



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Vocational education in schools

TUESDAY, 8 APRIL 2003

ROBINA

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Tuesday, 8 April 2003

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

Members in attendance: Mr Bartlett, Mrs May, Mr Pearce and Mr Sidebottom

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

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

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

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Committee met at 1.35 p.m.

ANTHONY, Mr Matt, Student, Robina State High School

ANTHONY, Mr Brent, Builder (Private capacity)

KINGSLEY, Ms Sarah, Student, Robina State High School

McDONALD, Mrs Jeanette Margaret, Head of Department Senior Schooling, Robina State High School

McKENZIE, Mrs Lyn, Principal, Robina State High School

PICKRELL, Ms Kayleigh, Student, Robina State High School

SMITH, Mr James, Student, Robina State High School

TOMKINSON, Mr Mark, Student, Robina State High School

CHAIR—This inquiry is being conducted to get a better understanding of how vocational education and training works in schools so that we can make recommendations to the government about ways they ought to improve it, where the problems are, where it is working well—all those sorts of things. We are visiting a number of schools across the country, talking to education departments, trainers, employers et cetera to get a good overview of how vocational education works. Thank you for having us here today at Robina State High School. We look forward to what you have got to tell us. Matt, would you mind telling us a little bit about the training you are doing, how you got into it, what you feel about it, how it works and so on.

Mr M. Anthony—I am in grade 10 and I am 15 years old. I don't really know what to say.

CHAIR—What are you doing? You are doing carpentry, aren't you?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes, I am doing a carpentry apprenticeship. I am building houses—nailing frames together, putting skirting in and stuff like that.

CHAIR—How old were you when you started your apprenticeship?

Mr M. Anthony—Thirteen.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is different from a lot of people, isn't it, Matt?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Can you tell us what happened to get you really interested in that when you were 13?

Mr M. Anthony—I had been going to work for my dad since I was three or four.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—He is a tough dad!

Mr PEARCE—Has he been paying you, as well, Matt?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

CHAIR—He was paying you when you were four?

Mr M. Anthony—No, he started paying me when I was probably nine years old. He said that I should probably get it down on paper and take it off some of my time—get me into an apprenticeship.

Mrs MAY—Are you enjoying your apprenticeship, Matt?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

Mrs MAY—You like working with your hands.

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—What has being at school and doing your apprenticeship meant for you, Matt? Do think staying at school and being interested in school has helped you?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

CHAIR—When you are off working with your dad, do you miss out on some other subjects that you would have been doing at school?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

CHAIR—Is it hard to catch up?

Mr M. Anthony—No, sometimes I just make photocopies.

Mr PEARCE—How often are you doing it? Is it just one day a week?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes, on Tuesdays.

CHAIR—And TAFE is two days a month—is that what you said?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

Mr PEARCE—Is it Tuesday because your timetable at school is easier for you to do it on a Tuesday?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes, and because of sport—half the day is just sport anyway.

CHAIR—It is a bit tough missing out on sport, though, isn't it?

Mr M. Anthony—No, I would rather get paid than go to sport.

CHAIR—Good on you. We might come back to you in a few minutes with some more questions, Matt. Mark, would you tell us what you are doing.

Mr Tomkinson—I am doing a traineeship in fitting and turning at a small place called Marine Technologies. I have just started doing it.

CHAIR—What year are you in?

Mr Tomkinson—Year 12.

CHAIR—How did you line that up? Did the school find that traineeship for you?

Mr Tomkinson—My dad is a fitter and turner for a Papua New Guinea goldmine. I just saw it on the notice board one day—traineeship for fitting and turning. I asked about it and went for it.

Mr PEARCE—Is that also one day a week?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes, one day a week; on a Monday.

Mr PEARCE—For how long have you been doing it?

Mr Tomkinson—For a couple of months.

Mr PEARCE—How is it going? Are you enjoying it?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes, it is good. I am enjoying it.

Mr PEARCE—Is it what you thought it would be?

Mr Tomkinson—Not exactly.

Mr PEARCE—How is it different?

Mr Tomkinson—It is a bit easier than I thought it would be. I thought it would involve more maths and stuff.

CHAIR—Do you do TAFE or tech with that as well?

Mr Tomkinson—No.

CHAIR—So it is just a traineeship with that company and you are at school for the rest of the time?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Do you find that doing that helps you at school as well?

Mr Tomkinson—Not really, because it takes up my Mondays.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So you have to catch up?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes, I have to catch up. It is all right.

CHAIR—Does that traineeship count towards your senior certificate?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes.

CHAIR—Is that a category A or category B course?

Mr Tomkinson—I am not sure.

CHAIR—Does it go on your senior certificate?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you get paid for that?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes.

CHAIR—How much are you paid?

Mr Tomkinson—I am paid \$6.75 an hour.

Mrs MAY—Do you do an eight-hour day there?

Mr Tomkinson—I do a 7½ hour day.

Ms Pickrell—I am doing an education course and I am in year 12. It is an all right course; I like it.

Mrs MAY—How long have you been doing it?

Ms Pickrell—I started at the beginning of last year.

Mrs MAY—How was the course?

Ms Pickrell—It is different from what I expected. I like it because it is in a library and I really like libraries.

Mrs MAY—So it is working in a library?

Ms Pickrell—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Is that a municipal or council library?

Ms Pickrell—No; it is the school library here.

Mrs MAY—So you are doing it here on site?

Ms Pickrell—Yes.

Mrs MAY—How often are you doing that? One day a week?

Ms Pickrell—Yes; on Mondays.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You said ‘education’. It is the first time I have heard of that. What exactly does that come under?

Mrs McDonald—Education library services.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So there is a course for that?

Mrs McDonald—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Do you go to TAFE at all?

Ms Pickrell—I do training with specialised training services, and the trainer comes here.

Mrs MAY—To you here, on site?

Ms Pickrell—Yes.

Mrs MAY—You spend some time with her on the day that you work in the library. Is that right?

Ms Pickrell—No. We have a meeting once a fortnight.

Mrs MAY—When you say ‘a meeting’, is it like a tutorial or one on one?

Ms Pickrell—Yes, it is a one-on-one tutorial.

CHAIR—Do you think you will be a librarian when you leave school?

Ms Pickrell—I am not sure.

CHAIR—Do you think you will take that up at university or tech?

Ms Pickrell—I do not know; maybe.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It just keeps an option running.

Ms Pickrell—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—And you are learning some good skills.

Mr Smith—I am a former student of Robina. I started my chef's apprentice at the beginning of grade 12. I did it for about a year and a bit. Mid way through grade 12 I had entered competitions; I won a gold medal in a cooking competition one year and a silver medal the next. I was involved in nearly every single fundraiser that the school had. Really, anything to do with this school I was involved in—I do not know why. When I started my apprenticeship, the school gave me the option of dropping a subject so that, in taking on more work, I could reduce my workload at school. So I only did four subjects throughout grade 12 and eventually, through some of the programs and extracurricular activities that I did, I got accepted into Griffith University's hotel management course without an OP. That was just off my experience—direct entry.

Mrs MAY—Direct entry.

Mr Smith—Yes.

CHAIR—Does that happen very often?

Mr Smith—As far as I know, no.

CHAIR—So you are doing university and your apprenticeship?

Mr Smith—I actually stopped my apprenticeship to do that. My employer said that I could continue on, but it is too much to handle. I have to do TAFE modules to keep up with my apprenticeship, which means I get assignments from there, and then there would also be university assignments. So I figured that I would rather do them separately and properly than do them both at once.

CHAIR—How many years of that apprenticeship did you do?

Mr Smith—I finished one year of my apprenticeship.

Mr PEARCE—What university course are you doing?

Mr Smith—Bachelor of hotel management, and so I have stayed in the same industry.

CHAIR—After the university course, do you think you will go back and finish off the apprenticeship or will you move more into management?

Mr Smith—I have thought about it. I am mainly trying to get into a managerial position. If a position comes up that I can get into as a manager or assistant manager or that will move me on to a management position, I will most probably take it. But I still work at the restaurant where I was employed as an apprentice; I work behind the bar now. I will just see what happens.

CHAIR—What led you into taking up that apprenticeship? How did you find out about it?

Mr Smith—I saw a lot of my friends from school going off and getting apprenticeships, and I had done a lot of work in the hospitality section at school. I did the outside course; that was done with an outside trainer who came in on Mondays. I decided that I wanted to be an apprentice chef, and so I asked my employer about it. A couple of months later they had an opening and I got a job.

CHAIR—You did that hospitality course in year 11?

Mr Smith—Yes.

CHAIR—That was a certificate I course?

Mr Smith—Yes.

CHAIR—That is what helped you get the apprenticeship, I gather.

Mr Smith—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You said that VET was really important for you at your stage in your schooling career to keep you on, motivated and learning. Do you want to share with us how important it was to you?

Mr Smith—I got off the track when I was younger. I went through two different schools; I was excluded from both. I came to Robina and, honestly, I do not think they knew that I had been expelled from two schools.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—They probably did.

Mr Smith—I was not doing too badly. I was getting into a little bit of trouble. But the turning point of my coming out of my shell at school occurred when we went on a camp and had time to bond with teachers. They were more like friends. I come back about once a fortnight just to say hello to my old teachers, the principal and everyone. They are more like friends really. They helped me get to where I wanted to go.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—VET helped?

Mr Smith—Yes, VET helped while I was here. The industrial officer, Mrs McDonald, said to me one day, 'Through what you've done, you'd probably be eligible to get into a course.' She

gave me a form. I filled it out and gave it back and did not think much about it. I think it was pretty close to the end of school when I got a letter from Griffith University. I opened it and it said, 'You have been accepted into this course.'

Mrs MAY—That would not have happened if you had not done your—

Mr Smith—No.

Ms Kingsley—I am in year 12. I started my traineeship in year 10, and that was a certificate II in business office administration. I finished that last year. That was with a promotion and production company. It is a small business that hires out data projectors and screens and also does DJ-ing and videography, like TV commercials, wedding videography and things like that. That is the reason I went for that traineeship. I did not actually go for the office side; I was more interested in the creative side of filming and so on. At the time there was no traineeship for that sort of creative industry and so I just did the plain business one. Then I picked up the skills of, and got experience in, the creative side while I was there. I enjoyed it.

Mrs MAY—Has that finished now?

Ms Kingsley—Yes. I finished that last year.

Mrs MAY—Are you doing anything this year?

Ms Kingsley—No.

Mrs MAY—Has that led to anything else?

Ms Kingsley—Now there is a traineeship available for the creative side of it. This year, with year 12, I thought it would be better to have a year off to concentrate solely on school. I have sort of headed in a different direction. While I did enjoy the traineeship and it was what I wanted to do at the time, now I am thinking more of primary education, which does not really link to it at all. It was an enjoyable experience and you can use the business side anywhere. So even though I have gone in a different direction, it is still useful for me and it will go on my senior certificate and it will help me still.

Mrs MAY—You have learned skills along the way?

Ms Kingsley—Definitely, yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—They use projectors in primary schools.

CHAIR—What about your OP or tertiary ranking to get you into university?

Ms Kingsley—I have heard that it helps towards my ranking and it will be on my senior certificate, and so that is always good.

CHAIR—It will help you to get into university to do primary teaching?

Ms Kingsley—Yes.

CHAIR—We will just throw out a few general questions. Please respond whenever you feel like it. What do you think about the careers advice you get at school? A couple of you have pursued areas of work because your parents are in the same sorts of areas. Did you have good careers guidance or counselling from the school in order to get an idea of all or a lot of the careers available and how you ought to go about getting into one of those?

Ms Kingsley—I can speak to that one. I wanted to do film and TV production. I went and saw Mrs McDonald about it, and this traineeship at the production company happened to come along. That was where I wanted to go at the time, and Mrs McDonald found a way for me to get into it. Then, because I was confused about what I wanted to do, I went back to her. I was able to sit down with her and go through my options. I think the school has a very good support system; it is very supportive. Going to my parents and saying, ‘I’m doing this traineeship but I want to do something completely different,’ there is always a feeling that they are angry with me. But at school, there is always that sort of help and I think it has been really important in helping me to switch and go to where I have wanted to be.

Mr PEARCE—I want to ask you particularly about that. Once you had worked out what it was that you wanted to do, how much did your parents know about traineeships and apprenticeships? Did they understand how vocational education works?

Mr Smith—My parents knew nothing about it. I went home and said, ‘I’m trying to get an apprenticeship with Fellini,’ which is where I work. They said, ‘What’s an apprenticeship? We thought you already had a job.’ I said, ‘No; it’s like training.’ They did not know much about it. It is something that is new, having just come in. Now dad has learned all about it and he knows more than I do; he raves on about it all the time.

Mrs MAY—They were happy for you to do it, though?

Mr Smith—Yes, very; as soon as they knew what it was. It is like schooling for what you want to do in life.

Mr PEARCE—Was there any concern about the fact that you might miss some subjects at school through going and doing this? Was there any discussion like that?

Mr Smith—Touching back on the question before, when I started here I was actually in the industrial skills class and was looking at being a welder or something of that description. Just through what they showed me, I decided what I wanted to be. Sorry, what was the question again?

Mr PEARCE—Was there any concern from your parents about the fact that you might be missing sport or you might be missing some subject because you had to go and do this?

Mr Smith—Once my parents understood completely what it was, they realised it was a good thing to get into. You can reduce your subjects down—I only did four subjects in grade 12—and, as you do, it lessens and evens out the workload. I was doing 40 hours of work a week plus

school, and only doing four subjects helped me a lot and I still managed to get good grades. I think my worst grade was a B minus. I got two VHAs and an HA.

CHAIR—Kayleigh, how did you decide on education and library work? Did you decide on that on advice from a careers counsellor here?

Ms Pickrell—I saw it in the newsletter.

Mrs MAY—Is that the internal newsletter that comes out through the school?

Ms Pickrell—Yes, the senior newsletter. I put in a resume and a letter of application and then I did an interview. That is how I got into it.

Mrs MAY—Did anyone else apply for it?

Ms Pickrell—Yes, I think so.

Mrs MAY—So you went through an interview process and you were chosen from there?

Ms Pickrell—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Very good.

CHAIR—Mark and Matt, you decided what you wanted to do because your parents are carpenters and a fitter and turner—is that right?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

CHAIR—Did you talk to the school careers counsellor about that as well?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

CHAIR—What did they say? Did they encourage you to do that?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes, definitely.

Mrs MAY—Mark, are you working for a company?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Or are you working for your family?

Mr Tomkinson—No, for a company.

Mrs MAY—Who identified the company? Did you find the apprenticeship or did the school find it?

Mr Tomkinson—The school found it. Mrs McDonald found it.

Mrs MAY—It was advertised within the school and you applied?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes.

Mrs MAY—You went to the firm and had an interview with the company?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Did anyone else apply?

Mr Tomkinson—One other boy applied, but I went to work experience and they rang up the company that I am employed by, which is GTA, and said, ‘He’s done all this work; we’ve got none for the other guy to do,’ so I got the job.

Mrs MAY—And you are enjoying it?

Mr Tomkinson—Yes.

Mrs MAY—That is good.

CHAIR—It sounds as if the system works pretty well. You all have some great achievements already. Can you think of any way the system could be working better for you—any areas where it has not worked as well as it could have?

Mr Smith—I would like to see the competencies recognised. I received a few at school but for some reason—I do not know why—I could not get my certificate until I finished school. So when I started my TAFE training and grade 12 I had to go through everything I had already done because I could not get my certificate; it comes out with the senior certificate.

CHAIR—You had done certificate I in hospitality at school?

Mr Smith—Yes. Then I started my TAFE training, my tech training—

CHAIR—And you had to do certificate I again?

Mr Smith—I had to do all the same stuff again because I could not get it. It would be good to get something nationally recognised whereby you have access to your competencies, because I took in my little log book where the trainer marks things off and they said, ‘No, that’s not worth anything; you have to have the certificate.’ I could not even get my certificate.

CHAIR—We are having a meeting in a couple of minutes with your teachers. We will talk about how that works then. Are there any other ideas or problems?

Ms Kingsley—Throughout my traineeship I had three different people in charge of me who were supposed to come out and monitor me. Because I jumped from one person to another—three throughout my traineeship—I never felt that I really had the support.

Mrs MAY—Is that from the school?

Ms Kingsley—No, from the group training organisation. Then the trainer who was looking after me after that fell ill, and I did not get any modules for a couple of months because she was ill and that was not looked after.

Mrs MAY—The continuity was not there.

Ms Kingsley—Yes. So with the group training company I had three different people, and then with my actual training I had one person and then it stopped for a couple months so I had to catch up. So the support from the group training company was not as good as I would have hoped.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Matt, are you going through a group training organisation as well?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So they employ you and your dad is the trainer at the moment—you are doing an apprenticeship through the organisation with your dad?

Mr B. Anthony—He is indentured to me and he goes to college at the group training organisation. They send someone out periodically to check.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Do you feel that that is working all right for you, Matt?

Mr M. Anthony—Yes.

CHAIR—It is very interesting that you all have different paths and different directions. You are obviously all doing really well, so congratulations. I hope your careers go really well. I am sure they will. Thank you very much for the time that you have given us today.

[2.06 p.m.]

GRANTHAM, Mrs Julie Catheran, Executive Director, Schools Gold Coast South, Education Queensland

KERN, Mr Christopher, Deputy Principal, Robina State High School

McDONALD, Mrs Jeanette Margaret, Head of Department Senior Schooling, Robina State High School

McKENZIE, Mrs Lyn, Principal, Robina State High School

TOBIN, Mrs Jenny, Deputy Principal, Robina State High School

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you want to make some introductory comments or run through a presentation?

Mrs McKenzie—We have put together a presentation and you have got a copy of that. We will briefly run through that but at any time interrupt us or if we are labouring the point and you want us to move on, please ask us to keep moving.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Mrs McKenzie—Firstly, on the overall profile of the school, it began in 1996, so we are a relatively young school. Our first year 12s were in the year 2000, so we have just finished our third group and we are starting our fourth group through. As you know, Gold Coast regional city numbers of students, which we have talked about before, are 1,830. Our retention rate at year 12 is 88 per cent, and I think that is important to keep in perspective. It is on the state benchmark but, with the breadth of programs we have got, it is still not 100 per cent retention, which is something we are working on trying to improve. The senior school operates on a four-day week, so the comments the students were making, ‘I go on a Monday,’ are because as a senior they miss no school if they go on a Monday. Their classes run from Tuesday to Friday starting at eight and finishing at four or 4.10 depending on whether they have late classes that we talked about in some of the prac areas.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Why is it a four-day week?

Mrs McKenzie—We fit the full five days in by starting an hour earlier, which allows us to do the Mondays. Mondays for students in senior school are traineeships or apprenticeships, or some of them are in part-time work in order to support themselves while they are going through. A majority of them, particularly those students who are doing OP eligible, they are in that group of students were trying to get university, come in on Mondays for tutorials. So the school operates on the Monday for them—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—There is still a structure.

Mrs McKenzie—That is right. It is operating for them but it is not in specific class time; they are in a range of other activities on the Monday.

Mrs MAY—Are those tutorials in groups of class sizes?

Mrs McKenzie—They are much smaller sizes because it obviously depends whether there is an assignment due or a big exam coming up as to how many takers we get on the Monday. It is a voluntary thing for the students. You can pick those students who are in the top 25 per cent of academic students, who appear regularly on the Monday doing the tutorials unless they are in a traineeship, in which case they balance their load in another way.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—This is very interesting. There are arguments about nine-day fortnights where I come from. That was through a community consultation, was it?

Mrs McKenzie—Yes. Julie, who is currently executive director of schools, was the principal at the time, so I will pass over to her in terms of that process.

Mrs Grantham—I have to think back. We started talking about it in 1997, our second year. I raised the possibility of operating in a different framework with the middle management at the time. I guess it came out of the frustration of being a deputy principal in another large high school nearby, where we saw children going off to apprenticeships and traineeships, but then coming back and having to overlay the requirements of what they had missed on top of the extra work they had already done. So it was more a group effort. I presented the ideas to Education Queensland and to our parent group, and then different people took charge of different aspects of what that consultation process would be. Jeanette McDonald took charge of what the courses would look like, some people looked at transport, and other people looked at timetabling and how it would fit.

Then, for 18 months, we went through a process of selling that to our community, so that, when it was implemented in 1999, it was well spoken about and communicated. It was very successful right from the word go. It was difficult for some parents to adjust family time because they then had to get children here an hour earlier when they had other children going to other schools at a quarter to nine. So the biggest thing was the adjustment for families. But, in terms of staff, there were arrangements made for time off in lieu if they had early starts. A whole lot of things were negotiated prior to the implementation.

CHAIR—What are the hours of the day, then?

Mrs Grantham—They are eight until 4.10. It can be eight until three because of the four days when they have an 8 o'clock start. Just to back up what Lyn was saying, the kids who come on Monday virtually do six days of schooling because they do five days across four but, with the extra commitment on the Monday, they virtually do an extra day at school.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Don't tell them!

Mrs Grantham—I think they have worked that out.

CHAIR—What percentage did you say come on Monday? Did you say it was 25 per cent?

Mrs McKenzie—It is. Again, it varies depending on the time of the year. About 61 per cent of our students are OP eligible, and about 40 per cent of those get better than OP 10, which is in the top third. Those students are the ones who are coming on Mondays, predominantly. It is give-or-take because some are on traineeships and cannot come on Monday. But, generally, those who are in the top bracket are coming on the Monday.

Mrs MAY—Are the staff quite happy? You have obviously been able to make arrangements for the staff for the extra hours they are working.

Mrs McKenzie—I will just pass to Chris on this because he works through this regularly with the staff.

Mr Kern—In fact, the staff like it. It is a battle each year for which staff will actually get the early classes because it means that, at some stage, they will have a half day off. So the majority of students, because of the structure of only having years 8, 9 and 10 on Monday, are either starting at 11 o'clock or finishing at half past 12. So, from that point of view, it still works out, whether you work the nine till three normal time frame or with the early classes—or, once again, also with the late classes. If you have a class that goes from 3 o'clock until 10 past four, it is the same again: that is two lessons for which you are working outside the normal time frame so, at some stage, somewhere else in the timetable, you will either start two lessons later or finish two lessons earlier. Combining that with an afternoon class and a morning class, some teachers are turning up at 9 o'clock on Monday and are finished by half past 10. Sometimes, though, the battle is to actually get them off site because they turn around and say, 'This is fantastic. I know I can't get used for internal relief. I know there's nothing else happening, so I will do all my work.' We certainly do not discourage that.

Mrs MAY—Who does the timetabling? Is that a nightmare?

Mr Kern—I do the timetable. It has its constraints—

Mrs MAY—I bet it does, Chris!

Mr Kern—But then, on the other side of it, it has great benefits for us because, due to the popularity of computer, industrial skills and kitchen subjects, it means that we can start operating a lot of those facilities and get more time out of them. I get a whole line of classes in the mornings and I get classes in the afternoons. I can fit more classes into there, so it works both ways.

Mrs McKenzie—I will keep going with the presentation. The last two comments on that particular slide are just for your knowledge. We have a low number of Indigenous students—we have a dozen or so Indigenous students. Also, we have a low number of ESL students. We have a low population there compared to other schools. We have low numbers of students with a disability, although we are designated a physical impairment school and we do have a number of students with physical impairment. But, when you compare us to other schools, just be conscious of that. Hence, when we come to the response to your criteria, we do not have a lot to say about the issues in relation to the fourth criterion question.

One of the things that we are very proud of here is that, although 52 per cent of our students come into year 8 with below national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy, as they go through the school 61 per cent are OP eligible—aiming for a university entrance score—and our OP results are well above those of the state. We are considered an anomaly, in that we are well above the state in our students' academic results but also well above the state in a range of our vocational outcomes. So I guess the answer to the question that someone put to me on the phone—'Can you do both and do both well?'—is that we believe you can and we believe that the structures and processes that we have in place within the school are allowing us to do that.

Part of our tertiary success is through the rank system. Queensland is unique in that you have the traditional OP system for getting into university and then you have another system called a rank system, whereby every student who is not eligible for an OP can apply under a rank. We encourage our students and our parent community to know and learn about that and to take full advantage of that system in getting access to diploma and degree courses. James, who you spoke to earlier, was an example of that. We have other students like that as well among those who are going through to tertiary studies. That 39 per cent is above the level of most schools in the state, but some of those are rank students who are using the apprenticeship traineeship pathway to get there.

There are three types of VET that we do in the school. We have our apprenticeships and traineeships, and you spoke earlier to students who are involved in that. We have what we call our embedded VET—that is, the Queensland Studies Authority has a list of subjects in which vocational units are embedded so that when you teach that subject at the school you are also teaching the units of competence that the Queensland Studies Authority, which oversees all of the curriculum for senior schools in Queensland, has embedded into it.

CHAIR—Do those courses qualify for OP? Are they category A courses?

Mrs McKenzie—There are both types. There are category As which have embedded VET units, and they qualify for OP, and then there is the category called authority registered subjects—that is the latest term—which also have some embedded VET. Then we have a very small number of stand-alone courses whereby students such as James, who was involved in the certificate I in hospitality, can gain a qualification with an external provider. There are various other single units in hairdressing and those sorts of things which students traditionally do in lieu of the sport program. Jeanette, who looks after that area, will be able to answer any questions about that.

We have had over 200 apprenticeship trainees over the last four years. Last year 16 per cent of our senior students were involved, which equates to about 110. Seventy-one per cent of our students study vocational units, either through traineeships, through stand-alone courses or through embedded VET, and more than 30 per cent get certificate I or higher. But it is important to note that a larger number of students are getting certificate II in communication. VET includes both very industry specific VET programs and more generic VET programs—communications, numeracy and those sorts of things. Of our students who get certificate I, 50 get it through communications, which is not necessarily an industry specific course.

CHAIR—In how many of these cases is there a direct link to post-school employment or further study in that area? Would most of your 71 per cent of year 12 students go on to do

further study and perhaps be employed in those areas, or is it more of a general background? Presumably most of the 16 per cent in traineeships would continue those traineeships after school.

Mrs McKenzie—That is not necessarily the case. The next slide will show you the breakdown on those traineeships. The current slide shows our embedded VET. We have a few points to make about the problems and the successes with embedded VET. As you can see, in the white area, one of the big issues is the number of students who do not complete the certificates in the embedded VET courses—they have the potential to do so but they do not complete them. Eighteen per cent, the purple area, are successful in certificates for embedded VET in QSA subjects.

We will flick to the next slide. The 31 per cent, the maroon area, represents school based apprenticeships and traineeships completed at school; the 17 per cent, the yellow area, represents those completed after school. Depending on how they are getting their VET units, it varies as to whether, firstly, they are completing and, secondly, they are continuing the use of those right through. There is quite a significant difference between the 18 per cent and, adding both of those up, the 48 per cent completion through the SATs. We also have an almost 100 per cent completion through stand alone. But we do so few of them; we only have 10-odd students in full certificate stand alone, and they are in the hospitality area. Again, we will talk about some issues around stand alone. That is it in a nutshell, and we have some issues to talk through. If there are no other questions, we will get started on those.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Could you give a rundown on the profile of your student intake—the demographics, socioeconomic status and so on?

Mrs McKenzie—We are deemed to be in the middle socioeconomically. The area is quite middle-income, but we do have pockets of students who come from very low socioeconomic backgrounds. We are a mix. Robina is a very suburban area; across the highway is Mudgeeraba, which is more acreage and semirural; and a 35- to 40-minute drive away at the top of a mountain range is Springbrook, an area which has rural areas and people who come down to work here in the city area. So we have a combination. Certainly, along with other schools, we have a group of students who are under the care of Family Services and we have groups of students from double-parent families and single-parent families—the whole range. But, looking at us on the surface, we have quite a large middle-income group of people.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—What is your SES score?

Mrs McKenzie—I cannot tell you. I have not noticed our SES score. Julie may know.

Mrs Grantham—No.

Mrs McKenzie—We certainly do not get additional funding or anything like that because of our SES score.

Mr Kern—My role here is to talk about the three different styles of VET that we have and the things that make them work very well in this school and also, on the other side of it, the things that we do come up against. We also have some concerns about how we deliver it. The

embedded modules—that is, embedded in the QSA A and B subjects, and so that is the OP subjects and the non-OP subjects—are certainly enhanced by the fact that teachers encourage the students to complete modules by highlighting the vocational benefits. We have done a fair amount of work with both the teachers and the parents around our VET work. We also ask our guidance officers to talk along that line as well. Certainly, Jenny and I talk to years 11 and 12 students who are struggling with their chosen pathway. It might be that they are not achieving their potential with a particular OP pathway. That is something we talk about with them, and it is those pathways that we work down. But the teachers are certainly in there, encouraging those students and talking to them about the modules in the particular subjects they have chosen.

It also concerns the students' commitment to success. Our school has always had an ethos of success and of saying, 'Okay, if it's there, I'm going to do it and I'm going to do my best at it.' Some students may have chosen a subject not necessarily because of its modules but because they liked it. They might have chosen it because it was an OP subject that they believed they would go well in, such as business communication technologies or tech studies. From that point of view, they look at it and say, 'Well, this is a vehicle for me to a good OP score—and, by the way, there are embedded modules in here. The teachers are talking it up and saying, "Look, this is a double bonus for you: not only are you getting benefit towards your OP score but you are also getting the embedded modules as well".' The students' commitment to success, to wanting to actually achieve, means that we are getting that high rate of students who are completing modules. I think last year the figure of successful embedded modules was 2,400 across the school, and that was across 190 students. So, on average, you are looking at around 10 modules per student.

The teachers also make themselves available in their own time to allow students to re-sit assessments. It is not a case of saying, 'Look, you didn't get it the first time, and so we're going to struggle to give you the opportunity to re-sit this.' The opportunity is certainly there for students to have a second or third go at trying to be competent in a particular module. I spoke before about the fact that having 1,830 students and around 700 students in our grades 11 and 12 cohort means that we can have quite a wide variety of subjects. But there is a finite level to that because of timetabling and staffing constraints. Even with such constraints, our next step may be to have partnership agreements with other schools in offering some of the less popular subjects. At the moment we have a large enough number of students for most of our courses to be offered to them alone. We often have two or three classes for each course. The computer subject alone has three, sometimes four, classes—up to 100 students.

Another point is that teachers believe the embedded VET strands offer more meaningful content to the students. When given options with study area specifications, for example, they may see that strand A includes the embedded modules and strand B does not. They will look at the particular content of each to see which one is more meaningful—from the point of view of not only the module but also the subject's pure content—to make sure that the students who have picked the subject will find it interesting and challenging; that for the students there will be variety, with the added bonus of being able to access the modules. That all builds up so that our embedded VET is seen by students as being meaningful and worth while. Students appreciate it and try and get into it, and they try to get as many modules as they can.

There are some constraints to it though. The constraints start in the authority subjects—the OP subjects. They are difficult to assess under the constraints and moderation expectations. In

Queensland, under the Queensland Studies Authority, we have particular guidelines, certain standards that we have to meet in moderation, assessment and content for the students—and that is moderated at an external level. There are expectations there. Trying to find the blend between the two so that those guidelines as well as the standards and expectations under the vocational framework can be met is quite difficult. Teachers are finding it a challenge to work out what that blend is and to balance the two.

With these subjects, HR requirements also cause us a problem. Normally, at the end of the year, with the students starting to leave—year 12s leave four weeks prior to the end of the school year and years 11 and 10 leave two weeks prior—there is free time for departments to get together and talk about next year's planning. At the moment, with the HR requirements, a lot of these departments—especially industrial design, lifestyle management, computer and business departments—need to send their staff out on industry placement. Other departments that do not necessarily have vocational have the time to do that planning. In the departments that I have listed the staff are out and they do not have that time; they need to find other time in which to get together. Often that then comes back on the school. We have to say, 'Okay, if you're all out at this time, when throughout the year can we free you up so that you can do your departmental planning?'

Turnover of staff also requires constant training and release time. If only one particular staff member has the HR requirements to teach in a particular area and they decide to leave—and they leave for a variety of reasons—it is then mostly up to us to try and bring another one of our teachers up to that standard so they meet the HR requirements. Sometimes we are given very late notice that we will be losing that teacher. There might be a particular reason for their need to have the following year off on leave.

The other thing is that any changes to national training packages that then filter down mean that we have to do rewrites of our programs. So that is an extra burden on our teachers through the vocational process. Looking at early childhood education at the moment, we believe it will go through two more changes. It has just gone through a change, and another one will be online in a year's time. So those particular teachers constantly need to redesign and change what is going on. That means not only time here at school but also release time because there is a good program of professional development put on by the Queensland Studies Authority that we believe is essential for those of our teachers who are teaching in these particular areas. So we will be releasing our teachers for daylong professional development activities that are run during school time.

Mrs McKenzie—I will just comment on that. There is the same requirement of any recognised training organisation: teachers have to get involved in the training package rewrites. There is a difference for schools, though. Take the early childhood example. The early childhood teacher at our school may be teaching only one-third of their program in early childhood and may also be teaching a range of other subjects. As a VET provider who specialises in early childhood or a teacher in TAFE who teaches early childhood, that is their focus. So, although specialists also have to keep pace with the training packages, because there is such a slim market in schools for the numbers of students who are going to be associated with that particular teacher, teachers have to keep up to date to the same extent as a specialist in the area but with less focus time on it. I hope that explains it properly. It is a burden for everybody,

but in schools it is particularly difficult because of the spread of things that teachers have to focus their time and energy on.

CHAIR—Is there any mandated amount of industry release time or industry experience required under AQTF to be able to teach the embedded courses? They have to have certificate IV to qualify for AQTF, don't they?

Mrs McKenzie—They need certificate IV and workplace training, or equivalency to that. Part of that is their teaching qualification, plus they have to show their understanding of competencies and those sorts of things. They need equivalency, which does not always mean the qualification but is just about the same thing. It is maintaining contact with the industry. Again, take the example of early childhood education. A full-time secondary school teacher who is not working part time in the industry needs to maintain currency with the industry. So they need to go out there if they are going to maintain some semblance of currency. Also, it is only one-third of their teaching load back here at school; in the other part of it they are teaching junior home economics or junior lifestyle management. So there is certainly a difference in terms of the split of a secondary teacher's head when it comes to VET versus the other things they do in a day. That is one of the issues we deal with.

CHAIR—I will just clarify that. For a teacher to have the qualifications necessary to teach, say, a certificate I course or an embedded course, how does the department determine that they have the industry currency required? It sounds like it is a fairly informal sort of arrangement.

Mrs McKenzie—We are under similar arrangements to those of any other recognised training organisation with the AQTF audits. We need to meet the framework. However, obviously, when you are teaching a certificate I the requirements for those units are quite different from diploma requirements. If our teacher is teaching certificate I here they should be able to teach that certificate I in a TAFE or in another RTO under the HR requirements. So we are required to have similar sorts of HR standards. I guess the issue for me, though—having worked in the TAFE sector—is that a childcare teacher there would go out and do two weeks industry currency and would probably be out doing assessments in the work force as well. That is their full focus as a childcare teacher. We have examples where our person needs to keep their currency in child care but also needs to keep their currency in hospitality because they are possibly teaching the introductory levels of hospitality. That is where we come up against a few issues.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I think there are industrial relations issues in there as well. Do you think there is an issue of equity in terms of your staffing? Some people are involved in VET and the normal school program, and others are involved in the full school program and doing the more traditional side of it. Is that catered for in terms of their conditions and payment? They seem to have more required of them than their normal colleagues in order for this program to run. So you are running on a lot of goodwill if there is nothing else.

Mrs McKenzie—If you look at the two awards—the TAFE teachers award and the teachers award—within the secondary system, you will see that the TAFE teachers have two weeks industry placement as a compulsory part of their award. We also find a way to put them out on placement—we do it at the lowest part of the year when we have no seniors around—but it would be fair to say that, while they are out doing industry placement, other members of the

school are working towards other parts of their planning. So there is a difference between the awards in the two sectors.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It could be worth exploring a bit more.

Mr Kern—To conclude on embedded modules, I come back to the first point I made: often students are not choosing subjects purely because they want to get the modules. They are choosing them for various reasons—for example, there are industrial skills students who like building things. The onus is then on the teacher to try to work with those students to push the idea that there are modules embedded in the subject and that these are meaningful things, because it does lead to some apathy from those students towards the modules, and specifically towards re-sits if they are not competent the first time around. That comes down to an onus on our teachers to be committed to working with those students to make sure that they understand the usefulness of the modules that are embedded in the subject.

Our school based traineeship position is enhanced by the fact that we have a senior schooling HOD who does a lot of work in that area. Again, that comes back to the size of our school and the fact that we have the maximum 13 heads of department and we have the opportunity to allocate one of those positions to a head of department. Jeanette McDonald, that head of department, does have a teaching load as well; she does not just run the traineeships full time. As her title—Head of Department Senior Schooling—suggests, her work is not just about traineeships; it runs the gamut of the senior schooling side of things, right down to working on subject selection with grade 10 students in choosing their grade 11 subjects.

A lot of the work Jeanette does is to do with the OP side of things, the vocational education side of things, information to parents, keeping abreast of what is happening in the industry, talking with people out in the industry and building all the strong relationships this school has. Christine Dawes, who works very closely with Jeanette McDonald, is our full-time industry liaison person. That is another commitment by our school—we have put on a full-time person to work with traineeships and the industry. That is coming back to us. A lot of industry people are saying, ‘One of the things we like about your school is that you answer our phone calls and you give us the information we want very promptly when we require it.’ That has a lot to do with our commitment to Jeanette and to having Christine there to be that contact, to be the one person who is talking all the time with industry.

CHAIR—How is that person funded?

Mr Kern—The position is currently funded through the money received from vocational education.

Mrs MAY—So you have a guidance officer, a liaison officer—and, Jeanette, you still have a teaching load as well?

Mrs McDonald—A half load.

Mrs MAY—How long ago was that liaison officer appointed?

Mrs McDonald—At the start.

Mrs MAY—Right at the beginning?

Mrs McDonald—Yes. She is not full time; she actually does 22 hours. I have an administrative assistant as well.

Mrs MAY—It says ‘full time’ here.

Mrs McDonald—She works for 22 hours on school based traineeships, work experience and industry placement. I have another assistant who works for seven hours on the administrative side—the academic things that I deal with, scholarships, the Queensland core skills and all of that sort of stuff.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—How many students are there, again?

Mrs McDonald—I deal with any student who comes to us. That means anyone from year 10 through to year 12, and some of our year 8s and year 9s who are at-risk students as well.

Mrs McKenzie—Kerry, you asked an excellent question about where the money comes from. I would appreciate a moment to talk about this.

Mrs MAY—You grabbed the microphone very quickly!

Mrs McKenzie—At the moment, it is an issue that is well-known federally in relation to VET funding. We are one of the schools that will be significantly affected by the distribution of the money for vocational education to the states and not having another look at the formula. With respect to the member from Tasmania, there is a significant difference between how much we get per student involved in VET and how much Tasmanian schools get per student involved in VET because of the way the formula works. Queensland is continuing to increase its capacity—as you can see, we have had 200 over four years and 110 last year; we have had a significant increase every year. That increase is going to come to a screeching halt soon if the funding cannot be revised in some way. We rely on the 22 hours in the work placement side of it being funded purely from the federal money that comes through. There are some issues around how long the state distribution of that federal money will stay at its current amount, based on the increased creep of more and more students going into vocational education in Queensland. So, as it stands, this is an area in which we are under threat in terms of being able to continue to fund the program at the rate we have been able to do so in the past in order to provide the service.

CHAIR—So you would argue for funding based on the number of students in VET?

Mrs McKenzie—Certainly, from our perspective it needs to be based on the number of students in VET as opposed to the number of students in the age group, so that we can have comparable amounts of money to support students in VET versus students generally who may not be taking up VET.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It is a typical fed, isn't it—it gives with one hand and takes with the other?

Mr Kern—Further to that, on our school based trainees: I have spoken about our commitment to excellent service to our industry providers, and that is something we work very hard on. The other decision by the school is that we encourage all the students to participate in the traineeships. In fact, 41 per cent of our trainees are OP eligible students. It is not seen purely as an area for at-risk students. It is certainly seen as worth while for students at all stages of their schooling and heading in all different pathways.

The last thing is that we also make sure it is student centred. We believe that this is probably the crux of our success—and at this stage we are getting 50 per cent completion. We encourage parents to get information and come and talk to us about the whole process, but in the end it needs to be student centred. It needs to be the student doing the legwork—getting the paperwork, filling out the papers and working through the process. If it is parent driven, the student will turn up for the first couple of weeks, and then say, ‘See, I didn’t like it,’ and pull out. That is when you get cases of students pulling out during the probationary period. So at our school we make sure that it remains student centred. The students do take the onus on themselves. If they are keen and interested and they want to do it, they need to do the work. It is just the same as it will be once they actually get into the traineeship; the onus will be on them.

Mrs MAY—Do you have a career information night at which all this is canvassed so that students have access to the information?

Mrs McDonald—Yes, we run several across the year. There is one where the tertiary roadshow comes in. We also have employers and then we encourage students to go out. But we are always on tap at any time a student wants to see us. I never turn a student away. We always find a way to facilitate whatever it is they need to know.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I turn to the point you made when you mentioned Tasmania and funding. It is a catch-22 in a way, isn’t it? You have made a school decision to encourage all students to participate in SATs. You regard that as a very important educational choice, and that is true. Yet, in that encouragement you are encouraging the most resource hungry choices. So, if funding is not going to match that, in a way you cannot continue to do it.

Mrs McKenzie—I guess part of the reason we encourage that is that, as you would be aware, although we have an 88 per cent retention rate—and other schools have a variety of retention rates—and 61 per cent of our students are OP eligible, only 39 per cent of students are getting through to tertiary education, and that includes those who are not OP eligible. So we have a whole batch of students who start grade 11 believing that they are OP eligible and that they are going to go to university, but that is not reality in the stats. If you ignored those OP eligible students, said, ‘Okay, you’ve chosen to be OP eligible and you’re on your way to university’ and spent the next two years focusing on that, at the end of that students have very little to do. They do not have a lot of skills behind them to take them to the next step.

Most of those OP eligible students are in that group of students who are probably not going to go to university anyway. They are going to go on to traineeships, apprenticeships and skilled work at the end of the program. That is why we have made a conscious decision not to ignore that population just because, at the beginning of grade 11, their parents believe that that is the best process for them and that they are all going to go to university. Often parents and students do not understand the breadth of what is out there. Educating the broad range of the Australian

community that there are many alternatives to getting through your pathways in life is a long time coming. That is why we made that decision.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I fully appreciate that, and I think in your drive to present the best educational opportunities which are realistic for the majority of students it still has dramatic financial and resourcing implications and, in a sense, I suppose you are trying to pool others to make the realisation in order to get the resources.

Mrs McKenzie—Yes.

Mr Kern—In terms of the traineeships, one of the constraints we actually have, and we have spoken about this, is that there is a major time commitment for Jeanette well and truly beyond the time that we can allow to give to her in terms of traineeships, with the whole range of activities that she is actually expected to do. There is also student concern on the interference, and I recall that when you had the students here you actually asked them about what their parents thought about dropping down to four subjects, and there are certainly some students, especially OP students, that have a concern. They see the value of the traineeship but they also see the impact the traineeship may have on the course of study. Even though we do have the flexibility of the Monday timetable, they still see it as possibly getting in the way of their study. Those students are making a decision on which way they are really headed, and that is probably talking again about the top 20 per cent of students who are making that last decision.

There are also the funding constraints if the student already has a certificate II in terms of getting employers, and I might ask Jeanette to clarify that.

Mrs McDonald—What we are finding is that for students leaving school with a certificate and they want to be employed outside, if an employer finds out they have got a certificate II or a certificate III they are less likely to take them on because they do not get any more federal funding for it. So we are finding these really well-equipped students going out there saying, 'I can't get this job because the employer won't take me on because I have already received funding.' That has been an issue that has been coming up lately.

CHAIR—I think that is being addressed. The minister has recently said that he is addressing that. There is obviously an impediment there.

Mrs McKenzie—On the next two points, on any future funding cuts without a review of the funding we do have some issues. I think the last point is important for you to note as well: not only do we have Jeanette and Christine working internally to place students into traineeships and apprenticeships but we also have a range of brokers out there. I believe some of you have met Andrea Meredith from SCISCO, which is a Gold Coast based group which helps us place our students. They have to do some work to do that, so there is a fee for doing that. That fee varies. Some brokers charge more than others and, depending on whether we really need to place the student with them, we will pay that brokerage fee. So the money that comes to us via the states from the federal government is being used to subsidise salaries internally within the school but also pay brokers who have got a business going out there.

Mrs MAY—Do you charge your students a levy?

Mrs McKenzie—No. I will pass to Jeanette and she will give you the range of the brokers' fees. It is quite an interesting range.

Mrs McDonald—We do not charge the students at all for school based traineeships, so it is fully self-funded. For example, SCISCO charges us \$265 for every placement that they make, and they are a non-profit organisation; they mostly all are. Our highest one is \$450, and when we are getting a start-up fee of \$500 we end up with nothing much. But in order to place that student we will pay the fee so that we are giving that student the best opportunity. Basically, it is funding coming in and funding going out.

CHAIR—Going back to the first point, would the highest priority for increased funding be to allow the vocational coordinator to be released from face-to-face teaching totally so that your whole role could be management, coordination, support and supervision?

Mrs McDonald—Not for me personally, because I really enjoy the teaching side of it. But, in other schools, with a whole range of people from private schools and different things, some of them have as little as two lessons off. Because there is no formula that says that this is what it should be for a HOD or a VET coordinator who is doing this, it is up to the principal of the school really how nice they are to you sometimes, and how much they value that within the school.

CHAIR—Do you think that is a higher priority, then, than resources for release into industry experience for your teachers?

Mrs McDonald—No. I think you cannot add one against the other. They are both essential. They are non-negotiable, really.

Mrs McKenzie—Certainly it is a catch-22 situation. We are currently managing the release of our teachers in that downtime—that last month of school. We will have some issues if VET keeps increasing in Queensland and we get less of the pie in terms of the distribution to all the students in Queensland. If the formula does not change federally, it is the teacher aide or admin officer who is working with Jeanette whose salary we will have to find more money for. That is the person who is where the rubber hits the road. Jeanette is the person the students all relate to, but her offsider, Christine Dawes, is the one the employers deal with day in and day out. She is the one the students check their resumes with. Jeanette also does that role, but that 22 hours is used. Certainly, she works above and beyond that because of her passion for the role. So there is that issue of brokerage.

At the moment there is good funding. If an employer takes a student they get the incentive. There has been some increase in that recently to encourage employers to take students, which has been fabulous. The students' training is then paid for, so a recognised training organisation gets involved in training the student. The key is that brokerage role. There can be all the money in the world out there for those other two things, but if schools do not get a sufficient amount of money—through either state or federal funding—to ensure that that liaison happens between industry and school to get the student out there and signed up, that is where it can all come unstuck.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Tell me to pull my head in if you need to, but I am just interested to take that a bit further. Let us assume we accept the principle that we should support that. Should it come in as a bucket of money? What criteria should we then put on it: one, that it be paid into the school and, two, that the school be given enough flexibility to be able to use it as they see fit? I suppose there are criteria for how much goes into a school and there are criteria the school has to meet to access that. It is an interesting one. I do not know whether anyone has thought about it enough.

Mrs McKenzie—Can I just explore that further? Are you referring to the school getting cash directly from the federal government?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I am wondering how we, the Commonwealth, could support these needs. You might say, ‘We’ll just fund the person.’ That arrangement may not suit some schools but it may suit others. What criteria or formula would you set to get the funding?

Mrs McKenzie—I guess, from a Commonwealth perspective, it is in terms of which aspect of VET—and we talk about having three different types here—you believe it is best to support financially. If it is the embedded VET in schools, then yes, we need to think through that relief in terms of the professional development of staff within schools. If it is the SAT side of it, it is about coordination. It is not about our teachers keeping current, because they are not actually doing the delivery; the outside providers are doing the delivery. If it is stand-alone VET, it is either that the schools keep current with individual teachers or that an outside provider comes in and stays current. The Commonwealth could supply money to schools to pay the outside providers to come through. I think that is the issue: which aspect of VET needs to be supported and is valued by the Commonwealth?

CHAIR—I suppose if you allocated funding on the basis of your earlier suggestion that it be based on the number of students doing VET of any type—

Mrs McKenzie—Then it could be.

CHAIR—If you did it across the board with a formula based on that, it would be up to the schools to determine where they allocated it. Whether it was SATs or embedded VET courses probably would not matter. That would probably still be a reasonably fair basis of allocation.

Mr PEARCE—So, out of the three, if you have to make a critical choice, in your experience which of the three styles of VET do you think should be emphasised? Which do you think delivers the best result?

Mrs McKenzie—Based on our statistics here, where we are quite supportive of all three, our completion rates in school based apprenticeships and traineeships are far in excess of what we are getting with our embedded courses.

Mr PEARCE—So it is SAT.

Mrs McKenzie—I think that if you look at those who complete it while at school and those who complete it after school, you see 48 per cent completion against 19 per cent completion.

Mr PEARCE—Also, I think there is maybe an argument that embedded VET is part of the normal school program, if you like, so it should not attract incremental, external type funding. Do you accept that there is an argument that it is part of the basic school curriculum and so, if there is going to be any incremental funding or external funding, it should predominantly be in the SAT area?

Mrs McKenzie—Again, I suppose it comes down to where, if it is being funded federally, the Commonwealth believes it is getting best value for money. In terms of the embedded side of things, it depends on what the peak employer groups et cetera are telling you about where they believe the best value for money comes from. As for the embedded component being just a part of the normal school day, yes, that is correct. However, there are some issues that we also have to deal with in a normal school day that do put constraints on us and on how well we can do the VET in an embedded fashion.

CHAIR—Since we have employers here, we might have to wrap up now rather than go through the rest of it. But you have given us an outline here. Is there any final poignant message you want to leave us with?

Mrs McKenzie—The point that I have indicated probably covers some of the key issues. In particular—I do not know whether anyone has raised this yet—be aware that the Austudy/youth allowance issue is a real concern for students who do not complete qualifications. When they try to go to another VET provider, a whole range of issues arises. One is that they suddenly become a part-time student because they have done half the qualification. The provider delivers the qualification all at once; the student, having done half the units, has done half the qualification and only goes for half the lessons and then automatically becomes not eligible for Austudy. That is a real issue for students exiting school.

Tied up with that is the issue James raised with you: the valuing by other RTOs of what is done at school. James indicated that it related to where he did not have a qualification. But that sometimes is a way of saying, ‘We are going to get you to do it again anyway,’ based on some of the valuing and those sorts of issues. They are just a couple of points, among the other things there that we have not had time to raise, which I think, from a student perspective, really need to be addressed.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. That has been very helpful. We would like to keep going, but we have some eager employers here who want to talk to us.

Proceedings suspended from 2.57 p.m. to 3.12 p.m.

APPLEBY, Mr Gary, Training Team Coordinator, Riviera Marine, Riviera Group

HILL, Mr Mathew, Head Chef, Robina Tavern

PARTRIDGE, Mrs Katie, Retail Traineeship Adviser, McDonald's Australia Ltd

McDONALD, Mrs Jeanette, Head of Department Senior Schooling, Robina State High School

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

CHAIR—Welcome. To get the ball rolling, I might ask you to give us your impressions of the strengths and weaknesses of VET in schools from your point of view as employers, and particularly where you think we can sharpen up our act, what areas particularly need addressing. It is probably asking a lot to do that in a couple of minutes, but if you could give us your impressions that would be helpful.

Mr Hill—Very briefly, the positives are many, and I do not need to go on at great length about those. There are the social benefits: the kids get a start and so on and so forth. There are a couple of what I regard as quite serious drawbacks, and in no particular order the first is the cost. Trainees cost disproportionately more than apprentices and the economic value to the organisation is not there. To give you an example of what I am talking about, my employer has two full-time apprentices and we have two school based trainees. One of my school based trainees has, as the school year turned over, turned over to a second year traineeship. He now costs me about 55 or 60 per cent more than the equivalent boy or girl on an apprenticeship. The problem with that from my point of view is that it is very hard to justify \$10 an hour to my employer for a trainee who does not have the same economic value as the apprentice who is there full time.

Mrs MAY—What is the difference?

Mr Hill—The difference is about \$3.50 an hour, and that is quite substantial for a small employer. As an organisation, we have a philosophical commitment to trying to do the right thing by the kids in our community, particularly here, because it is a very local community, but I am almost at the point now where I have to consider whether I can afford to keep this boy on. Even though he is very good, he works very hard and he is a terrific lad, the fact is that at the end of the day he does not represent the same value to me and my employer as a first year apprentice.

Mrs MAY—How many hours a week would he be working?

Mr Hill—On average, probably about 18. He does one day full-time, every Monday, and then this particular lad that I am talking about will always work a Friday night and probably a Sunday as well. It is a little bit unfair on the boy that I have to consider his future purely in terms of dollars and cents. But it is almost at the point where it makes more sense for me to put

on another apprentice or to turn one of my two trainees into a full-time apprentice rather than keep the two trainees on. That is a very significant factor for us.

CHAIR—Why is the cost higher?

Mr Hill—Because that is the award. I am not sure of the exact cents, but a second year trainee costs me basically \$10 an hour and a first year apprentice costs me about \$6 an hour. There is a substantial difference. It is unfair to expect the trainee to perform at any higher level than he does. He is doing very well. If you compare apples with apples, he is doing very well, but if you compare him with what I could get for my dollar if I go in another direction it is not such a good thing. I cannot speak for any other industry, I can only speak for my own, and I have been involved in the traineeship scheme for quite some time. I am very much in favour of it, but the economic argument is a real issue for me because obviously I have got constraints placed on me by my employer.

When I first became involved in this type of training I was working in Brisbane and all of my trainees were actually school based apprentices, so they were treated and paid as apprentices. Now most of them are trainees. The argument that has been put to me why it should be so is that, if a kid gets halfway through their apprenticeship and changes their mind, which they are entitled to do and I encourage people to do that, they walk away with nothing but the experience. However, if they do a traineeship and get halfway through it, they do have, for instance, a level I, a piece of paper. My answer to that is that I completely respect people's right to change their mind but, if you change your mind halfway through the race and you get nothing, nothing is actually what you are entitled to. I know that is a little bit hard but that is the way of the world. So there is economic drawback to traineeships.

I think that the training that my kids get is not necessarily industry relevant. There is a lot of superfluous stuff goes on. Once again I can only speak for hospitality, but a lot of what these kids are doing through TAFE and through school is not necessarily of any use to them at all in the workplace. For example, one of the units that they do is communicating on the telephone. Apart from the obvious observation that these kids are born with a mobile telephone attached to their hand, there is also the issue that that is something they can learn in five minutes at school. They do not need to go to class to learn how to talk on the telephone; they can watch and listen while I do it at work. That is how you conduct business. So a lot of the training is simply not relevant to what we are doing in the workplace.

The training is delivered in an inefficient manner. With no disrespect to the people involved in the process—it is obviously beyond their control—the training is often delivered in an inefficient manner. I will give you a quick example. Last Friday a lady from Group Training Australia came to see one of my apprentices. It involved her being away from the office, with travel time and sitting down with the lad, for probably two hours. With the cost of the vehicle and all the rest of it, it probably cost that organisation \$200 to spend one hour with a 16-year-old kid. It would be much more efficient to get 10 kids together. So what is happening is that the exposure that these kids get to training is diluted by virtue of the fact that they are doing one-on-one visitations, which is grossly inefficient and quite expensive. Rather than having the mountain coming to us, let us go to the mountain. That is relevant.

CHAIR—Would the rest of you like to comment on the comparison between traineeships and apprenticeships in that regard?

Mr Appleby—We have only one school based trainee and the balance are school based apprentices. Just as an insight, we have about 900 staff and, of those 900 staff, 174 are apprentices and of those 174, 44 are school based—and, as I said, we have one trainee. We have had quite the contrary. We have had a very good relationship with schools and a very good relationship with our trainer. Perhaps our size is part of the reason we have the power to negotiate our training. In fact, our training is all done on site, either by our own approved trainer or by TAFE delivering on site. We do not have the same problems. We have problems with our kids and how they progress from school, but the finance issue really is not a problem. To our point of view, the investment in the short term is worth it in the long term. Any inconvenience of having a person there for one day and paying a bit more for the output balances out better at the end of the day.

Ms Ward—In regard to wages for SATS as against apprentices, at the moment under the hospitality award you pay a base rate of \$5.15 for a first year apprentice chef and a base rate of \$7.38 for a year 12 SAT. You cannot pay a base rate on a school based traineeship; you must pay the loaded rate, so you are adding 20 per cent. That is where it becomes less economic for the employer, particularly small employers. One of the things that can alleviate that is the additional \$825 funding for school based trainees. That is in addition to the up to \$4,400 that you receive in Commonwealth funding at certificate III level.

The other thing that I would like address is the ineffectiveness of the training when you are only delivering training to one student. We have 60 school based trainees at Nara. We have partnered with Radisson Resort Gold Coast; they wanted to do 20, which would be four per day for them. We have organised a partnership arrangement where our training for our 16 trainees per day is done together and on our site by a registered training organisation. That happens to be us as well, which is lucky, but it may not always be that way. We have been trying to make our training time more effective.

We made the decision to pay our school based trainees while they were in training. Currently, that is not mandatory. You do not have to pay school based trainees for off-the-job training. You do have to pay normal trainees for off-the-job training; so there is some relief there from what you are paying school based trainees. If more employer groups can enter into partnership type arrangements for the sake of training, they will find that not only the training is more effective because kids generally will learn from each other and bounce off each other but also it will reduce the costs for registered training organisations.

As a registered training organisation, we currently do not charge the students for their training and nor do we charge the schools. We have been using SCISCO as a broker to seek potential trainees. If it becomes too onerous for the schools, I guess we will look at that as well. We have done that for ease. However, I know that some of the funding for that has already been reduced, and if it is not viable for the schools then, yes, we will deal directly with the schools. We want the smaller employers in particular to get together and get their school based trainees in on the same days so that we can cluster their training to make it more effective and more cost effective for them as well.

Mrs Partridge—I turn to the original point about apprentices. McDonald's do not take on apprentices, so I have no argument there. The only point I wanted to bring up today was that, as you probably know, McDonald's do it nationally. There is a lot of inconsistency between states with the training materials we deliver because we deliver them nationally. We have to account for each individual state and for some of the different things with school based trainees in different states. If it were more regimented across the whole nation, it would probably be a little bit better for us.

Also, there is the fact that I have people in Tweed Heads, which is in New South Wales, and people in Coolangatta, which is right next door in Queensland. The people who do it as a school based traineeship in New South Wales get it to go towards their higher school certificate, and it helps them to get an OP, as we call it in Queensland. Yet in Queensland there is no recognition of that. We are heading along those lines for certificate III. But with certificate II we feel that, in Queensland, a lot of them have a piece of paper at the end but do not have something to help them better their marks at school.

CHAIR—What about the issue of comparability of school based qualifications—VET in schools—compared to qualifications achieved through TAFE or other training organisations? Is that a problem for employers?

Mr Hill—Yes, it is to a certain extent. I can only speak for my own industry, but I prefer a TAFE trained apprentice to a school based apprentice. I think that one of the reasons for that is unavoidable. That is that a kid going to TAFE is doing it full time—whether it is in the workplace or at TAFE, it is basically total immersion—whereas at school it has been diluted by the necessity of other things. Having said that, it is not necessarily a bad thing. It is a good thing for the kids to be able to stay at school while they are doing their traineeships. The benefits outweigh the drawbacks. But, purely from the practical aspect of coalface experience, the TAFE training system is better.

I will just very quickly address the issue of the industry experience of the training officers, whether it is through a registered training organisation or through the schools. In my general experience—and I hasten to add that the people I deal with are all very dedicated, keen and so on—I am not overly thrilled with the level of industry experience that people have. Often that is outside their control. I have dealt with teachers and people in RTOs—not in the situation I am in at the moment, but previously—who have been qualified in a completely different area and have had no direct hospitality or kitchen experience. I think that is a problem as well.

CHAIR—Do others share that view?

Mr Appleby—We actually changed RTOs six months ago, from the traditional delivery of training to our local Gold Coast TAFE. They had no resources, but they came to us with a promising commitment, so we changed to them. I think that is right. In a lot of cases I guess we have a very staid and traditional teaching facility in TAFE. That has changed rapidly over the years, but certainly if you are not happy with your RTO you shop around and find someone else who is better. We have found that that is something that needs to happen.

Mrs MAY—Gary, your young people are all full-time apprentices, are they?

Mr Appleby—No. We have 44 school based apprentices. They are year 12 students at the moment.

Mrs MAY—They are still at school and coming out to you—

Mr Appleby—They come out to us one day a week. They have half-day training for half the school holidays as well.

Mrs MAY—Is that training done out at Riviera?

Mr Appleby—Our training is now done on site. Gold Coast TAFE delivers it. We have also stolen a teacher from Helensvale State High School, who is workplace accredited and who has been delivering training to our school based apprentices for the last three years. He is now full time with us and doing that training on the job with the apprentices.

Mrs MAY—So he is employed by Riviera?

Mr Appleby—He is employed by Riviera under a contract and a partnership agreement under the 2002 training act with TAFE. They pay for the training; we just do the work.

Mrs MAY—Those young people are still at school doing school based traineeships. Do you have any figures or outcomes for those young people going through and staying with Riviera—continuing on after they have left school?

Mr Appleby—Yes. At the moment our retention rate is over 90 per cent. Normally we lose one or two apprentices; that is about it. By the time the students have done work experience in year 11 and signed contracts, we find that they have made up their mind whether boat building is swaying palm trees, hula girls or real work and are away and running. We have found it so much better. Every year now, we try to take on 100 per cent of school based apprentices. It does not happen because we still get kids from interstate who come to work with us and also have to be given some breaks by us. The success rate is too high for us not to go that way.

Mrs MAY—Where are you sourcing them from, all over the coast?

Mr Appleby—We have 22 schools. The furthest north is Manly State High School in South Brisbane and the furthest south is Tweed River State High School in New South Wales.

Mrs MAY—Are you using SCISCO and GTA for that?

Mr Appleby—We do not use any group training organisations. We work with SCISCO, but we actually deal directly with the schools. We recruit directly from the schools rather than through SCISCO.

Mrs MAY—Do you get involved in, say, a presentation evening?

Mr Appleby—Absolutely. For me, it is now a full-time marketing job. To recruit year 11 students into the program with a close-off date of August, I start doing the rounds next month, May.

Mrs MAY—For next year into the program?

Mr Appleby—Yes. We will take 50 next year.

CHAIR—So, for you, school based apprentices are a better source of employees than students coming in cold after school?

Mr Appleby—Absolutely, yes. By the time they leave year 12 and turn full-time employees, they are as good on the floor as a second year apprentice, and we are only paying them first year rates for another six months. They know they want to be there. They are up and running; they are confident; they present well; and, as a general rule, they are articulate. They are fabulous young men and ladies.

Mrs MAY—What is the range of trades they are doing?

Mr Appleby—Eight trades, from electrical engineering through to boat building, composite technicians, timber finishing, upholstery et cetera.

Mrs MAY—The Riviera is a very successful company.

Mr Appleby—It has been a success story for us. There are some ups and downs with it. One problem is trying to get private schools as involved as state schools are. I am not knocking the private schools, but they tend to be more academically oriented. We have had kids leave private schools and go to state schools in order to come and work with us because those schools will not take on a school based apprentice, which I think is a real tragedy. They are losing some of their best kids and losing the parents as well—and they are probably losing other clients as well because those parents tell other parents about the whole situation.

I take the view that schools need support to get vocational education coordinators into them. That is a funding issue. I do not know whether that is federal or state; I think some of it is federal and some is state. But Merrimac State High School, which is one of our best schools, does not have a fully paid full-time workplace coordinator. She does a fabulous job in her spare time and deserves a medal for it, but she would be a lot better off if she could dedicate her time fully to the process. Some schools do have them; a lot of schools are not able to have them because of the funding.

CHAIR—How about Sea World and McDonald's, in terms of this comparability of standards?

Mrs Partridge—I am sorry; you are asking about comparability of—

CHAIR—Standards, unless there is something else; but that is where we were going.

Mrs MAY—And, with McDonald's, retention too. Do they stay or are they using you as a stepping stone?

Mrs Partridge—Yes, unfortunately. I was just discussing that with my colleagues. We lose them. They do certificate II with us and then do certificate III with these guys. But that is

McDonald's all round; that is not just traineeships. We develop a lot of people who unfortunately leave. We have a very steep pyramid and we have some drop-offs, but we do like to think that we train them well—apparently these guys pick them if they have worked for McDonald's.

You mentioned one point that I thought was very valid. In relation to private schools; I think it very much depends on the individual school. I would not say it is necessarily private schools versus state schools. State schools are fantastic; we get very good responses from state schools with traineeships. Some private schools do and some do not. In response to what you said, they are very academically minded and that is probably a good thing. But sometimes I feel that key people might be missing out. Particularly with McDonald's, as you can imagine, some people in private schools do not hold McDonald's in the highest regard. So maybe they are missing out; I do not know. But you are saying that it is the same for a boat building company as well.

Mrs MAY—Do you have trainee managers and that sort of thing?

Mrs Partridge—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Is there a program with McDonald's?

Mrs Partridge—Yes, we do certificate IV—they work towards certificate IV. That is not funded—

Mrs MAY—So there is a pathway to climb through the organisation?

Mrs Partridge—Yes, definitely. Unfortunately, with a store of approximately 40 to 50 crew members, you will have five managers and, as you can imagine, there is a very steep drop-off rate. In McDonald's, we go up to advanced diploma. We are only funded for certificate II and certificate III, but we go all the way to advanced diploma. There is definitely a career path for people in McDonald's. But you have to understand as well—I do not know whether you are aware of this—that 80 per cent of our restaurants are franchised.

Mrs MAY—So they are individually owned.

Mrs Partridge—Yes. Even though I suppose I am here representing the RTO side of things, I can also speak for some employers. With McDonald's there is not just the one employer but many different employers.

CHAIR—I will return to the apprenticeship/traineeship issue that Matt raised. If taking on an apprentice rather than a trainee represents such an advantage for you as an employer, why don't you take on more school based apprentices? Is it just that the schools want to push traineeships rather than apprenticeships?

Mr Hill—I deal primarily through Group Training Australia on the Gold Coast and I would give them a huge wrap: they are terrific and I get very good attention. But the information I get from them is that this is a school based initiative to emphasise traineeships as opposed to apprenticeships. The reasoning that has been given to me is the business about the drop-out: if kids drop out of an apprenticeship, they get nothing; if they do half a traineeship they get level I

and that gives them something to take on into other areas. The argument does not work for me; people are entitled to change their mind but, if they change their mind, they are not actually entitled to anything. I know that is a bit harsh but that is how it is.

The push against apprenticeships, from the information that I have, is very definitely coming from the schools. It is certainly not coming from the employer; it is certainly not coming from me. One of the problems that I see with a traineeship as opposed to an apprenticeship is that there is a cultural difference in the way people think about traineeships as opposed to apprenticeships. My personal view is that we would be better off emphasising to these kids the value of an apprenticeship. I know that it is a four-year commitment and so on, but all of us make commitments every day of our life. That is nothing new.

CHAIR—Jeanette or Lyn, would you care to comment on that from the school's point of view?

Mrs McDonald—About it coming from the schools?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mrs McDonald—No. I think that is probably something that that company has developed itself.

CHAIR—The group training company?

Mrs McDonald—Yes. From our point of view, I am pushing certificate IIIs which are more at that apprenticeship level, whether they are considered a traineeship with McDonald's, Sea World or whatever it is, because they are the ones that actually count at the moment in our system. As Katie raised before, in Queensland a certificate II does not really count towards anything. It can appear on a senior certificate, but it does not count towards anything really. But a certificate III does count towards something, and I actually push certificate III. In our system it works because we have a flexible timetable approach; other schools may not have that option. I think it is just the group training organisation that has said that; it is not coming from the schools at all, as far as I am aware.

Mr Hill—That is right; I am definitely getting that problem.

Mr Appleby—I agree that there seems to be an undercurrent of traineeships in preference to apprenticeships when there is an apprenticeship outcome for that particular trade. When I have organised with companies to take on a school based apprentice—I do that quite a bit and go through the whole processes—it distresses me when such companies are then convinced by other people to take the child on as a trainee and then, if he is any good, change him over to an apprentice at the end of year 12. Personally, that sucks, for want of a better term. If you are going to take on and train a kid, why not take them on as an apprentice from the start? There is better money in it. Stand your ground; tell Group Training that you want an apprentice and not a trainee. Sometimes that is where it is coming from. It certainly is not coming from the schools, in my opinion.

Ms Ward—I think one of the issues for employers with regard to traineeships as opposed to apprenticeships is that the employer incentives are currently paid after three months. There is a midway point and a completion point. If an employer employs a trainee, they are going to be able to receive that full funding within a shorter amount of time than they will with an apprentice. That is what it probably comes down to for the majority of employers. Even though apprenticeships are competency based as well, with a chef's apprenticeship in hospitality you would still be looking at a minimum of two years to complete the three blocks of training because of the intensive mode and rigorous assessment within those training packages. You put a student into a certificate III in retail, hospitality or tourism and, because they are also getting some underpinning knowledge at school, you can assess them and move through it at a brisker rate. So the employer will receive their full incentive—and sometimes that incentive will completely match what they have paid the trainee in wages, so they have a cost-neutral situation—whereas they are not going to have that with an apprenticeship. That is probably why it is not as attractive.

CHAIR—So that should counterbalance the issue of the wage differential, then: the differential between the apprenticeship rate and the traineeship rate. I suppose it varies from industry to industry, does it?

Ms Ward—It is still probably going to end up dearer for the employer to employ an apprentice rather than a trainee because they will have them for a longer period of time.

Mr Hill—All of that is quite true, but it is only true for employers who take on the apprentice or trainee themselves. My employer is not in a position to sign these kids up ourselves because of the shifting market, so we get ours through Group Training. That argument is redundant in my situation, although it is an important point for you. It is a redundant issue for me because GTA get the financial benefit. It is obvious that they have to pay—

CHAIR—Is that maybe why they are pushing traineeships?

Mr Hill—That is something I had not considered, because I did not know it until 10 seconds ago. That is entirely possible; yes. But for us it is not an issue at this point. It is good information; now I will go back and talk to these people.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Get them to come and talk to you.

CHAIR—That is very interesting, Gary.

Mr Appleby—I just want to go back a step and talk about private and state schools. I do not want to sound like I am being unfair. Maybe I did bag private schools hard. As I said, this year we have 22 schools; 16 of those are state and six are private, so we do have a fair proportion. Going outside Queensland, I heard the other day when I was talking to an organisation down in Victoria that the Catholic schools are really behind school based apprenticeships down there and that the state schools are dragging their feet. So I guess it just depends on the movers and shakers a little bit. It is the personnel issues more than anything else.

One of the other things that concerns us as an employer is that, if we get a school based apprentice who has done, say, a certificate III course in hospitality and comes on full time, he or

she then becomes a burden to us because he or she has used up his or her allocation of funding and is not able to get any more funding to become an apprentice or trainee. Maybe the school based process needs to be looked at from the funding point of view of a person who has achieved outcomes as a school based trainee and is now looking at it as a career change at the end of school. At the moment they have, effectively, missed the bus. I am not 100 per cent sure how they are going. Possibly you could help me on that one, too. I am passing the buck. Is that right?

Ms Ward—Not completely.

CHAIR—I think that is in the process of being changed.

Ms Ward—Yes. At the moment, if they are doing it in an industry which is completely different—like yours and mine—they will still be eligible for incentive funding. Education Queensland, with the new white paper, is pushing for certificate III to go towards the senior certificate so that they finish school with either a senior certificate or a certificate III at AQTF. Unfortunately, though, what has also occurred and will greatly affect the schools in being able to implement this process is that some of the major school based traineeships taken at level III, particularly hospitality, tourism and child care—child care was one of those that were pushed this morning—have lost state funding for the training organisations at level III. That will probably cause a problem for schools in the very near future—by June. That is another issue whereby the schools, if they want them to be able to complete at certificate III level, will have to look at some funding issues themselves as well.

Mr Appleby—A while ago we talked about kids who do not achieve an outcome at the end of year 12 not having anything. Occasionally we do have a kid who completes the school based component and then decides that it is not what he wants to do as a full-time job and moves on. Most of our apprenticeships are competency based and, at the end of year 12, all the competencies they have achieved throughout the year do go on the year 12 certificate, so they do not walk away with nothing. They still have those competencies on the year 12 certificate and they are listed through the TAFE system and can link to further education and training.

CHAIR—So, even though it is not certificate I or certificate II, the competencies are still there and when they do another TAFE course they would get credit for those?

Mr Appleby—Absolutely. The RPL process comes in and they get recognised for that. So they are not totally disadvantaged.

Ms Ward—It is the same if a kid starts a chef's apprenticeship and then decides halfway through it, 'No, this isn't really for me.' It is not that they walk away with nothing; they walk away with a statement of attainment for all the competencies that are completed, and then they can be either RPLed within hospitality or cross-credited within some other industry. So it is not really a case of them walking away with nothing.

CHAIR—So there is some benefit. Any final comments?

Mr Appleby—Do you want me to address literacy and numeracy?

Mrs MAY—No thanks.

Mrs Partridge—Overall, school based traineeships are fantastic. They work really well within our organisation. We employ a lot of young people, as you probably know, and they work very well within our system. We have some very good relationships with the public schools and some of the private schools, and I think it gives a lot of people an opportunity. As I said before, some schools do not see it as an opportunity; they do not see the value of putting someone in the workplace as opposed to just learning things in the classroom—going out and learning it in the environment when you are still young. In high schools you have to pick your subjects earlier and earlier these days, and going out and getting that experience is fantastic for us and fantastic for the kids. Even if we do not keep them on in our organisation, which unfortunately we do not—I am not saying we do not keep them on, full stop; we do keep a lot of them—it gives them a very good basis if they are not going to go to university, and maybe if they are going to university too. I think that some university students could have some workplace competencies that would do them good as well. Overall, it is a fantastic scheme.

Mr Appleby—I endorse that. That is why we are going with school based apprenticeships as much as we can. It has been so successful for us that we would not go back for love or money at the moment.

Mr Hill—I endorse what these folks have said. I am a big fan of the scheme; I think it is terrific both socially and economically. We are getting kids at the end of grade 12 who are ready to step into the workplace and be of economic value right from day one. That is very important because, at the end of the day, I still have to pay the bills for my boss; otherwise we do not have a job—it is as simple as that.

I want to emphasise that the two schools that I draw from, Robina and Nerang high schools, although I do not deal with them directly—I tend to deal through Group Training—appear to be making a genuine effort to do the right thing by these kids, and that is terrific. They seem to be very flexible in terms of fitting in with my roster at work and adjusting the kids' timetable at school. I appreciate that because it allows me to keep trainees on. So there is a lot more good about the idea than there is bad. The issues that we have addressed today are serious and need to be addressed, but overall the scheme is terrific and we should encourage it. I hope something comes of this process that we are involved in here.

I would take on another trainee tomorrow—and I mean that in a literal sense—if it were not for the things that I have discussed about the cost. I have room in my kitchen at the moment on my timetable for another school based trainee but I cannot justify it at the moment on the basis of having to pay a grade 12 kid \$10 an hour, because they do not have the economic value to the organisation and at the end of the day, as I said, we still have to pay the bills. But there is a lot more that is good than negative.

CHAIR—Maybe an apprentice is the way to go.

Mr Hill—I will be going and talking to them.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. That has been very helpful. We appreciate your input. And thanks for the opportunities you are giving our young people. You are all doing a great job there. Keep it up.

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

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

Committee adjourned at 3.51 p.m.