybe do an apprenticeship in the hospitality industry.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What do you feel about apprenticeships? Do you feel they are

a good form of employment? Do you feel they will give you a good career after you have finished your apprenticeship? Does anybody have any views? Would you be surprised that three of the people on this forum started our working careers as apprentices? You would be surprised.

Mr MAREK—I am a fitter and turner. Frank is a fitter and turner and Bob was a chippie, weren't you?

CHAIR—A carpenter.

Mr MOSSFIELD—And Mrs Elson started her career in a printing factory.

Mrs ELSON—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So we are all people who started work with our hands to start with. But the important point to make is that you do need a broad education because you will probably change your job two or three times, I believe, or more, during your working life. So you need that good basic education so that you can move from one job to another.

Mr MAREK—How many of you feel that the education you are getting now is relevant to the sort of work you want to do when you leave school? The lady at the back mentioned it before, but does anybody else have an opinion about what you are learning? Is it relevant to what you want to do?

JARROD MELICAN—I go to St Mary's College and am 15. Most of what we learn is relevant to most things that people will be going on with. There is a very broad range of subjects.

Mr MAREK—What subjects are you doing?

JARROD MELICAN—We have the standard because we are in year 10. But we have a lot of creative arts subjects through woodwork, art, textiles, graphics, computers and all sorts of things.

Mr MAREK—What do you want when you finish school?

JARROD MELICAN—I have no idea.

Mr MAREK—Move on to university or something?

JARROD MELICAN—Yes.

Mrs ELSON—Those in the room who do not have part-time jobs, is there a reason for that? We would just like to know if it is hard to get a part-time job here or

whether that is what you chose. Who does not have a part-time job?

CATHERINE JONES—I go to Yea High School and am 14. I do not have a part-time job because I am not old enough.

ANNETTE FOSTER—I go to St Mary's College and am 15. Where I live, there is no need for part-time jobs—I live out of town. There is only a store and a pub and that is it. There is no access to a part-time job.

Mr MOSSFIELD—The young people that left school last year that you know, what sorts of jobs did they go into? You must have known somebody who left school last year. This is just so we know what sorts of jobs are available here.

ALISSIA BARKER—I go to Yea High School and am 16. I know two guys who left school and they are both doing apprenticeships.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What sort of apprenticeships?

ALISSIA BARKER—Shop fitter and a builder.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Locally?

ALILSSIA BARKER—In Bundoora.

REBECCA WALLIS—I go to Seymour Technical High School and am 17. I have two friends who left school last year and both are doing apprenticeships. One is a fitter and turner and the other is an apprentice chef in Melbourne.

Mr MAREK—Are any of you worried that you will not be able to get a job when you want to get a job? Do not worry—there will be a job there. Are any of you concerned that there will not be jobs for you? Do you feel as though there are not jobs available?

ALYSON QUADARA—One of the reasons I want to go into the hospitality industry is that, with university, if you go to get a job or something, everyone seems to be saying that there are no jobs. Do you know what I mean?

Mr MAREK—Yes, that is a fair comment. I guess you have to look at university as an investment in a career that you want to get involved in. It is surprising—Bob has mentioned it in a lot of places that we have been to—that in the hospitality industry there is a lot of jobs for chefing people, particularly up around the Whitsunday Islands.

CATHERINE JONES—I worry. I want to be a zoo keeper, a zoologist or something like that. There is only one zoo in Melbourne, and I do not know whether I will get into that one. I do not want to move interstate, so there is not much of a chance

that I will get in.

CHAIR—Just out of interest, what made you decide you want to be a zoologist?

CATHERINE JONES—I want to study animals and I want to find out how they live and to just work with them.

CHAIR—Is there some particular event in your life that encouraged you in that direction—your parents?

CATHERINE JONES—Yes, I live on a farm. I have always been with them. I have always had heaps of pets. I just love them.

Mr MAREK—What about veterinary science or something like that?

CATHERINE JONES—I want to work with animals.

Mr MAREK—You want to work with them but you do not want to have to cut them up?

CATHERINE JONES—Yes, but it does not really worry me. I do not want to be putting them down all the time. I want to study them and their habitat. It is hard to explain.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Have any of you thought about interview skills for when you apply for a career entry job which is going to be the job that will lead you into full-time employment? Have you thought about how you should dress, how you should present yourself, what the employer will be looking for when you apply for a job?

DAVID CHITTENDEN—We are doing a careers subject this term. We have gone into all that interviewing business and how to dress and all that sort of stuff. When I thought I might be interviewed for a job that I applied for, I went around and got brochures. There are plenty of brochures and all sorts of information out there that you can get on a topic.

ALISSIA BARKER—Last year and the year before, all the students in our year had mock interviews. They brought in employers from shops in the town and they interviewed us. We had to dress as we would for an interview. We had to go for a certain job. We got evaluated and got a sheet at the end of it. It was good.

Mr MAREK—How many different schools are there in Seymour?

It was indicated that there are two.

Mr MAREK—And they are a Catholic and state school?

Mrs ELSON—Do the other schools have career guidance officers?

All in agreement.

Mrs ELSON—Do you find that they are useful? Do you use them and talk to them?

All nodded in agreement.

Mrs ELSON—Are they mainly there to guide you to university courses or to tell you what is available now?

ALISON HENRY—No, we have a wide range. We get shown about TAFE courses, and it is advertised when apprenticeships are on. We do a lot of work with the TAFE. It is a wide range.

CHAIR—What percentage of young people at the school do academic studies, and what percentage do the technical strain?

ALISON HENRY—All the kids in the middle school, up to year 10, do a prac studies. But year 11 and 12 get to choose their own. We do not have to do a prac skills. I am not sure how many do it but there are a few. There is an engineering side and a cooking side. A lot of people do that, those who are interested in the hospitality industry.

CHAIR—The majority of you have a part-time job. Can you tell us how many of your friends and colleagues have tried to get a part-time job and were not successful?

CLARE WALKER—I have a friend who left school about halfway through year 10 and she has tried for heaps of jobs and has not had any success until now. She now has a part-time job as a waitress. She is flying to Perth tomorrow to try and get a job over there. She knows people over there apparently. She found it very difficult to get a job.

Mrs ELSON—How long was she unemployed?

CLARE WALKER—She had been unemployed for probably about two years.

CHAIR—Does anybody else have friends who have tried to get jobs but were not successful? They tell us that youth unemployment is a problem in the region.

ALISON HENRY—A fair few of my friends have gone for jobs and have been unsuccessful the first time. We have three supermarkets in Seymour and they put their names down at all three. If they miss out on one, a couple of months later they usually get

a phone call from the other. Everyone else I know who has gone for full-time work has made sure the work is there before they have left school.

CHAIR—So are you telling us that if you want a job you can get a job?

ALYSON QUADARA—Not necessarily. You may be able to get a job but it might not be in what you want to do.

CHAIR—But you could get a job?

ALYSON QUADARA—Probably.

JOHN KOSTOPOULOS—Generally when you go for a job, it is not necessarily straightaway. With the supermarkets you may have to wait for two months, even longer, just for a phone call to get interviewed. So you cannot necessarily get a job straightaway. It is not as if the jobs are waiting there, saying, 'Yep, come and get me.'

CLARE WALKER—A lot of my friends have tried for a job but they are not determined enough to get it. I do not think they try hard enough to get a job. They could try a lot harder. It really depends on the individual person as to whether they get a job and whether it is in a field that they think they might want to go onto.

JARROD MELICAN—The jobs are out there but you have to be at the right place at the right time, like at the supermarket and other places. I have got a part-time job at a winery and it was pretty much a bit of luck that I got it. Alyson told me about it.

CHAIR—Do you think it is fair that some people are willing to leave school, take unemployment benefits, take the dole, and not work at getting a job? They say, 'I'll only take that job or that job. I won't have any job that they give me.' Do you think that is fair? Do you think your parents' taxes should go to pay for that?

JOHN KOSTOPOULOS—There are usually different excuses or problems that people come across when going onto unemployed benefits such as disabilities, no jobs at all, large families or they simply cannot survive on no work or little work at all. A lot of people do take the dole for granted. It may seem that we are picking at areas. There are so many things on the news saying that all of these people are bludging. I think the majority are not taking advantage of the dole but they are making an effort to get jobs. I do not think it is fair that some people are saying, 'I do not have to worry about getting a job, I can just get the dole. I do not have to apply for that job at all.'

Mr MAREK—How many people, do you think, are on the dole and getting a cash income on the side from employers?

JOHN KOSTOPOULOS—I would not have the foggiest clue about that.

Mr MAREK—Any ideas at all about anyone who might be on the dole?

CHAIR—Do any of you who have part-time jobs get paid in cash? I see some of you do.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Some employers say to us, and we do not agree with it, that some young people do not have the right attitude for work. How do you feel about that? Is that a fair statement?

ALYSON QUADARA—I waitress and I work with people my age. I agree that some people will come for a job and they just do not have the right attitude. In my opinion, they do not deserve to get the job. If they do not have the right attitude, when you are working with them, it makes it harder for the people who do have the right attitude, and who do want to work and do the job properly.

Mr MOSSFIELD—If you are applying for a job and the employer sets an interview time of 9 o'clock at night or 6 o'clock in the morning, would you still go for the interview?

JARROD MELICAN—It depends what the job was and whether you really wanted it.

Mr MOSSFIELD—We were told yesterday that an employer actually did this, that he set the interview time at 9 o'clock at night just to make sure the people really wanted the job. Just be alert to that possibility.

Mrs ELSON—Does anyone believe in the work for the dole scheme?

CLARE WALKER—I believe in it because it gives people self-esteem and confidence in themselves because they are getting out there and doing something. Whether or not they want to, they probably do not realise that it is giving them these qualities. That why I think it is good.

REBECCA WALLIS—I pretty much agree with what was just said. I think people who are being paid money to sit around doing nothing should be out there doing something, even if it is just basic community work. As previously said, it helps with skills to perhaps find employment.

ALISSIA BARKER—I am doing it for my issues for my CAT and I have read into it a fair bit. There is one guy who is 32 and has been unemployed for four years. He said that no matter how hard he tries he just cannot get a job. Once they see that he has been unemployed, they will not hire him. He is hoping that with the work for the dole thing coming in, employers will see that he has been working and he might get some experience behind them. So hopefully he will be able to get a job.

RENEE JARVIS-PARKER—I think they should work for the dole because they should not sit around and do nothing. They are getting paid for doing nothing at all. But there are not enough jobs out there for all of us. In a way I do not agree, but in a way I do.

Mr MAREK—Why is it you think that there will not be a job for you?

RENEE JARVIS-PARKER—I do not think there are enough jobs for all of us.

Mr MAREK—What do you want to do?

RENEE JARVIS-PARKER—I want to work in a morgue.

Mr MAREK—Do you want to work as a funeral director or something?

RENEE JARVIS-PARKER—Yes. I want to work on the bodies.

Mr MAREK—There are jobs there—it is a growth industry.

RENEE JARVIS-PARKER—I know there are jobs for that and I have been offered one.

Mr MAREK—Well, there you go.

JOHN KOSTOPOULOS—I go to St Mary's College and am 15. I think, to me, the whole emphasis on working for the dole means that people will not try to take the easy way out and say, 'Oh, I'll just go on the dole.' It actually takes out the easy way out. They may actually have more interest in going for a job they like rather than the government giving them a job and saying, 'Okay, you have to do this.'

Mrs ELSON—Can I just expand on that answer. If for some reason you could not get a job after you finished your tertiary education and the government said to you, 'You go and choose the job that you want to do in the community,' rather than a career job, 'just to fill in your time,' you are quite happy to do some job with some community group?

JOHN KOSTOPOULOS—Yes. The emphasis is then on not only helping yourself with community jobs but also helping other people—for example, working in the homeless shelters and things like that. Not that that is exactly going to be what happens. The whole idea helps people, I think, and encourages people to get social skills and teaches them what it is really like out there in some cases.

Mrs ELSON—It helps you to get to know your community a lot better, doesn't it?

JOHN KOSTOPOULOS—Yes.

Mrs ELSON—Can I have a show of hands of those young people out there who would work in some community group while they were waiting to find a job? About half, that is excellent. The ones who did not put their hand up, can I just know why you would not like to do that? There was a lady next to the young girl there. They are too shy to tell us why. Maybe you could tell me later. I would just be very interested to know why.

Mr MAREK—What sort of work do you perceive that you would probably be doing on a work for the dole scheme? Has anybody got any ideas on what sort of work you consider is the sort of work you should be doing on the work for the dole scheme and what sort of work you should not be doing?

JARROD MELICAN—I think it should be work that is helping the community, because it is the other people's taxes that are paying the dole. So we should do things that help the community.

CHANTAL DANIELS—I go to Yea High School and am 15. You asked why people would not help. Why would they? They are not getting paid for it. Why would they want to go out and help the community? They will be there until they get older and then probably move houses. Then they will be totally out of that community, so I do not see why.

CLARE WALKER—I go to Yea High School and am 17. But the community is paying for them to be on the dole, so why shouldn't they put something back into the community as a thank you. They are just sitting there doing nothing.

ALYSON QUADARA—If people are going to be forced to go out and work if they are on the dole, they are not going to be putting 100 per cent into it. If they are there because they do not want to be there, because they are forced to be there so that they get paid, they are not going to work to the best of their ability. They are just going to show up to say that they have been there.

Mr MAREK—What if they then knock the dole on the head and say, 'Okay, you didn't work. You didn't turn up, so you won't get the dole'?

ALYSON QUADARA—They can go there and say that they have turned up, but only half do it so it is not done properly.

Mr MAREK—What if the supervisor has the power to say, 'This person only did a 50 per cent effort and only gets 50 per cent of the dole'? I am not saying that that is going to happen, but what do you think about that?

ALYSON QUADARA—It probably would work better.

Mr MAREK—What I was going to ask from there is: do you perceive the dole payment to be too much? In some ways, it is almost the same as starting on traineeship or apprenticeship money. Does anybody perceive that the dole is probably too close to a trainee or apprenticeship wage?

ALYSON QUADARA—How much is the dole?

Mr MAREK—It depends, I think, on who you are and what your age is. Do you know, Bob?

Mrs ELSON—I think it is about $90.

Mr MAREK—About $90 a week, is it?

ALYSON QUADARA—How much is the dole?

Mr MAREK—About $90 a week.

JOHN KOSTOPOULOS—My father is unemployed. He is the only person in the house that works—and in the family there is me, and I have a teenage sister and a younger brother who has not started school yet; he is now in kindergarten. Living off the dole, in that case, is generally not enough because you have to support a large family and meet costs. If people on the dole have had a business, as in our family's case, and it has failed due to competition and stuff like that, you are left in an awful lot of debt and the dole does not help you—you are lucky to scrape by. Generally, you have to get out there and somehow scrape up additional money for costs like that. In some cases it is not enough but in other cases where you do not have debt and stuff like that it is. I think the dole should target areas of how people are living, how old they are, whether they have been employed and stuff like that.

STACEY BORG—I just want to say something to this boy here. The dole is different from what you are talking about, isn't it? Because you are talking about the pension; is that right?

JOHN KOSTOPOULOS—No, it is the dole.

STACEY BORG—It is the dole when you are getting money for the whole family as well?

Mr MAREK—You are both half right. It is not worth going on with. The point is, you are half right. It is not $90 for your parents, but it is on a scale, yes.

STACEY BORG—Thanks.

Mr MOSSFIELD—If you were able to get employment when you are in year 10 or 11, would there be any pressure on you to stay at school and not take that job?

ALYSON QUADARA—There would be pressure on me to stay at school in case it fell through, to have my VCE behind me to back it up.

Mr MOSSFIELD—You can continue your studies, of course, even though you are working.

ALYSON QUADARA—Try to tell that to parents, though.

CHAIR—Do most of you intend to stay at school until you finish year 12? The school leaving age now is 16. Legally, the state cannot require you to stay in school past the age of 16. There have been some calls to raise that age to make sure that, theoretically, young people get a proper grounding in all the general areas of education that they may need just to survive in life and help them go on and have satisfying careers. What do you think about raising the age? What difference do you think that would make if we raised it from 16 to 17?

JARROD MELICAN—If it was raised to, say, 17, people would not want to be at school so they would not be trying and could well disrupt the learning of other people who are trying to learn.

DAVID CHITTENDEN—I think, at the age of 16, some people are not quite mature enough to make that important decision. If it was raised, maybe then they would be old enough to make an important decision like that.

STACEY BORG—I think, if the age is raised to 17, people would do their VCE and then on their resumes it will say that they have done their VCE. You can get jobs if you do your VCE. If you finish school when you are 16 and in year 10, you probably won't get a job. Doing your VCE will mean that it is easier to get a job.

CHANTAL DANIELS—She is saying they are just going to quit. Most of the time, the people who quit school when they turn 16 or 17 normally go to an apprenticeship—they have a reason to quit school. Most boys probably quit to go to apprenticeships such as fitting and turning.

ALYSON QUADARA—If people are not academic—not good at learning and stuff—why make them stay at school if they could be out in the work force?

Mr MAREK—Can you see the other side of the coin: at least if they are at school they are stimulating their mind, rather than sitting at home in front of a TV? I heard somebody say at the last place we were at that they are made to do PE in grades 10, 11 and 12 and they do not want to do PE; they would rather have a free class to sit down and

do some extra study or something. There are those who fall behind because they are not motivated. Can you see that stimulation can help to keep people moving? You never know, they might get that chance if they are in the right place at the right time. Do you understand that that could be one of the reasons?

ALYSON QUADARA—But if they are not academic and they have apprenticeships to go to or can go into the work force—I do not know any people who have left school at 16 to go on the dole.

Mr MAREK—I appreciate that. I would not mind going on with that. If you are, say, in grade 10 and you have just turned 16 and you can get an apprenticeship, you would leave school then to take on that apprenticeship, wouldn't you, rather than being concerned about the fact that if the apprenticeship falls over you will not have done your year 12? Does that make sense? Would everybody take that apprenticeship?

ALYSON QUADARA—In my opinion, I would like to take the apprenticeship, but I would be forced to do my VCE because of my parents.

ALISON HENRY—I think by making them stay in school they are just going to be disruptive.

Mr MAREK—That is a good point.

ALISON HENRY—The senior years are too important to the people who are there because they want to learn and they might want to go on to do TAFE or something. By the others being there they are just taking up the teacher's time, they are taking up other students' time and it is not fair for the other students who are there because they want to be.

CLARE WALKER—Also, I know some people in this room do a hospitality course at TAFE, and that is for not just academic people. They learn practical skills. That is a school, yet that is not totally academic. So people who are not academic could go to a TAFE and do some sort of course like that.

MATTHEW FOWLER—I am doing a hospitality course. It is hospitality level 4. I am also doing my VCE. I am doing them both so I can get the best of both worlds. It goes for three years and, if I decide after the three years that I do not want to go on in that particular area, I still have my VCE and my grades to go on to other areas.

CHAIR—You are in school here?

MATTHEW FOWLER—Yes.

CHAIR—Is that because the tech does not offer hospitality, it does not have the

facilities to teach it? Is that why it is offered at TAFE?

MATTHEW FOWLER—We do have it here, but if you do it at TAFE you do a broader area of it.

CHAIR—So you have got it here but you reckon doing it at TAFE gives you an extra qualification?

MATTHEW FOWLER—Once I have finished I will have a level 4 certificate. If you try to get a job in the hospitality area without the certificate, you have to try harder to get the job. I know of adults who are doing the hospitality course that I am doing and they have a job in the hospitality area. One lady is a mess manager and she cannot go any higher than that because she does not have a piece of paper to say she can do it. That is what you need.

CHAIR—Just so that you know, we have talked to the hospitality industry training board and the tourism industry training board, amongst many others, and jobs for cooks and chefs are available all over Australia. As I recall, the deficit in chefs is 1,000 at the moment nationally. At the moment 1,000 chefs are desperately needed around Australia. The industry cannot fill the jobs. There are many regional places in Australia where they need cooks and they cannot find good cooks. If you have ever been to Broken Hill you would wish that they would hire decent chefs in the town. It has fantastic potential as a tourist town, but it is hard getting a really top feed. You get a steak and an egg and some chips, but that is about it. So you should go for it. You have got fantastic career opportunities in front of you, I can tell you that.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Are there any plumbing industries in the town? There are. Has anyone approached the local plumbers to see if there is any opportunity of getting apprenticeships? That is what needs to be done. Whatever industry is existing in a location, the idea is to approach those organisations to see what employment opportunities there are.

CLARE WALKER—There is Armstrong's Plumbing just down the road. Someone from my school went there for work experience, not for an apprenticeship, and I think there is a possibility that they could get a job after they finish school, but they are finishing school first.

Mr MOSSFIELD—With that example of work experience leading to a job offer, has that happened quite a bit in other industries in the town?

DAVID CHITTENDEN—We had work experience with our careers class this term. A girl who did work experience for the heated pool in Kilmore got a job in the same week that she was doing the work experience there. I think that does happen quite a bit.

Mrs ELSON—Have other students here done work experience in their term of going to school?

DAVID CHITTENDEN—Everyone does.

Mrs ELSON—What year do they do that?

DAVID CHITTENDEN—In year 10, generally.

RENEE JARVIS-PARKER—I did work experience last year at a funeral parlour. They told me about a three-year embalming course that I could do when I leave school. They also offered me a job there then. The only thing that stopped me taking it was my parents. They want me to finish VCE before I do anything else.

CLARE WALKER—A friend of mine did work experience in year 11 last year at an advertising company down in Melbourne. He was offered a job while he was there and they used one of his designs for one of their products. So he has got a job offer ready now. He is only in year 12.

ALISSIA BARKER—Last year I did work experience at Mount Bulla at the Chalet Hotel. The boss of the restaurant there offered me a job for the ski season. I knocked it back because I wanted to get my year 12 behind me for future jobs.

CHAIR—Why don't we try a slightly different topic. Is there a McDonald's in town? No. Okay, but you have got KFC. You should know that in some industries, like the retail industry and parts of the hospitality industry and the tourism industry, there are age based wage rates. So you get paid one rate if you are 16 and you get more when you are 17 and more when you are 18. What do you think about that system? Is it fair? Do those industries exploit young people? Does it provide you with opportunities that you would not have otherwise? What are your views on all that?

JARROD MELICAN—As you get older, you are more likely to have more experience. You try and take on a job when you are 15, and if you stay through until you are 17 or 18, then you will have more experience, you will probably be able to get the work done faster, so you are of more value to them and so they will pay you more.

ALYSON QUADARA—I disagree with that because where I work I do the same the job as an adult and I get paid half as much. I get more hours because I can do more for the same price as an adult.

CHAIR—Do you think that is fair?

ALYSON QUADARA—I think it is unfair that I can do the same work as someone else but at half the price.

CHAIR—Would you have gotten the job if they had to pay you the full adult price?

ALYSON QUADARA—I don't know.

RENEE JARVIS-PARKER—I disagree with younger people being paid less. I can go into a job and not know what I was doing but someone else who is, say, 30 can go into the same job, have never done the job before and get paid more when they know exactly the same as me. You barely know anything about the job but they get paid more for it.

ALISON HENRY—I go to Seymour Technical High School and am 17. I think it is unfair that you get paid less when you are younger. Where I work, I sometimes have to train older women in my area. So I am more skilled than them. I have been there since I was just under 15 and the women who are just starting are 20 to 30 and getting a better wage than me and I am actually training them to do a job. I think that is unfair.

CHAIR—That is fascinating. That is doing what? I have forgotten.

ALISON HENRY—I work in the delicatessen at Seymour.

Mrs ELSON—Have you asked for more money?

ALISON HENRY—No.

CHAIR—Are you frightened to ask for more money?

ALISON HENRY—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you think they would sack you simply because you suggest to them that you are training new people and that it is worth something for doing that training?

ALISON HENRY—No, not so much. I am scared that they would cut back my hours or get someone else who could train them and not worry about the money.

ALYSON QUADARA—I recently got offered to work more hours where I work. I said I would do it only if I got paid the same amount as an adult because that was the responsibility I was taking, and they agreed.

CHAIR—So you are not being paid less now?

ALYSON QUADARA—No.

CHAIR—So what are you complaining about?

ALYSON QUADARA—I have two jobs where I do the same thing. In one I am getting paid adult wages and in the other I am getting paid according to my age group.

CHAIR—Does anybody else want to say anything about youth wages?

BRIONY TOBIAS—I think it should not go on age but on experience.

CHAIR—Singapore has no unemployment—zilch. There is no such thing as being unemployed in Singapore—so I am advised. They have no formal wage structure system at all. There is no minimum wage rate. So an employer can offer 1c an hour or nothing. The theory is that nobody will take a job for pay which is less than what they are really worth. Under that system they have full employment. We have a system of safety nets where people not only have minimum wages that are set by tribunals but also, as you know, if you do not have a job you also get a minimum rate. What would you think of that system?

JARROD MELICAN—I think the minimum wage should be decreased so that younger people would be able to get the jobs easier because they are offering less money.

CHAIR—But your colleagues are complaining that the age base rates are already too low.

JARROD MELICAN—No, for other jobs—easier jobs, smaller jobs.

CATHERINE JONES—I go to Yea High School and am 14. I went to Singapore and saw older people walking around doing really dirty things like scrubbing bins at McDonald's. They do not look like they are being paid at all. They are just yuck.

CHAIR—So you do not think anybody should have to clean the bins?

CATHERINE JONES—No, I am saying that they should be paid a certain rate because it didn't look like they had been paid more than 10c.

DAVID CHITTENDEN—I believe that if the youth wage was at an adult rate, then in a way you would be taking the money which could be going to an unemployed family or an unemployed person. I don't think that would do anything for the economy.

Mr MAREK—So you consider that getting your certificate for higher education is extremely important compared to getting an apprenticeship? I want to go down this track a bit further. Someone said that your parents probably would not let you leave. Is that right? Do you all consider it that way? Say you had just started year 11 or you had just finished year 10, you would take on an apprenticeship or a traineeship or something, wouldn't you? Does everyone feel that way?

BRIONY TOBIAS—I think that if I was offered a job, not even depending on whether it was what I want to do, I would not take it because I would rather finish school so that I knew that if it fell through I could go on to uni or do something else.

ALISON HENRY—If I was offered an apprenticeship in an area that I was interested in I would take it. At least that way I would be getting the skills in the area that I am interested in, instead of staying at school where I might not be getting the same level of skill.

JOHN KOSTOPOULOS—I think it depends on what you are aiming to do in life for a job or career. If you are going to become a doctor, you would have to go through school and on to university. But if you are doing something like bricklaying or carpentry or something like that, you would have the choice there of dropping from school early where schooling may not be useful to you in any way. Do you know what I mean? It depends whether you know you have the job and you will have it for a while or whether it is a 'here today, gone tomorrow' type of thing.

CATHERINE JONES—I think it depends on what you want to do. If I wanted to be something like a chef and I got asked to do an apprenticeship I would probably do it because I am only doing VCE because I want to be a zoologist and I have to finish sciences and everything like that. But at school I am not doing anything really to do with animals. I am doing science and that but you do not do anything you really want to do, so I am just sort of finishing it because I have to.

CHAIR—Is there anything else that any of you would like to bring up? We've been asking you heaps of questions. What issues would you like to raise with us that you think we should know about in order to be able to write a report to help make you more employable or to help make more jobs available for you and your colleagues? What do you reckon?

CATHERINE JONES—I think there should be more practical days when you could go out and play sport or go out and look at a restaurant, depending on what you want to do. There should be more practical areas and definitely more work experience.

REBECCA WALLIS—I am little concerned about what has been in the media lately about the HECS fees rising. Is that happening? Have they risen? Are they staying where they are? Are the HECS fees rising?

CHAIR—They did last year.

REBECCA WALLIS—In regard to that, I think they should be lowered to enable students to pursue academic studies.

Mrs ELSON—The HECS fees only get paid once you do your course, once you

get a job. You do not have to pay them up-front.

REBECCA WALLIS—In some private colleges and universities you do have to pay up-front.

ALISON HENRY—With the HECS fees, if you pay early you get a discount. I think that is a bit unfair because, in a way, you are paying for your diploma. It is unfair that the people who do not have as much money but equally—if not, more—deserve to be there miss out because they cannot afford it.

Mrs ELSON—They can pay later once they get a job.

ALISON HENRY—I think Melbourne uni makes them pay HECS fees in a lump sum at the start.

CHAIR—They cannot do that. Melbourne University have so many places they can offer and which the government finances. They can offer places beyond that, just like they can offer places to overseas students. They could offer 10,000 new places a year, which is not that many.

Mr MAREK—1,500.

CHAIR—No, more than that.

Mr MAREK—Really?

CHAIR—Heaps more. Let us say it is 5,000 new places a year at Melbourne University that the government is financing them to offer. Beyond that, they can say that they will accept lower cut-off scores in some subjects—lower TER scores or VCE results—and accept those students who are willing to pay for the course.

There is a limit to government funds, and that is what funds HECS and universities. They are simply saying, 'We will take more students.' They take in foreign, overseas full-fee paying students and they are saying that they will take in some more Australian full-fee paying students if they want to pay, but they do not have to. That is what that was all about at Melbourne University.

Mr MAREK—Do you understand that HECS is seen by the taxpayers of this country as the taxpayers investing in you to get an education to become, say, a doctor? When you have finished your education and you are a doctor, you may have the capacity to earn half a million dollars or $1 million a year or something—say, $200,000 a year. Whereas somebody else might buy a truck or become a tradesman and will have the capacity to earn only $40,000 or $60,000 a year. As far as the taxpayers are concerned, the amount of HECS you pay should vary depending on the job or career you want to

take. Do you understand that it is your responsibility rather than the taxpayers' responsibility for HECS? I want to know how you feel about that.

CHAIR—It is part of the cost of providing a tertiary education, not all of it.

Mrs ELSON—I want to make a personal comment here. I have a daughter who is 29. If that system was not available years ago when she started uni, she would not have been able to go to uni. At that particular stage, I could not afford it. If she did not have that opportunity, she would not be in the position she is in today. She took taxpayers' money to get herself through that education, and she was only too happy to pay it back over the next seven years, I think it was. The opportunities are there. We do not tell anybody that they cannot have an education or cannot go further.

Mr MAREK—A career as a doctor might cost, say, $20,000, or whatever it is.

Mrs ELSON—It is actually $33,000 a year.

Mr MAREK—Okay. Whereas an engineer or somebody on an income that may earn less involves a considerably less amount of money. You understand that that is why they have staggered HECS, don't you?

REBECCA WALLIS—With regard to HECS fees, some people might be deterred from taking tertiary studies by the fact that later on, for the next seven years, they will still have to pay money for the studies that they had pursued. Although it is unfair that the taxpayers pay for their education, having to pay back that money for the next seven to 10 years might act as a deterrent.

Mr MAREK—I do not think that taxpayers begrudge at all the fact that you want an education and the career of whatever it is you want. I pat you on the back; I think that is fantastic—you go with that. All I am saying is that it is not unreasonable for those people who are doing high profile education and education that may earn them hundreds of thousands of dollars to pay slightly more for that, rather than the taxpayers having to subsidise them.

REBECCA WALLIS—But, at the same time, those people who do not find employment immediately will have that debt hanging over their heads a few years down the track. Once they are living out of home, they have rent and bills and all of that sort of stuff. If their job is only paying them enough to live on, they are going to have that debt for quite a long time.

Mrs ELSON—It is not repayable unless you earn over $20,500 per year, and it is only a very small percentage. I think it is 2½ per cent. My daughter paid something like $1,000 a year out of her tax return. That is a very small price to pay for an education and to have a future, especially when it would have cost the taxpayers around $30,000 to

educate her to that standard because I could not afford it at the time.

Mr MOSSFIELD—There may be a problem in the lower wage field—not if you are going to become a doctor. To be a nurse, you have to go to university now, and to be a teacher you have to go to university. They are not necessarily high paying jobs—not in the true sense of the word. You can understand people in that wage bracket having difficulties in repaying it.

Mrs ELSON—My niece is a nurse and she is on $44,000 a year. So nurses are not low income like they were years ago.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for coming. We intend to continue with this tour and to talk to other students around the country and to a couple of more organisations. We will finish our inquiry at the end of June. In August, early September, we will write our report and we will certainly send you a copy. In the meantime, *Hansard* has been doing a terrific job of recording who you are and what you had to say. We will send you transcripts. If you think they got it wrong, you can fix it up.

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

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

Meeting suspended at 4.32 p.m.

WITNESSES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Factors influencing the employment of young people

SEYMOUR

Tuesday, 8 April 1997

Present

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mrs Elson — Mr Mossfield

Mr Marek

The committee met at 5.24 p.m.

Mr Charles took the chair.

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

The committee has received over 100 submissions and conducted public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Alice Springs and several regional centres in Queensland and New South Wales. The committee has also conducted school forums, including one in Seymour today, in which young people discussed their views and opinions with the committee.

The committee is now conducting public hearings in rural and regional centres in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. This meeting is one of a series in Nowra, Merimbula, Sale, Seymour and Wagga Wagga which will give Australians outside the capital cities an opportunity to put their views and concerns to the committee.

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

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

MURRAYLEE, Mr Wayne Leonard, Manager, Planning and Development, Coles Supermarkets, Tallarook Street, Seymour, Victoria

SPILLMAN, Mr Mark, Dry Goods Manager, Coles Supermarket, Seymour, Victoria

CRAWSHAW, Mr James Denison, General Manager, Shepparton and Seymour Employers, 198-200 Numurkah Road, Shepparton, Victoria 3630

KAVANAGH, Mr Daniel Hugh, Manager, Hume Employment and Training Inc., PO Box 677, Seymour, Victoria 3660

McCAMISH, Ms Elizabeth Anne, Cornish Road, Ardmona, Victoria

SIMSON, Mr Andrew John, RMB 2240, Tatura, Victoria 3616

CHAIR—Welcome lady and gentlemen. Ms McCamish and Mr Simson, in what capacity do you appear?

Ms McCamish—In a private capacity.

Mr Simson—In a private capacity.

CHAIR—I remind you that our inquiry is about employment, not unemployment. We are trying to come to grips with essentially two things: first, how we can help young people become more employable and, second, how we can encourage employers of all kinds, shapes and sizes to make more opportunities available for our youth. Having said that, would each or any of you like to make a statement about the matters we are here to discuss before we start to ask you questions?

Mr Crawshaw—Perhaps I will start off, if I may. I am very concerned about the number of young people whom I see in the business area who are really very unprepared in relation to work ethic and what the workplace is all about. It concerns me that perhaps we do not start educating these young people early enough for exposure to the working world. I think it comes as a bit of a fright to them. They do not understand the reasons for being at work on time, being at work consistently—the ethic that is required as far as work is concerned. Quite a number of them that I see when interviewing for employment concern me greatly.

CHAIR—Why do they come to you for jobs?

Mr Crawshaw—Particularly around our area they have a desire, I believe, to work. They are interested in opportunities that are open to them. They come to ask what work is available. I am not too sure whether they really realise what sort of work they do. They tend to just call in and ask whether there are jobs available rather than ask for

specific jobs. Again, I think that is partly because the education system has not directed them to where they believe these young people should be headed or perhaps there is a lack of advice as to what is available.

CHAIR—Most of you are or have been employers. You say it is the education system's responsibility to tell them where work is available. If what you say is true, what is your responsibility in letting young people know what kinds of jobs are available at entry level, what careers might be available, where they could progress to, what sorts of earnings they might some day make? Or is it all just the fault of the schoolteachers?

Mr Crawshaw—I do not think it is the fault of the schoolteachers. I think it is the fault of the system under which we operate. Perhaps industry are not given the opportunity to provide enough information through the schools. We have a careers working expo with our Rotary organisation, which has always been a very successful exposition. But we have always had difficulties in getting industry people involved.

CHAIR—Why?

Ms McCamish—I think too many employers expect schools to do it all. It has to be a much more realistic working relationship between schools and employers. The working world is different from the way it was when most of today's teachers trained. They need to be aware of the differences, and employers need to let schools know what they expect.

Employers would probably love to tell schools exactly how to prepare young people to work in their businesses, but schools will reject that. They do not see it as entirely their role to prepare people for the work force. They see that there is a much bigger role for education. But I think there must be a little part of that education that prepares them for the work force.

I do not want to be speaking out of turn but it seems to me that, at the moment, most schools are oriented towards preparing students for university, for tertiary education. I do not know what the figures are. I am sure there are miles more young people going to tertiary education today than there used to be. But a lot of them are not. I am not quite sure that schools are doing much for the kids who do not take the tertiary option.

CHAIR—That is a theme that we have heard all over Australia—in the capital cities, the country towns, the regions, indeed, even in the outback. Yet you are sitting in a tech school, one of the few tech schools, I might say, left as a pure tech school in the state of Victoria.

Ms McCamish—Yes, and that is a tragedy really. At the moment, everybody in Victoria goes to year 12, doing basically the same sort of education. Presumably, they sort themselves out after year 12. What about the child whose abilities, interests, skills and

mode of learning involve hands-on, what we used to call in the old days practical, subjects? There is hardly any support. They are still offered, but it is not a big, key point.

Mr MAREK—It is not regarded, is it?

Ms McCamish—No.

CHAIR—Right here in Seymour, you should have a tremendous resource. Here is a school of a thousand kids, nominally, which is teaching a range of vocational courses and offering the kids the opportunity, if they so wish, I understand, to go off and do part of their work at the local TAFE, if they feel that will give them better qualifications. We say this is a general problem. Why is it a problem here?

Ms McCamish—I do not know whether that is a problem in Seymour. I look at a place like Shepparton, where there are four big secondary colleges today and they all run independent year 12 courses. In Bendigo, they have tried a senior college experiment. From everything that I have heard, which is probably not enough, it works quite well. But there are four schools in Shepparton all trying to offer competing year 12 courses. They could all finish at year 10 and have one place where they all went, a senior school where presumably the range of offerings would be much greater and would hopefully meet a greater range of needs of the students who attended.

CHAIR—Mark, what is your experience at Seymour?

Mr Spillman—I find that most of the people we employ are very willing to work. We basically have not got enough jobs for them.

Mr Crawshaw—I do not think there is any argument about it. Even the young people who I deal with through a program for disadvantaged children all want to work. They all have a desire to work. But they need to be helped in the area, both by industry and by secondary education, to understand what working is all about. It is not by continuing going to school.

I know a number of 14½-, 15-, 16-year-olds who would give their eyeteeth for a job, but because there is nothing there, because they have not really been educated in how to present themselves and look for jobs, they fall by the wayside and get into bad habits, which ruins them for later on. The young people that come to our place that are simply looking for a job really do not know, when you ask them, what they want to do. I think that is an indictment of both industry and the education system.

CHAIR—Andrew, do you have the same sort of comments about the young people that apply to you for a job at McDonald's?

Mr Simson—I was just sitting here trying to come to grips with exactly what my

contribution would be, but one of the things that I have found with the people that pass through our place—and the bulk of our casual employment starts at 15, and we keep a good proportion of those kids until they finish their VCE year in one form or another—is that the balance of them are early school leavers, trying to resolve what their future is.

The big problem that most of those people face is that, once they decide that what they are doing is not what they want to do, then they tend to run into a brick wall as to where else they go. They end up, at the ripe old age of 17 or something, with not a lot of education and an understanding in their first job that what they thought was glamorous and a fun place to work, after being on the treadmill for six months, is not as glamorous as it used to be. They move off somewhere else, and invariably you see them six months further down the track and they have not been able to find another opportunity.

What should we do about those kids? I think they are the ones that concern me most. It is not a matter of who can do a better job or whom you can blame; they are just basically not prepared, from a family background point of view or a motivational background point of view, to face the challenges of finding something that is suitable for them. They tend to get lost in the social activities and the society that we have got in Shepparton, and most of them end up taking a long time to get out of that rut, if they ever do.

CHAIR—You are talking about kids that have worked for you?

Mr Simson—Yes, and they are the kids that start at 15 as someone at school looking for extra work. I think we are lucky in our business because we are seen to be an attractive place to work, they make a lot of friends, it is a good social activity and it is very flexible. But those who have got some ability to see a future and can handle the school system really know where they are going.

I probably see the cream of Shepparton's kids, so I am really not exposed to their problems. Most of them, thank goodness, work their way through to something that is really what they have been looking for—they have got strong family support, they work hard, and they do succeed. But there is a percentage of those kids that tend to get lost in that 16- to 17-year age. With a few of them, we have been able to offer them management opportunities and some of them are proving quite successful, but others have not been able to even progress down that track.

A percentage of them just do not understand what getting into the work force is about if they do not continue at school. So at 16 they are lost, and if they get lost at 16, there is really not much out there to help them, in my view.

CHAIR—When you have a job available, how many applicants do you get?

Mr Simson—We have in our employ somewhere between 100 to 120 casual

employees. We would have an application bank of around about 30 to 40 at any one time, and there is probably a three- to four-month waiting time before we progress through those kids. When we look at targeting the non-school hours, that is the difficult area in what we term a daytime role. If we had a job that was really targeting those daytime hours, we would probably have no shortage of applicants but it is the quality of applicant at that stage that is really the issue. It is not the number; there are plenty of people available to us who see us as an appropriate or attractive place to work. But to get the people who are then in that slightly older age group who have got the skills to cope with the demands of our particular industry is quite a challenge. We do have quite a high turnover in that area in trying to get people who are prepared to make a commitment to that role.

Mrs ELSON—With the young ones that you do interview, what is their literacy and numeracy like?

Mr Simson—I certainly would not try and put a percentage figure on it but it ranges from complete to totally lacking. An awful lot of the 15-year-olds who present themselves for interview do not get to interview. I would guess that a good 30 per cent of our applicants are unable to complete the very simple application form that we have as our first stage. By the time we do a preliminary check with their referees, usually school based, they are not of a calibre that we would provide an opportunity to.

Mrs ELSON—And they are still going to school at this stage?

Mr Simson—Yes. They are in the last stages of their schooling; they are the 15-year-olds and 16-year-olds who are really running into a brick wall somewhere. I do not know the answer to your problem. I certainly do not envy you writing a report on it or trying to give direction. From my experience, most of the problems stem from that lack of family support in the early ages of their schooling. They are the kids who really do not have much hope and I do not know whether the school system can provide much hope for them. I really do not know how we make families more conscious and aware of the development role that they have for children in those earlier stages.

Mrs ELSON—Ms McCamish, can you see a solution to the problem?

Ms McCamish—No, I cannot see an immediate solution to the problem. The literacy problem is much bigger than just not being able to get a job. It seems to me that most children learn to read by the end of grade 1. If at the end of grade 2, you realise that you cannot read and write the same as everybody else, that must be having an impact on your self-esteem. From that age, about 8, we have kids who have got really low self-esteem and very little confidence in their ability to do anything. They just move up through the system and look for jobs. I cannot believe that there are many secondary schoolteachers out there who know how to teach children to read and write. I do not think it is even fair to expect them to do that. They should have learnt to do it in primary

school.

Mr MAREK—Exactly, I agree with that, Anne.

Ms McCamish—There are programs around the world. There was a program in New Zealand—I do not know if it has gone out of fashion—called Reading Recovery where they had a huge success rate with teaching children to read before the end of grade 2. I think the best money this country could do invest money would be in grade 1 and 2 in the primary school to make sure that kids do not move through until they can read and write. If most of the kids can do it, why cannot all of them do it, unless there is something wrong with them? If it just takes a bit more time and a bit more money, then let us spend it. At least we will then have kids leaving school who can read and write and who have a sense of value. If those sorts of kids cannot find a job, they might have enough nous to create a job; knock on doors and mow people's lawns or something. It is not much of a job but it is a start. But a kid who has not got any self-esteem is not going to knock on someone's door and ask for a job.

Mr MOSSFIELD—The literacy and numeracy problem has come through quite consistently, no matter where we are. It is no different here from anywhere else. In fact, it is a worldwide problem. I was reading a magazine fairly recently that made the point that it is a problem in many overseas countries and it is a problem that we have to concentrate on. One of the very important points that came through is the need for business people to have an input into the local education system at as early a stage as possible.

Certainly, the work experience program is an ideal way of you having that input and trying to get through to young people what is required out there in the work force. I do not know whether there is any structured way that you could talk to local school principals and say, 'We think there is a problem here and we would like you to have a look at it.'

The initial interview skills are very important. I want to know how the local school students came through in this area. Some of the school children said that some of the businesses had assisted them in this program, that they had got together and conducted an interview session with local business. I thought that was a very positive move. I think these people were in about year 10. Have you got any comments on that, particularly the initial interview skills of young people? Is their dress and their approach right?

Mr Crawshaw—We have tried to instigate something through our ACC in Shepparton with a school and skillshare area of presentation. I have given a few lectures to a couple of classes. I do not think there is nearly enough of it. Most of the time it is very difficult to get the acceptance of the schools. That seems to be the barrier and it is the same barrier that we have when we offer the service of a jobs expo. We just do not get the reaction. We do not get the positivism. We do not get the drive.

Mr Simson—Recently, we ran a series of ads for a maintenance role in our restaurant. That was the first time that we had advertised for several years. The quality of references and the presentation of all of the applicants was certainly far in excess of what I could have expected three or four years ago. I think it is due to those support programs that have been evident in Shepparton that people have got a place that they can go to. I think there is a far greater awareness within that late school age or early school leaver time of the importance of presentation and putting together an adequate CV. From my most recent experience, it was certainly well above what we used to experience in years gone by. I think the facility is there in the community to provide that support.

Mr Kavanagh—I work mainly with the young people who are the casualties of the system, the early school leavers who have not coped with school. We spend quite a deal of time with groups of young people in attempting to give them the interview training. One of the difficulties is that many of the young people exit the school system at about the time that the schools start to provide that preparation, through the formal work experience programs and the linkages with local employers. That is very good and it is very useful for those who are staying in the system.

But the kids who leave early finish up not getting any significant exposure to that sort of preparation. As a consequence, they do not have the skills or the ability because of some of those other issues—the literacy and numeracy issues and presentation issues—to get through the various checkpoints that they have to go through before they get to the actual interview stage. This includes aptitude tests and reasonable resumes and references that can be checked—the full array of issues that an employer wants to look at before they decide to spend the time interviewing a young person.

The difficulty with it is that the traditional jobs that, for many years, young people have been able to access, if they were relatively low achievers and were not inclined to study for formal training, no longer exist. These young people are pretty well caught in no-man's-land. Not only do they not have the skills or the ability but the opportunities are not there. They are being denied them because they have not had that preparation to move forward to access the opportunities that are available.

CHAIR—How about keeping them at school? Why do they leave?

Mr Kavanagh—We have some success in encouraging early school leavers to consider returning to school. What seems to be a fairly good stimulus is the exposure to the realities of what happens if you do not stay at school. After they have had a taste of that, those who do want to make something of themselves are more malleable and you can direct them towards some of the options that are available rather than just concentrating on improving the work experience programs which are available through the schools. But in Victoria there is really only two weeks dedicated to work experience for year 10, which is far from adequate as far as those who work in the areas are concerned.

I also think the work experience should incorporate exposure to the other side of the world of work, which is unemployment, while the kids are still at school. I think they should be given the opportunity to come in contact with the realities of what happens to people if they do not stay within the system and at least try to achieve some reasonable level of qualification.

CHAIR—Is it, in a sense, also possible for a range of young people who exit school in year 9 or year 10 to disappear out of the system and fall off the edge? Is it not true, Anne, as an ex-teacher, that most teachers in that area will know which kids are the ones who are in danger of leaving?

Ms McCamish—Absolutely.

CHAIR—Isn't it possible to design curriculum programs for them that differ, give them an exposure to work and some time at school and a bit of life skill help, to keep them within the school envelope? I guess what I am asking is: isn't that preferable to trying to get them back again later or salvage them once they have gone down the route of unemployment and despair?

Ms McCamish—That is what we were talking about before, isn't it? The tech system provided those opportunities for a lot of kids in the past. Then you get back to the argument of a sort of status of education. Having taught in a secondary school, technical schools have always been regarded as more lowly places than secondary schools. In order to balance everybody out and have everybody exactly the same, we did away with them and put them into secondary colleges.

CHAIR—They were second-class schools for second-class kids, weren't they? Isn't that what we were told?

Ms McCamish—Yes, but I would rather not put it that way. A lot of teachers would regard going back to tech schools as a retrograde step, but what we are doing at the moment is not working. I have taught in the university system and taught a university class of second year students and could not believe the standard of literacy. They can read and write all right and they can express their opinion, but not in a form that I would have regarded as second year university standard. I am interested to know what happens to them when they finish. Are there jobs there for all these people?

CHAIR—They become teachers.

Ms McCamish—That is a joke, but it is a fact. That is part of the problem—the fact that the TER scores to enter teacher training institutions are so low. If you want to be a doctor or a lawyer you have to get a 99-point-something score, but you can get into a teacher training institution with no score virtually. That has to be a worry for us, surely.

Mr Murraylee—I would like to make a few comments about what I have heard. It seems like whatever can be done to increase the level of cooperation between private enterprise, schools, employer organisations and the government should be encouraged as much as possible. The solution to this is clearly a shared solution—that we all need to work towards trying to come up with a solution.

There are a number of programs that the government has already initiated that move towards addressing some of these issues. I am probably talking at a broader level. At the local level within Seymour, we find that we have very good quality people here. We have a manager who transferred recently from the Melbourne metropolitan area and speaks very highly of the willingness, the flexibility and the self-esteem of the people within Seymour to work. It is just really a matter of population and sales. The bottom line is that we do not have the opportunity to provide employment for more people.

But I can outline some of the things that are working well. As an organisation we have gone down the path of accrediting our own trainers to deliver the nationally accredited curriculum in retail operations for traineeships. Employer organisations are taking responsibility for the actual training and education of their own people, and that is working very well for us. We are putting on some 150 retail trainees, but at the same time there needs to be consideration for people that you would otherwise maybe not give a first glance to—that is, the people who have been unemployed for six months, 12 months or even up to two years—through other programs out there, like the special employer support strategy, where we can put a person on 20 weeks of job placement, if you like, and have some sort of funding for that.

We are finding that we have had a lot of success with those previous job skill type programs people have come through. In just May-July of last year 60-odd people came through that sort of program. These people were ordinarily not looked at in the first place, but we have had some 85 per cent retention of those people through that program. These are people who have achieved real jobs—of 20 hours or more—and probably would have not otherwise been given the opportunity. I know that is articulated. Because of our confidence in running that sort of program—we have got some runs on the board with our store managers—we are now getting into things like the special employer strategy. About 160 of those people are starting right now—April-May. We anticipate that we will have probably a 80 to 85 per cent retention rate as well for that program.

I think not only is the government taking some ownership but also employers are taking some ownership to bring about a shared solution, an outcome, for these maybe disadvantaged people but equally youth unemployed. They are starting to get into that disadvantaged area, where they maybe do not have the skills as compared with, say, people that have been working.

Additionally, you have your dual recognition programs where they do work with an employer for maybe two years—year 11 and year 12. We would encourage that sort of

program because they are getting exposure to the real world whilst they are completing their VCE studies.

I think those sorts of things are moves in the right direction. I guess it is a matter of what we can do to get all these different people with a shared commitment to outcomes working together more cooperatively so that they can get the synergies happening there and that can start to flow through. I am not too sure that has answered any specific question but they are really just comments for the record.

Mr MAREK—With the thought in mind that students do not really know what to expect when they go into employment or, even from the other side of the coin—from the employer's point of view—what is expected of them, would you like to comment on whether we should take a fresh look at the education system, in particular the curriculum, and look into it with input by the government, employer groups, group trainers, teachers, students, et cetera? What do you think of that? Do you think that is maybe something we should look at doing?

I was very interested in what Anne said. We did a bit of a survey in some schools in my electorate of Capricornia, and found that 35 per cent of grade 7 students were not up to scratch in reading, writing and numeracy. It was incredible. So what do you think of that? Do you think we should have a fresh look at the curriculum, what they are teaching in schools and how they are going about it? Would you like to comment on that?

Ms McCamish—It is so hard. I admire your courage at the thought of changing the school system.

Mr MAREK—But I think this could be where the problem is.

Ms McCamish—Yes: it is too hard so we do not do it.

Mr MAREK—That is just it.

Ms McCamish—You have heard me talk about literacy. I feel very strongly about it. I think that all the money in the world should be spent on teaching children in primary school to read because I am sure that that is the absolutely basic skill that every single person in this society needs.

Mr MAREK—Every group we have interviewed throughout the best part of Australia, or where we have been so far, has said the same thing about numeracy and literacy: the kids cannot read and write and they cannot add up without a calculator. It is incredible.

I am very close friends with a lot of schoolteachers, particularly in secondary education, and they all say to me, 'Paul, I haven't got time to sit down and teach a kid

how to read and write and add up. They should have already done that. I have to focus on the subjects I have to teach. I am too busy now.' This is a common statement that a lot of the teachers I talk to make.

Ms McCamish—It may have something to do with teacher training, too, that secondary teachers are taught to teach areas of expertise rather than children. A little bit more emphasis on teaching children rather than teaching a subject might achieve what you are talking about. I do not think many secondary teachers would regard it as their responsibility to teach children to read. You would hope that by year 7 they could.

Mr MAREK—The statement that we have heard made—I am not sure whether it was mentioned here or in other places that we have been to today—is that it does not matter if you do not spell it exactly right as long as it sounds like it. If you are writing an essay, it does not matter if you do not exactly spell it right. As long as you write it the way it sounds and it looks like it, that will do. Have you heard that statement before?

Ms McCamish—Yes, of course. We all have.

Mr MAREK—There you go.

Mr Simson—From a personal point of view, I have four young children who have just moved through the primary education system. Small rural schools have been the subject of substantial financial rearrangements and operational rearrangements. When you look at the overall balance of how an economy is managed and where real value can be returned for the dollar spent, then I think the changes that have been made have been very short-sighted when you look at the nature of problems that we are discussing here. I do not know whether that is applicable over Australia, but it certainly has been applicable in Victoria over the last two or three years.

Mr MAREK—Are you saying that the kids in rural areas are not as well educated as the ones in the cities?

Mr Simson—No, I am not saying that. I would say that the resources in schools in Victoria have been rearranged to such a level that there are not sufficient resources, in the schools that I have had experience with in the state system, to handle kids with learning problems. I think every child has a learning problem at some stage during their primary years in coping with writing, numeracy or maths. That is where the problems are, and we are making the wrong long-term decisions when you look at the problem that you people are trying to investigate. What is not being supported is where it all starts.

Mr MAREK—When I went to school we had special education groups. I am only 32, so it was only some 15 or 16 years ago that I was at school. Particularly at primary school, they had special ed units which were for the few who were falling behind a bit or whatever. That is where you went for some classes to catch up.

Ms McCamish—Absolutely.

Mr MAREK—They have been dissolved in the last few years.

Ms McCamish—Yes. If you had a broken leg that crippled you, they would take you away and fix it and let you get on with the rest of your life. Being unable to read is just as crippling as having a broken leg. Whoever takes these kids away puts them through an intensive course and then puts them back into the school. It could be done. It is being done in New Zealand.

Mr MAREK—I think we could work well together, Anne.

Mr Crawshaw—I think that what Wayne had to say here is very true. There are systems that are working but we are not getting them early enough. Young people who I deal with who get off the track are people who have just been allowed to walk away from school. Nothing is done for them. They have not got the discipline at home to force the issue, for various reasons. They have left school at the age of 14½ or 15—they just walk out—because the school cannot cope with them. That is the excuse. There is no discipline for them. There is no understanding. By the time they reach the age of 16 and 17, there are others who have joined those ranks and they are the ones who are even further behind.

Mr MAREK—I think that all that might have started when they took the cane and that sort of stuff out of the school.

Mr Crawshaw—I do not really think it is necessarily that sort of discipline. It is the understanding of their specific problems. Perhaps it is all too hard and they are pushed away. Because they do not have that motivation and driving force at home, because they have lost it themselves and because they feel inadequate at themselves because they are accused of not being able to read this or of not doing their homework, school is a gripe for them.

Mr MAREK—I want to step into a slightly different area. I want to start talking about small business, I guess. First of all, do you think the training wage or the apprenticeship wage is a little too close to the dole? A lot of prospective apprentices or kids who have an opportunity to go into traineeships look at it and say, 'I'm going to get only $90 a week. It is going to cost me money to go to work. I may as well stay on the dole.' Do you think those areas might be a bit too close or we could look at that?

Mr Kavanagh—In my experience, the training wage appears to be an issue that adults are more concerned about than young people. Having dealt with both groups, in looking at further training options the marginal differential between the dole and the training wage does not surface with young people. They are usually quite relaxed about it, but with adults it becomes a significant issue because the short-term view is that they will be working for nothing.

Mr MAREK—One of the greatest problems small business talks about is the imposts. To take on an apprentice you have to go through all these procedures and you have all the imposts of red tape, workplace health and safety—the list goes on and on. I cannot remember whether anyone has mentioned this today, but previously we have spoken about groups that are probably more prepared to just pick up the odd person who might be on the dole and flick them a little bit of cash on the side. Do you think that we have this problem because not only is small businesses doing it tough—we all accept that it is—but small businesses starting to take on apprentices might be just too much trouble?

Mr Crawshaw—I think that is a perception, and I think that perception comes through because small business does not really understand the systems and the availability of programs that can be worked through. I have been a great user of the training program within our own organisation. It has proved to be very successful, not only from a training point of view but also from a rehabilitation, I suppose, point of view for people that have been out of the work force for a long time. I have found it to be most acceptable, and it certainly has not cost the company a lot of money.

We have put those people on under the same standards that our normal working people have been under. We have not gone for the lower training wage. But at no time has any question been asked as far as money or the scale according to which those people are being paid is concerned. They have been given their directives of what they have to achieve. They have been set the normal goals and targets in the workplace, and they have worked towards those. We have said to those that have not achieved, 'Sorry, but we thank you kindly.' We have never had any problems with people disputing wage payments or wage groups. Maybe we have handled it in a different way. I think that in a number of areas—occupational health and safety, workers compensation and all those sorts of things—small business has a misunderstanding of what the rules can be if they ask the right questions of the right people.

Mr MAREK—That is something that Frank has spoke often about today, that maybe employer groups are not dealing, I guess, with the right circles of people. I take it we all agree that there is a shortage of skilled labour in Australia. There is a shortage of fitters, boilermakers, carpenters, chefs, electricians—those sorts of people. Do you have any suggestions about what employers particularly want from this government, or governments in general, to assist them to say, 'Fair enough. I'll take on an apprentice.' Do you have any suggestions about what you think we could do?

Ms McCamish—Why should we do anything? Why don't employers have a responsibility to train apprentices? Why do we always have to look to the government for an incentive to do that? It is easier to import skilled labour than to train our own. I feel quite strongly about that. In the old days, employers had apprentices. Maybe there have been so many training schemes, so many government hand-outs and so many interferences in the process of an employer employing an apprentice that employers have got out of the habit and they now expect it to be done for them. I do not know anything about it as I

have never employed an apprentice in my life, but that is just the way it looks to me.

Mr MAREK—I have. Do you think there are too many imposts being put on small business so they decide not to employ people?

Ms McCamish—Maybe.

Mr Crawshaw—I think it is more the standard of people they are trying to employ rather than the actual employment programs themselves. They are just not getting the young people who appear to be interested in what they are doing.

Mr MAREK—The standard of youth?

Mr Crawshaw—The standard of young people. I do not mean this in general, but maybe that is the misapprehension that a lot of employers are under. They are just not getting the right sort of quality. I agree with that, and we are a small business.

CHAIR—Is it the schools' fault?

Mr Crawshaw—I do not think it is the schools' fault. I think it is society's fault, and perhaps the employers' fault, because they think they are going to pick up and drop down people as they walk in and out the door.

CHAIR—I see what seems to be a bit of a dichotomy here. Ann wants us to fix the problems that develop with young people in primary school in literacy and numeracy. Andrew decries a reduction in resources in schools. Society demands more and more out of the curriculum and out of the schooling system.

The average primary school in Victoria spends about three hours a week teaching a kid how to read and write today. Yet we know that if those same primary schools spent three hours a day in the morning—not in the afternoon when the kiddies are sleepy after lunch—it is unlikely that one single kid would fall through the safety net. If we teach them all how to read, write, count, add, multiply and divide by the time they are seven, before grade 3, our tech school principal over here would not then have the problem of trying to fix up the mess and you would not be complaining about the standards.

But society keeps on saying, 'We want sex education for those kiddies. We want them to have physical education. We want them to have health education. We want them to have safety education. We want the police to come in and talk to them about their responsibilities in the community. We want to make sure that little girls know how to run away from men. We want to make sure that the little boys do not harass the young girls.'

How do we resolve that dichotomy and expect those primary school teachers to teach those little kiddies how to read when the teachers themselves probably have not

been taught how to teach them to read in the first place? Universities do not demand that they do that. They do not have to do courses in teaching how to read to be a primary school teacher.

Society is asking an awful lot of the system, if society is also saying that our secondary schools have to teach the kids how to stay in school, how to apply for a job, how to walk to work, in an atmosphere where 30 per cent of the kids probably are from a single parent background and may be from a very low socioeconomic area where mum has not worked, dad does not work and maybe even grandfather did not work. Aren't we putting a lot of pressure on the schools in asking them to solve so much of society's problems?

Mr Crawshaw—I think that is what we were saying before. We have got to work together in this sort of area. This is where it just does not seem to be working.

CHAIR—I would not disagree with you that it is not working. That is why we are here.

Mr Crawshaw—Equally, neither side of the fence is taking the responsibility.

Mr Simson—If I can be economic about it, we are talking about the question of what makes it attractive for someone to put on an apprentice. A lot of these issues have got an economic base to them. If you do not allocate the resources effectively then you will not get a result. Probably, what has happened with the education system in those primary years is that society has changed the balance, and you need to look at redressing that balance. The resources are going to have to be found to do that if you are going to change it in the long term.

Coming back to the apprenticeship thing, there has been such an impost on small business with associated taxes, the increased demand by society for workers compensation and such issues that are such a big issue in our workplace now that those things are very dependent on the ability of small businesses to adequately fund wages growth and meet the opportunities.

So if you are going to fund things like improved apprenticeships there have to be other ways apart from just support programs for 20 weeks or wage contributions; it is more substantial than that. It is really a long-term commitment. They are not short-term programs. Fifty dollars a week to support an apprentice wage is not going to persuade an employer to put on another apprentice when they are faced with payroll taxes, workers compensation and all those sorts of things that have made such a difference to businesses over the years. So I think it is a matter of redressing the balance and providing the right incentives.

CHAIR—Anne said something about, 'How about the time when business had to

train their own people?' We could go back to those times when your business and your business and your business was taking on 14- and 15-year olds full time—and I did too—and we trained them. Does your company or your company have university scholarships today? Or, since Whitlam, do we expect the community to pay for a university education? It is a valid question. Do you pay for scholarships for young people who deserve to go to university? The answer probably is that you do not.

I propose this to you, ladies and gentlemen. As a society, if we are going to continue to ask government to do everything for us, what do we have to do for ourselves?

Ms McCamish—We are disabling people if we keep doing things for them.

Mr Crawshaw—You only have to look at the industries that have received so much support over the years. Look at the industry that I have been in for years, the clothing industry. Look where that is today. Instead of people wanting to stand up and do what they should be doing for themselves, they expect everyone else to do it.

CHAIR—Do you want to tell us about tariffs in textile clothing and footwear?

Mrs ELSON—Of the young people you employ, how many actually work 40 hours a week—just an estimate out of that 100 that you say you employ?

Mr Murraylee—The award is 38 hours a week, so full time is 38 hours a week. I have some figures here from the Seymour store as an example. Out of the 76 people that we employ in the Seymour store we have 22 who work the full 38 hours per week.

Mrs ELSON—So it is a very small percentage of ones that work 20 hours a week permanently.

Mr Murraylee—Yes, that is right. And I guess internally that is something that we want to try to address and there have been some changes to the industrial relations environment that have allowed that to be facilitated. With the introduction of deregulated trading hours, what that has meant for our business is that there has been more of a flattening of trade. So we have had a structural shift where our reliance on casual labour has decreased and we have actually increased our reliance on permanent labour—that being full time and part time.

Mrs ELSON—Is that the same for you, Mark?

Mr Spillman—Those figures do not include managers, and there are 15 managers basically in the store.

Mrs ELSON—And what would be the average age of your managers? Are we talking under-25s?

Mr Spillman—I am basically the assistant and I am only 23, which is not too bad, I suppose.

Mr Murraylee—Our store manager would be 32.

Mr Spillman—I think our oldest department manager is 39. She has only just been put on.

Mrs ELSON—That is encouraging, because after speaking to a lot of people when we started the inquiry last June—or a bit later than that—we recognised that employers were taking them on for no longer than 20 hours and having heaps of them, so a young person was looking at the position of it being better to go on the dole than work 20 hours and get exactly the same. That problem was showing up everywhere. That is why I was asking how long you employed people for and whether they were full time.

Mr Murraylee—From a company perspective, in Victoria we are wanting to move towards a more permanent work force, and part of that has been facilitated by the deregulation of trading hours. So that has been helpful.

Mrs ELSON—That is encouraging.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I just wanted to make a statement relating to the issue generally. I think in some ways we are heading down the wrong track. I certainly do not blame the education system for the fact that young people cannot get jobs. I think it is more the political and economic rationalist decisions that all parties have followed where companies are downsizing. Even manufacturing industry is contracting out a lot of their work and they are not employing as many young people as they did. Government departments are moving away from regional areas and are downsizing, and large industries are not training the number of apprentices that they did 15 years ago.

I take the point that a lot of things have happened, and I think governments have to take some share of correcting the situation and I do believe that some assistance has to be given to large employers, government departments, to start training young people in bulk. There is no better transition from school, no matter what level of education, to real work than an apprenticeship. If you are in an apprenticeship, you may not always continue in that field but it is a great eye opener for young people and a lot of them will then use the apprenticeship to move into other areas of business. I certainly believe one of the ways of solving our problem would be to look at this view of apprenticeship. And governments, I believe, have to assist because small industry cannot afford to train as many young people as they have in the past, for economic reasons. Is there any support for that point of view, or am I—

Mr Murraylee—Absolutely. From our perspective, we have meat and bakery apprentices, but the majority of positions are really created for retail trainees. We have put

on in excess of 300 retail trainees just in the last two years. I am absolutely certain that that number would not have been that high if there was not some sort of support in terms of financial attractiveness for that sort of program.

When you have a look at that, that is 300 positions. We have got probably about an 80 percent completion rate—people actually complete that traineeship. Out of that, we have probably got about a 95 percent retention rate.

When you look at the retail industry, probably going back 10, 15 years before you had the Australian traineeship system, there was not that structured entry level training into the industry. Now you have got structured schooling where they will attend, say, one day a week, or it might be a block release depending on how the employers want to structure it, where they are mixing the off the job technical theory work with the on the job practical application.

I can only speak from our perspective, but we are continuing our emphasis on creating employment opportunities for entry level people coming into our business through traineeships, so we fully support that. But there needs to be a balance. We equally recognise our job there in providing training and we have gone down the path of having our own accredited trainers to start to share the responsibility for delivering that training. We can make the training more industry specific. Hopefully, the people that come through that training are getting a better quality training than would be otherwise provided if the person did not have the same vested interest in training their own employees. So we fully support what you say.

Mr Spillman—Just on work experience: do kids see work experience as a holiday from school?

Mr MOSSFIELD—You should answer that question better than we can. It is up to you to make sure it is not a holiday.

Mrs ELSON—The opinion that the youth have given so far is that no, they look at it as being a valuable asset to gaining some work experience of some kind when they go for their first job.

Mr Spillman—Two weeks is good. I would rather eight weeks of less time, after school. It would be more beneficial to us.

Mr Crawshaw—I think it should be a continuing thing through a particular period of their education. And I think this is where industry could become very involved. There are a lot of businesses around our area that would be only too pleased to assist in a program of this nature.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Did someone say just two weeks in year 10?

Ms McCamish—That is it, yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Nothing in years 11 or 12?

Ms McCamish—No, because that is their two years of getting into uni.

Mr Spillman—I have had four work experience people and I have put all those four on.

Mrs ELSON—After hours, and how many hours a day, if it is after school?

Mr Spillman—Three hours—once or twice a week.

CHAIR—Most of the young people in the school forums, including today, in answering the question, 'Would you work for nothing if the job gave you a leg up to help find employment later rather than do nothing?' said that they would. These were pretty switched on kids, and I suspect, Anne, that a lot of the kids that you deal with and some of those that you deal with when wearing your other hat may say 'Get lost' because they do not—

Mr Crawshaw—I think, given the right understanding, a lot of them would be quite happy to.

CHAIR—Because they lack motivation to do it, but if it led to something real they would be happy to do that.

Mr Kavanagh—That's right. We use that very issue in a hypothetical sense with some of the groups that we deal with about how they would feel about offering themselves to an employer for nothing just to prove their worth, and inevitably it is met with shock and derision. They just have absolutely no interest in even exploring the issue. And similarly with volunteer work.

Mr MAREK—Who was shocked and horrified?

Mr Kavanagh—The young people.

Mr MAREK—I thought it was the civil libertarians and those sorts of people that would be cracking up—or the socialist left.

Mr Kavanagh—No. The older people are quite happy to say that it is something that is worth considering. And it is the same with volunteer work.

CHAIR—But not the young people. Yet the young people we talked to said they would all be happy to work for nothing.

Mr Kavanagh—But perhaps you are dealing with the kids of a different calibre. We are talking about the kids who have been unemployed for quite some time and they have got used to the income.

CHAIR—So is the dole a huge disincentive to work?

Mr Kavanagh—For young people, I believe it is.

Mr MOSSFIELD—James, what do you think about tariffs? Would it help the industry to maintain tariffs at the current level?

Mr Crawshaw—I believe the clothing business has dug its own hole and its own grave. I have never been one in favour of protectionism whatsoever.

CHAIR—Fair enough.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Your own employer groups and the large employers are lobbying down in Canberra to maintain the tariffs.

CHAIR—Lady and gentlemen, thank you for coming and talking to us. We have learned a lot this afternoon. It has been interesting and invigorating. I do not know what solutions we will come up with. I am not about to try to pre-empt them. There are a few ideas floating around from things we have learned, particularly in relation to helping kids to have a better chance of understanding what the world of work is all about and helping advise their careers advisers on what work there may be out there in the future.

Beyond that, the committee will continue until the end of June and we will be working on a report in August, and we hope to bring it down by late August, early September. We will certainly send you a copy. We appreciate your coming out on a cold night to talk with us, and good luck with your prospective jobs and with your kids.

I think the kids we had here were good kids. Most country kids know how to work anyway. There are a few that they go off the rails. I suspect that a few are attracted by the idea of easy money, that it becomes almost like a drip feed and pretty hard to rid of. Once it becomes a habit, how do you kick it? But, outside of that, most of the kids are good kids. There are not any that we should throw away. It is a matter of working out how we can best help them and help you so that you can be good corporate citizens.

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

That a subcommittee of the committee be established comprising Mrs Elson, Mr Marek, Mr Mossfield, to be chaired by Mr Marek, for the purpose of conducting a school forum and public hearings in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales on Wednesday, 9 April 1997.

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

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

CHAIR—Thank you *Hansard*. Thank you, staff. Thank you, participants. Thank you, colleagues. And thanks for the loan of your school.

Committee adjourned at 6.31 p.m.