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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Vocational education in schools

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Thursday, 26 June 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, Ms Gambaro, Mrs May, Mr Pearce, Mr Sawford and Mr Sidebottom

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

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

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

WITNESSES

Committee met at 9.09 a.m.

GREER, Mr Tony, Group Manager, Schools Group, Department of Education, Science and Training

WALTERS, Mr Colin, Group Manager, Vocational Education and Training Group, Department of Education, Science and Training

WHITTLESTON, Ms Shelagh, Branch Manager, Enterprise and Career Education Branch, Schools Group, Department of Education, Science and Training

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training inquiry into vocational education in schools. I welcome representatives from the Department of Education, Science and Training. Thank you for joining us today. We certainly appreciate your submission and your time again this morning. I remind you that today's proceedings are considered proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect. We prefer that evidence is taken in public, but if at any stage you would like to give evidence in private please let us know. I invite each of you to make some introductory comments about the issues that you think are pertinent to the inquiry and then we will proceed to questioning.

Mr Greer—On behalf of the team, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. As you know, the department put in a submission to the inquiry in October last year, in which we outlined the key features of Commonwealth work in relation to vocational education in schools. We also appeared before the committee in a private hearing in December 2002 and provided the committee with some additional information relevant to the inquiry's terms of reference.

There have been a number of developments since then, and I would like to briefly outline developments with a number of DEST's initiatives in enterprise and vocational learning. I would also like to table copies of some DEST reports which may be of particular interest to the inquiry. One of those reports is a report recently finalised on the cost of VET in Schools. The Commonwealth has recently completed a project to investigate the cost elements of VET in Schools. The report from that project has now been circulated to education and training ministers and we have copies here today for the committee.

The project involved the collection of data and information on a nationally consistent basis, with much of the information being collected directly from schools. The national VET in Schools cost model was developed from survey responses across schools and non-school organisations to show the national average cost of delivering VET in Schools. The primary model developed in the project assumes 38 hours of regulated teaching time per week, which is based on Victoria and is the highest number for all jurisdictions. We have also developed an alternate model based on an assumption of 32 hours teaching time a week, which is the jurisdictional average. Based on the model, it was found that the average cost of delivery, at the national level, per student hour is around $6.91 per hour. This figure includes direct costs incurred at the school level, which comprise about $5.60 of that element, and for the delivery and assessment of non-school organisation costs. Under the alternate model, which is premised on 32 hours, the national average cost of delivery was about $7.72 per student hour. The direct

school cost and the non-school organisation costs are estimated to be in the order of $227 million to $247 million. That is, using that model, when you look at the student hours involved in VET in Schools across all jurisdictions, that would suggest in the order of $227 million to $247 million of general recurrent funding that jurisdictions are putting into this exercise.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Is that the 32-hour model?

Mr Greer—Yes. I think the 38-hour model was extrapolated to $227 million and if you used the 32-hour model it was $247 million.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Right.

Mr Greer—That is on the basis that, in 2002, there were something like 37,373,000 student contact hours involved in VET in Schools, but we can come back and dig into that a bit deeper. As I say, this should be a rich source for you.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Thank you.

Mr Greer—The report also provides a snapshot of VET in Schools and a detailed overview of delivery of VET in Schools programs in each of the jurisdictions. So it is not just the model in the report that you might find particularly interesting; it is the recent snapshot of each of the delivery methods and what is happening in relation to those methods in the jurisdictions. The model we put forward was not a funding model per se, but it is indicative of the costs that are involved.

Turning to enterprise education, the Commonwealth has work under way to support the establishment and maintenance of enterprise education in Australian schools. A major action learning research project is currently in progress to assist about 192 schools to review, analyse and document models of innovation and best practice in enterprise education. Some preliminary findings from phase 1 of that review—which runs over a couple of years—have been documented. The Commonwealth minister recently launched that document and it is available for the committee's information.

Similarly, in the broader context of our transition programs, the Commonwealth took a budget decision in the recent budget to bring the functions of the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation closer to other Commonwealth transition initiatives. The Commonwealth's view was that this will enable a more streamlined approach to the Commonwealth's effort to support young people in their transition through school, and from school to work. We are happy to give the committee an update on how that transition is moving. There are other elements but rather than take the committee's time up now, they may be teased out in questioning.

CHAIR—Thank you. Tony, just following on from the study of the cost of VET, how do those figures of $6.91 and $7.72 for those models compare with the cost of general education?

Mr Greer—I do not think that level of costing has been identified in the general schools area at this stage. There is certainly collaborative work being undertaken through the MCEETYA task force mechanism. The schools resourcing task force has a remit from education ministers to do a major research project which is trying to identify what the costs are—and what the cost drivers

are—of delivering general education. Ministers at the forthcoming MCEETYA meeting on 10 and 11 July will be receiving the first report from that committee and noting work to date. Ministers are also being asked to endorse the next stage of that exercise, which will be going beyond the base and looking at what the marginal cost drivers are—and what the costs of those are—running through a range of issues. One of those issues would be VET in Schools. Ministers will then expect, if they agree with the resolutions before them, that the schools resourcing task force—a task force driven out of New South Wales—will be reporting back to MCEETYA in 2004 on what the outcome of that exercise is at this stage.

CHAIR—It would seem to me that that is a critical issue. Intuitively, we would think the cost of VET in Schools is greater than the cost of general education and if we could get a fairly clear indication of the marginal cost increase, it would obviously have implications for Commonwealth and state funding. Again, on those figures, do we have any idea of the relative cost of VET in Schools with the cost of offering similar courses through the TAFE system?

Mr Greer—My understanding—and Mr Walters may be able to correct this—is that in 2001, the published figures by ANTA for the average cost of a student contact hour was about $12.67.

Mr Walters—I think we could take it on notice, as I said, if there is anything more recent. But if I could just offer a slight word of warning: when you look at the cost of vocational education and come up with a single figure, it is like offering a single figure for the temperature in Australia. It is like taking the average of Darwin and Hobart. The reason for that is that you have got such a wide range of different kinds of provisions and some of them are inherently a great deal more expensive in terms of overheads.

Some forms of VET, including VET in Schools, can be taught virtually in a classroom situation—management studies, for example—whereas others require a great deal of equipment. Safety considerations come into play and class sizes have to be smaller. While I support what Mr Greer has just said, we will see if there is anything more recent. I will just offer that word of caution because the mix of courses that are delivered through the schools system is quite different from what is often delivered through the VET system, and that itself will vary from one TAFE to another and from one kind of provider to another.

CHAIR—The issue of the interaction overlap between VET in Schools and TAFE is an issue that has come up a number of times in submissions and it is an issue that we have discussed amongst ourselves. It would seem to me that it is a fairly fundamental question in terms of the direction that we ought to be going: do we put a whole lot more resources into VET in Schools; are there areas where those courses could be offered more effectively in TAFE? I think, Colin, you have hit the nail on the head in terms of the different courses. Would it be your view that there are areas with duplication, where schools are offering courses that could more effectively be offered in the TAFE situation? Is there a degree of consistency between states in that regard or is every state different, depending on the effectiveness of their TAFE system, for instance?

Mr Greer—There is no doubt that in some jurisdictions some VET in Schools is done expressly in TAFE. My understanding from some unpublished data that will be going to MCEETYA in a couple of weeks or so is that, of the 185,000 students who participated in VET in Schools in 2002, 16,991 were specifically doing their VET in Schools while they were enrolled at TAFE. That is not to say that, in the models of delivery that schools may use, they

may enter into partnership arrangements with TAFE and use TAFE to do the other. But, if you look at the data going to ministers, it will indicate that predominantly that is a feature where TAFE is doing it expressly in New South Wales. About 16,800 of the 64,000 students in New South Wales are predominantly enrolled in VET in Schools programs in TAFE. There are less than a couple of hundred, or a few over a hundred, in Victoria. It is about 26 per cent in New South Wales.

CHAIR—Can I rephrase that a bit. Is it your view that there could be cost savings and more effective delivery in some instances by TAFE running courses rather than schools duplicating what is already happening in TAFE?

Mr Greer—I think jurisdictions are demonstrating that by the options they look at in how they prefer to arrange for the delivery of VET within their jurisdictions. That is well teased out in this report. I think what this report says is that the average cost of set-up, for instance, of a VET in Schools program—and there are some assumptions under that: the setting up to engage; running nine course offerings et cetera—is about $340,000, but that ranges from the low end of that to something over $1 million. Clearly, where the course might be in a more traditional type of area and the infrastructure is already in the local TAFE institute, it makes much sense, I would have thought, for the school and the local TAFE to look at perhaps the preferred delivery mechanism in that location. It may well be some form of auspice or partnership approach. Depending on the type of course to be delivered, it may make more sense to do it just as a school, as an RTO in its own right. It is a matter of choice and there are multiple opportunities for that.

CHAIR—There are a number of barriers—and it does vary from state to state—but one barrier to non-government schools accessing TAFE in some states is the charge that their students have to pay to access courses at TAFE. There is a degree of variation between the states on this. The argument put by the public sector at times is that, if there were no charge at TAFE, it would be an effective way for non-government schools to access their VET programs at the cost of taxpayers. Do you have a view on the most equitable way to address that issue in a way that removes the disincentive for students to access those courses through the TAFE sector?

Mr Walters—To go back to what Mr Greer was saying, you will gather that we have a highly decentralised system. There is the MCEETYA framework on the delivery of VET in Schools but, apart from that, there is enormous variation between the states and within the states at local level. That comes down to delivery and to charging systems. That has advantages and disadvantages. Some countries have a very prescriptive centralised system; we let a thousand flowers bloom and that has the advantage of allowing a lot of experimentation.

CHAIR—Do you think that that is desirable—that there are a thousand different flowers blooming?

Mr Walters—If we tried to run it all from Canberra, I know very well what view people out there would take. They would take the view that we were stifling initiative and preventing people from experimenting and coming up with lots of different patterns. If you take a step back in terms of the VET system overall and bear in mind that of the teenaged age group—my calculations are very rough and ready—about 41 per cent who are doing VET are doing VET in Schools, about 24 per cent are doing New Apprenticeships, and about 35 per cent are doing other

forms of VET. That is taking different collections and putting them together and they do not quite add up, but it gives you a rough order of magnitude.

There are a lot of different pathways there. What we have sought to promote in recent years is a variety of different pathways because there is no single thing that works for every young person. It has been done through talent and initiative at the local level, and I think that is a very good thing. The very first question you asked was about which way you should go. I am not sure there is a single answer to that. I think it is a question of pushing the system along the most productive lines.

Charging systems are very much a matter for state governments. You saw in the media yesterday that one jurisdiction has chosen to raise TAFE fees by a very considerable margin and there has been quite a controversy sparked about that. The Commonwealth has no control over that, and the charging system is the beginning of the debate within the processes which lead up to the ANTA ministerial council on the appropriate levers in terms of who pays for what. Certainly, this is a matter for the states at the moment and I am not sure we are in a position to have a view.

CHAIR—There are implications for the Commonwealth, though—for instance, in states such as New South Wales, where non-government school students are charged for access to TAFE, whereas government school students accessing TAFE courses are charged at a much lower rate or are not charged a fee where their course is part of the VET in Schools program. If students from non-government schools are accessing increasingly expensive TAFE courses as part of VET and we are partially funding non-government school students, there are implications for us, aren't there?

Mr Walters—There are, but I would urge you to see that this is a subset of a bigger issue: who gets charged for what in the TAFE system? This is a very variable thing between the different states. Certainly, one of the issues for the Commonwealth at the moment that we are seeing throughout VET system is some jurisdictions increasing charges and restricting state government subsidies and the availability of competitive mechanisms, such as user choice. This does seem quite likely to drive down demand across the VET system as a whole at a time when some of the states are arguing that demand is rising. One would certainly see that increases on the scale announced yesterday by one of the jurisdictions are likely to drive down demand. In respect of the specific issue you are looking at, differential charging systems between state and non-state schools, I think you need to look at that also in the light of the funding systems for the two kinds of schools. The charging system is only one aspect of quite a complex financial relationship.

Mr Greer—I would like to add to that. I think it is probably symptomatic of a requirement for greater national consistency across a range of areas. In Commonwealth dealings with states and territories, that is how you tend to do that: by setting up frameworks and using those frameworks to deliver greater national consistency. Fees might be one area of that.

Mr SAWFORD—Thank you, Tony, Shelagh and Colin, for your contributions so far this morning. I have been on every inquiry of this committee since 1989 and I have to say that, halfway through—and I am sure that this is true for many of my colleagues here—you always get a sense of the direction you ought to be going, although you might amend it as you go along.

But in this case I have no idea what the direction is. It seems to me that the information that has been presented to us is full of contradictions and dilemmas. Some of those dilemmas are affected by history in the sense that technical training in Australia seems to have had an impetus in terms of national crises. It had impetus in the depression of 1890—you can even go back to the drought of 1840 maybe—and in the depression in the thirties and in both world wars.

There has only been one time in the history of training in this country where vocational training has had an impetus because of its intrinsic worth, and that was in the seventies. The TAFE people often refer to that as the golden years of TAFE. Yet throughout all of that time, it has fluctuated. If we cannot state the purpose, the rationale, of our inquiry right, then we will not get anything right. The same goes for you people: if you do not get your direction, your rationale, right, then the process and all the outcomes will not be right either. There seem to be a number of classic dilemmas. I will go through these dilemmas and get you to comment on them. I have about six of these dilemmas that I want to put to you.

Mr Walters—I would like to offer a comment on what you have just said, because I think it was very interesting. If it is said that the 1970s were the golden age for TAFE, then it is worth bearing in mind something that former Prime Minister Keating said. I was reading Don Watson's book recently about the Keating prime ministership and he makes point that, when the Working Nation statement was being prepared, Former Prime Minister Keating said that the vocational education and training system was the broken reed of Australian education. That was sometime after the so-called golden era. Around the early nineties we saw the creation of the National Training Authority, a substantial increase in Commonwealth funding for vocational education and training, and the inauguration of the training package system. Slightly after that we saw the new apprenticeship system, and vocational education in schools was promoted as a major program from the mid-nineties. In terms of participation rates, since the early nineties there has been something like a 78 per cent increase in vocational education and training, to the point where we now have about 1.7 million people every year participating in some form of vocational education and training. That is 13 per cent of the working age population. We have seen an increase of about 40 per cent since the mid-nineties.

In terms of new apprenticeships, the increase has been something like 150 to 200 per cent—I have lost track—to the point where we now have 391,000. There is something inevitable about a graph that is rising like that, but I was looking recently at the corresponding statistics for England and they show that during the nineties there was a period where, through most of those years, they were going backwards and the numbers were coming down. So we have achieved something over the last decade, and it has not been necessarily related to any of the shocks to the economic system which you have mentioned; it has actually been the result of a sustained policy impetus by the Commonwealth and states in terms of growing this particular sector. So I would like to suggest that it is a slightly more optimistic scenario than you have suggested.

Also, in terms of overall strategies, it is worth bearing in mind that, while there has been a lot of focus on VET in Schools and the development of a framework in MCEETYA, in terms of overall vocational education and training we have a national strategy that has been developed by the National Training Authority as a result of extensive consultations around the country. I think they had 35 different sessions around the country. That was signed off on by the ANTA Ministerial Council in June, so we now have a national strategy that has been agreed by the

Commonwealth and all the state and territory ministers. That is due to be launched, in association with the ministerial council, in November. So I think there is a strategy.

Mr SAWFORD—I will come back to that, because basically there is some contradictory information in terms of what you have given there as well. When we went to New South Wales—and New South Wales is often regarded as 'a leader' in VET training in schools—we were given figures that say, 30 years after Karmel, they have struggled to get 30 per cent of students with access to accredited VET training in schools. The graphs might be going up, but they are coming from almost flatlines over the previous 20 years.

Mr Walters—If you look at VET in Schools as part of the overall VET provision—which is what it is—then around the early nineties you were looking at about a million people participating every year. It is now 1.7 million—

Mr SAWFORD—In accredited training?

Mr Walters—These are all forms of vocational education and training.

Mr SAWFORD—But it is not accredited training, is it?

Mr Walters—But there is a substantial move towards accredited training, to the point where we now have training packages that cover something like 80 per cent of occupations. There have been significant strides in that direction.

Mr SAWFORD—We can agree to disagree. I accept what you say about the nineties, but it came from 20 years of flatlining. I make that point as well. Technical training has always seemed to have two things pushing it: the needs of industry and the needs of individual students. What is your response to that? Can you have both?

Mr Greer—Yes, I think you can. This issue is, I think, well captured. That is why I referred to the report that is now available—not just to the costing model but to the snapshot and some of the unpacking. In looking at the development of VET in Schools, it is saying that VET in Schools serves a wide range of purposes, not just skills formation. Certainly, some programs operate primarily to enhance skill development in a way that is consistent with the VET sector and closely tied to national recognised training packages. Other courses attempt to meet students' expectations for broad vocational experience and familiarity with workplace skills that have broad applicability and relevance that students find interesting. Others address students who may be at risk of disengaging and leaving school early. In a sense, from a school's perspective this report is saying that there are different drivers: skills formation, vocational experience and retention.

The report then goes on to tease out some of the stakeholders' expectations of VET in Schools. In that sense, it looks at state and territory governments and argues that state and territory governments refer primarily to VET in Schools in the context of achieving their respective educational policy objectives—that is, contributing to increased retention and school completion. School sectors introduce VET in Schools with a view to providing a broad curriculum that will assist in keeping students engaged in education. Certainly, the industry and training sectors value the objectives of VET in Schools more in relation to enhancing work force readiness and

addressing emerging skill needs and so forth. Students may have a different perspective. Their objectives could include gaining work based experience, looking at enhancing future employment opportunities, exploring different approaches to learning and assessment, and personal interest. So there is a multiplicity of drivers and expectations from stakeholders and participants.

Mr SAWFORD—How do you reconcile that in terms of the real world that these young people face? We can go back and use the same decade that Colin used. Ninety per cent of the jobs out there are under $25,000 a year, part time and low skill. How do you reconcile that dilemma? The first statement in your executive summary—which I totally agree with—says:

Australia's future rests on the skills and capabilities of its people.

That implies a high-wage, high-skill intent, and that is not the reality of the last 13 years.

Mr Walters—I was looking at a very interesting report—I do not know if the committee has come across it yet—that was done by Professor Kaye Schofield for the South Australian government about a month ago.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Mr Walters—She makes the point that something like 90 per cent of job creation over the last decade in South Australia has been in the service industries basically. It has been in business services, hospitality and areas like that. There is a view that a lot of these industries are low skilled, but I have to tell you that it is not a view that comes from the people who are growing those industries. If you were to talk, for example, to Mr Bill Galvin, who runs the Tourism Training ITAB, he will tell you that tourism has been a major engine for growth around much of the country and has provided a lot of jobs and a lot of opportunities. He told me a couple of days ago that, despite SARS, it has actually bounced back remarkably quickly and is doing very well again. The idea that it is a low-skill occupation is something he would contest very strongly, and he would tell you that a lot of that growth has been the result of putting a lot of attention into hospitality.

One of the things you need to do with tourism is to get people to come to Australia not once but twice or more, because it is a long way from most places and it is a big effort. You have to give them a very good experience. We have to have hotels and restaurants where they get a marvellous experience and good service. That does not depend on four walls and a kitchen; it depends on the people. It depends on their skills and their abilities to service the customer well. One of the things you will recall from the Olympic Games experience is that people went away and everybody said, 'They are very friendly, they give marvellous service, it is a great place to come and you have a good experience.' That is what you need to do. Around that, and around retailing, all of these things actually require a great deal more skill than is commonly thought. The view that the service industries are low-skill occupations is one you will often hear from some of the more traditional sides of industry. It is hotly contested by the service industries.

Mr SAWFORD—But it is still low wage.

Mr Walters—Not necessarily. One of the points that the retailers—

Mr SAWFORD—Well, it is. It is no good contesting the figures. Over 90 per cent of the jobs created in the 1990s are part-time, insecure and have low wages. That is the reality.

Mr Walters—That is where you start, but what the retail industry tell us, for example, is that they are short of young people that actually want to make a career. A lot of people will go into the retail industry for a first job, but not so many of them actually want to make a career in it. But you can do very, very well. One of the points that some of the traditional trades make to us now, in terms of trying to get young people to go into the traditional trade areas, is that young people can go into retailing instantly and earn more than they can for a four-year apprenticeship in a traditional trade. So it is all relative.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not particularly want to go down this track, because I have two more questions. I deal with young people all the time and I can tell you that the big retail companies in my state do not offer a great deal of management training. They probably need it, but they do not offer it. That is the reality. But I do not want to go down that track, because I am taking up too much time. There are two other things I want to put forward. One is: vocational training is not on the public agenda. It is not high up there, in my view.

Mr Greer—Vocational training in schools, or vocational training?

Mr SAWFORD—Both. It is not there, and it has only been there historically in those times that I have said: either in times of national crisis or in the seventies, the only intrinsic-value time. I disagree with Colin. The other thing that confuses me is the propaganda that is often used by people who work in VET and TAFE about this theme of integration. You see in the writings, particularly since the Karmel report of 1973, this theme of integration, which in my view diminishes, closes, conforms and is not particularly useful. What is your view of the theme of integration versus diversity in VET training?

Mr Walters—I will answer across the board, firstly in terms of consciousness and it not being on the public agenda. Has the committee being given a copy of the new VET national strategy?

CHAIR—The secretary informs me that we have a copy here.

Mr Walters—Good. I think it is quite important to look at that. Certainly one of the points which has been picked out in the new VET national strategy is the need for better promotion of the system. From the department's point of view, one of the main elements we have been trying to promote recently is new apprenticeships, and we are just about to launch a new national campaign to promote consciousness of new apprenticeships. We have raised consciousness up to much higher levels than it was before we started advertising three years ago. There has been no television advertising for a year now, so it has dropped off. We are doing a new campaign which is particularly based on the traditional trades. It will feature people in building and construction, people in hairdressing, which oddly enough has a skill shortage in every state, and it will feature people in hospitality.

Mr SAWFORD—That is because, unless you are managing the place, you get very low wages and terrible conditions.

Mr Walters—One of the things that we are doing through the campaign is to highlight some real-life role models—people who have done an apprenticeship and have gone on to better things, such as running their own business and so on. Most people start, in any kind of profession, pretty well down that pecking order and you have to give them some aspirations to move on. So we are very conscious that we would like to move the VET system and we would like to move vocational training up the public consciousness. We are working hard on that and anything the committee can do to help would be very welcome. I have to say the media tend to be obsessed with higher education and whatever good news story you can produce about VET, it is very difficult to get coverage for it, though we do try. Against that, you have to look at the numbers. We have nearly doubled the numbers doing vocational education and training in 10 years and the numbers in VET in Schools have risen from almost nothing to 180,000.

Mr SAWFORD—They ought to be 70 per cent and they are 30 per cent in New South Wales. That is the reality. In 30 years—20 years of flatlining and 10 years of attention—we ought to be up there with 70 per cent of our kids having access to accredited VET, and we are way down at 30 per cent. That is the reality. Again, I think if this committee cannot get its rationale right in terms of the recommendations, it will have lost something out of this. I think the same applies to your bureaucracy too. You need to get your direction right as well.

Mr Greer—If I could comment on that in the context of VET in Schools—Colin has taken it from the broader perspective. Certainly all education jurisdictions and ministers signed off on the National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century.

Mr SAWFORD—That is another problem.

Mr Greer—It may be a problem. However, there is a commonly and collaboratively agreed statement of national goals of which one is for all students to stay to year 12 or its vocational equivalent. In the context of that, the National Goals for Schooling, which all states are committed to in the sense that they must be committed to it to draw any funding at all from the Commonwealth—certainly from the schools general recurrent funding—clearly identify the importance of vocational education in those goals. It is probably right I think to say that what was once a marginal activity of VET in Schools—as Colin mentioned back in 1995 or leading up to 1996—has really now been established as a part of mainstream school education across Australia. The reality is, as we touched on earlier, 185,000 senior secondary students are participating in VET in Schools—that is about 44 per cent of the senior secondary cohort. And 95 per cent of all secondary schools in this country provide VET in Schools opportunities. There are 37.3 million student contact hours. At least on rough modelling, there are between—

Mr SAWFORD—You know and I know, Tony, that participation in terms of accredited and recognised VET training is at 30 per cent. That is the highest figure, and you can use all those other figures as much as you like but that is not the real world. I am going to finish on this. You raised the Adelaide Declaration. If ever there is a confused national statement about education, it is that one. It cannot even get the rationale, the process and the outcomes coherent, let alone separated. It is one of the most incoherent policies, and I am ashamed coming from Adelaide myself, that it is called the Adelaide Declaration. It reflects absolute woolly-headed, dopey thinking. It does not identify a rationale, and it does not have coherent processes and then coherent outcomes. I have read the statement over and over again and I amazed. It is made by a committee made by a camel. It is a terrible statement.

CHAIR—We might leave it at that point.

Ms GAMBARO—It is always hard to follow you, Rod.

Mr SAWFORD—Sorry.

Ms GAMBARO—While I admire some of the work Rod has done on this committee, I have to take his point up. I think Colin was talking about the service industry and Bill Galvin, and I know the work that Bill is doing. Coming from a hospitality background, I have to correct you on a few things, Rod. Some of the chefs that my family used to employ were paid $100,000, and that is just in a basic area.

Mr SAWFORD—We understand that.

Ms GAMBARO—In the large hotel chains, you are looking at $150,000-plus packages. To say that there is no professionalism or that it is low skilled, I find a bit offensive to the industry. As an industry, we always try to raise our standards. Last time I looked, tourism and hospitality—and part of that are restaurant experience, hotel dining and all that sort of stuff—is up there as the second or third largest exporter. Several years ago when I was teaching, I told my students that 70 per cent of our GDP was based on the service industry. Because it is a service industry or a hospitality industry, I think it always gets classified as some low grade skilled area that has no future and no viability. It is clearly changing as we are becoming more—

Mr SAWFORD—Let us not put words in my mouth. I am just going to correct that.

Ms GAMBARO—Okay. Go on.

Mr SAWFORD—The best hospitality training centre in Australia is in my electorate. It is at Regency Park.

Ms GAMBARO—Then you are familiar with that.

Mr SAWFORD—I understand that. If you are questioning my figures please give me some evidence—because it is not true. Certainly there are chefs in the Sydney market who are getting such packages—they probably all come from South Australia—and then you are in the international league. But let us talk about the mainstream.

CHAIR—Is there another state?

Ms GAMBARO—Queensland, of course. I know there is a centre of excellence there. What I am saying is: let us not downgrade this. We talked about retail training here as well. When I worked with Coles Myer, they used to send me off to a training program for managers one day a week, which was a lot of time away from work. I want to ask you—and Rod touched on this before—is about skill shortages and how we predict that. We will always need chefs and people in the hospitality industry; that is pretty predictable. Hoteliers and restaurateurs have mentioned shortages of chefs and catering people in that industry. Queensland has recently been vying to be a biotechnology centre. How do we predict these emerging industries and match the skill shortages in this vocational education training sector? It always seems—and I have asked this

question of other people who have come before us—that the mechanisms there need to be finetuned. How can we improve that?

Mr Walters—The answer, I think, is that there is no single answer; but it needs working at. If you have a look at the report that I mentioned before by Professor Schofield from the South Australian government, under the heading 'Not a problem of supply' she makes this point:

There is little evidence to suggest that skills imbalances, where they exist, are the result of an inadequate training system.

She goes on to make the point that the issues around skill shortages are very complex. They are about, for example, wastage rates in industries. We know that something like 50 per cent of all chefs who have passed their apprenticeships are not working as chefs. A lot of them go abroad. One of the reasons people train to be a chef is that it is a good passport for a job anywhere in the world. In fact, the young lady in our advert that you will see on the TV screen shortly says that. One has to accept that is part of the problem.

Ms GAMBARO—But do they come back?

Mr Walters—A lot of them come back because it is a wonderful place to be, but they like to see the world first. So there is that issue. There is the issue that we still have inflexible training arrangements in some respects. We have a four-year apprenticeship system that basically does not work for young people who have completed their schooling. Our schooling policy is based on trying to get them to complete year 12, and then you want some of them to still take apprenticeships. But it is a very different proposition when you are 18 or 19 and looking at four years on a training wage—which means you will not come off the training wage until you are 22 or 23. That is a very different proposition to starting at 15 and growing up. I took a party to Germany last year to study their system. It is quite interesting to compare them. We talk about the traditional four-year apprenticeship, and theirs is three years. For people who have done the equivalent of year 12, it is shortened to two years. In Germany, they recognise that those young people who have grown up have got more basic education. In far too many of our traditional trades, we are still stuck with the four-year apprenticeship.

Ms GAMBARO—I was going to ask you about that, because obviously it is a deterrent.

Mr Walters—It is a deterrent, and young people simply do not want to take that on. We know that. The training package system we have enables new flexible pathways to be developed. The question is: how can we accelerate that process? How can we get some of traditional trades—where people say, 'You haven't done it unless you've done your four years'—to think differently and see that they are simply not going to get the supply of young people in the future? The demographics show this; they will not be there. The number of young people who have not completed year 12 will dwindle, and we want them to dwindle, so you have to think of new ways of doing that. That is another issue all about training flexibility.

The other point about skill shortages is how they arise. We have posted on our National Industry Skills Initiative web site a paper that has been put together not by our department but by the employment department together with the National Centre for Vocational Education Research on the nature of skill shortages. It might be worth circulating that to the committee. The point it makes is that they exist at all points of the economic cycle. We are fortunate enough

in this country at the moment to have relatively low unemployment, so you do not have too many people queuing up for jobs, especially in tight labour markets like central Sydney and central Melbourne. Beyond that, of course, the labour market is changing all the time.

You asked how we spot these things coming up. You are finding new niche things, particularly associated with IT, coming up across all trades and professions. A good example of something that came up in the last 20 years is airconditioning in cars. Car mechanics know how to strip down a carburettor, but an airconditioning system in a car is a totally new type of skill, which needs to be learned. Car electronics have become vastly more complex. Whereas traditional things like stripping down a carburettor are gone—because these days you just throw the part away and plug in a new one; you do not recondition old parts—there are whole new things, like the looms for car electronics, which now come in. In a country town you might have perfectly good car mechanics but nobody who can fix the airconditioning. So it is a niche thing all across the board.

As a department we have established a National Industry Skills Initiative and have had task forces drawn from a number of different industries looking at the complexity of the issues and trying to see ahead how new training packages can be designed. We have worked with them on a host of new career information materials in a number of these areas, which have been linked in with the myfuture system—which Tony and Shelagh have put in—to give better career information to young people to steer them towards some of these areas where there are good careers. So it is not a simple problem; it is a very complex one. We have been working with industry to deal with it. It is likely that there always will be skill shortages, particularly when we have such a fast-changing economy and we know that a lot of the jobs people will be employed in in 20 years time do not exist at the moment. Things are going to come along and hit us—things in areas like biotechnology, for example. One of the skills initiative reports we have had is in emerging industries—trying to work with some of the people in TAFE, for example, who have been trying to look forward to see where some of the emerging industries, like photonics, might take us.

Mr SAWFORD—But they are not going to be big employers, are they?

Mr Walters—Some might be. Biotechnology might turn into quite a big employer. The other point is that, unless part of the economy is up there with the emerging industries, as a country we will get left behind.

Mr SAWFORD—That is true.

Mrs MAY—I just want to tease that out a little bit, because I also come from Queensland. I just wonder, Colin, with the emerging industries whether or not Vet in Schools can keep pace. Is a cost factor holding schools back from having those courses? You have touched on biotechnology; certainly, that is very big on the Gold Coast at one of my universities. But are we keeping up with the emerging industry? Is it a cost factor that maybe prevents schools from offering courses in those emerging industries?

Mr Walters—I think it comes back to your very first point—that is, exactly where does Vet in Schools fit in with the overall provision? You are looking at a situation where, on my very rough and ready figures, about 40 per cent of teenagers doing vocational education are doing it in

schools. The question is: are you going to try to cover the whole field? What we know about young people is that there are certain industries they move into for a first job, and they will often move on from that. So a lot of people's first job is in retail. Mine was.

CHAIR—As non-career aspirants.

Mr Walters—Not necessarily. Some of them will turn that into a career. But they are nevertheless learning employability skills and all the sorts of things—often entrepreneurship and that sort of thing—which are going to help them establish careers in later life. Are schools able to offer courses in nanotechnology? I do not think so. Not very many people can. I think it would be a bit unrealistic in most cases to expect them to be at the leading edge. They can play a part in a lot of trade industries.

Quite interestingly, looking at the figures I have, in 2001, 13 per cent of VET in Schools students were in engineering, mining, building and construction, and primary industry, which is not the whole of what we regard as traditional trades because traditional trades include hairdressers and chefs. But that is engineering, mining, building and construction, and primary industry—13 per cent. The proportion of the work force employed on traditional trades is about 13 per cent. So, oddly enough, that is just about spot on. Across the VET sector as a whole, 36 per cent of new apprentices are still in traditional trades, although they are only 13 per cent of the work force. So you would say around that more technical area VET in Schools is certainly playing its part. I do not personally think it will ever be at the leading edge; I do not think that is its job. But, nevertheless, industry and everything we hear place a very high importance on the role that it does play in getting across some of the basic employability skills and some of the mind-set needed to make a career in anything.

Mrs MAY—That comment interests me when we have heard certainly during the inquiry about literacy and numeracy levels not being work ready and not delivering what employers want to see in students when they look at them as prospective employees. I wonder whether we are delivering.

Mr Walter—There has been a lot of debate about employability skills. If we had time, I am sure Tony could tell you all about what is happening to integrate that within VET in Schools programs too. The whole concept is part of making that transition from the world of school to the world of work and enabling people to start thinking about their lives and their careers.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—The exchange that occurred between Rod Sawford and you is very good, because it is really important to tease things out. For instance, Rod puts his finger on a number of issues that he regards as dilemmas—I am not speaking for you, Rod. But they are perceptions. We could argue about the validity of those perceptions, but they are certainly there. It was interesting—and I am really looking forward to reading that report—that when you went through the snapshot there was very little in there that I thought was any different from what I have seen in other assessments of the importance of VET in Schools for a lot of the participants.

But one of the things I find is a telling marker for its acceptance is parents. I come from a college system that introduced VET some time ago and the understanding of VET by parents was virtually zilch, as it was by many members of the community and students, and teachers in particular. But parents value it a great deal as well, and that is an important indicator of its

acceptability now. The publicity of it is a lot more positive and progressive now than it certainly was a few years ago. Also in the snapshot it appreciates the needs that are being met by this, and in particular by students. There is no doubt about that. The biggest swing I have seen, particularly where I come from, is the fact that students who are looking at tertiary orientated programs in the future, university and whatever else are now welded to VET. They see VET as fulfilling a need for them, because they will need that in terms of their own careers in the future, part-time work to sustain their study needs and so forth. So there is this conglomeration of need.

But the thing that strikes me from listening to most of the people making submissions is we still come back to these fundamental areas of what support and what needs exist for teacher education and training in VET. They are still there. How do we get people involved and how do we best support them? How do they factor themselves and their needs in with what is required in VET? The other area which is very important in all this is information, particularly careers advice and information. Forget about the leading-edge stuff. In schools you should be directing students towards areas that will assist them, that will take that on when they leave school in particular and stick with those more traditional VET offerings, particularly to introduce them to the world of work and the things that go with it. But that area, the funding of that and the training of people in careers, and education advice is very important.

Then there is the perennial issue of funding. You hear it all the time. That is why I was interested in these comparative costs. It costs a lot compared to general education, so the resources are being absorbed inside the schools and their budgets. How are we going to meet these needs? Those issues still appear to be coming through all the time. I am very interested in what the Commonwealth can do to support that in real terms and of course in the presentation of programs and projects.

Mr Greer—I will just make some observations on that, and I might ask Shelagh to touch on some of the careers aspects of that. But, firstly, you are asking: what are we doing? This is about not the broader VET area but VET in Schools. The Commonwealth has for some time run a program called the Commonwealth Quality Teacher Program. That is a program which the government put some $70-odd million into for the first three years. We are currently on another three-year tranche of that, with $80 million. So we will have $159 million going in over six years. One of the key strategic areas of that is the capacity for jurisdictions—state and non-government—to use those funds in their strategic plans to underpin professional development, PD, for VET in Schools' purposes. The most recent figures I have are that towards the end of last year—it might have been September or October; I am not sure—there had been 100,000 teacher participants assisted through the Commonwealth Quality Teacher Program. Of those, about 8.4 per cent, or about 8,400, had been specifically assisted across jurisdictions under that program to lift their development in relation to VET in Schools. That could relate to gaining access as RTOs to the relevant certificate levels.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—In their feedback are they saying, 'Thank you very much. That's sufficient'?

Mr Greer—We have an evaluation of that program under way. We are funding about 147 separate projects. If the committee would like it and think it would be useful, I am happy to see what the evaluation has drawn out—what the feedback was from those 8,400 participants or from those projects which are specifically targeting PD for VET in Schools teachers.

CHAIR—That would be helpful, yes.

Mr Greer—David McCrae—I am not sure whether you know him—is undertaking this for us. It is pretty much done, but I will get that and get in touch with the secretariat to the extent there is something useful in bringing that forward. I will just move onto the third point before asking Shelagh to talk about the careers aspects. It comes back to something we mentioned before—that is, rightly or wrongly, the National Goals for Schooling. Clearly, VET in Schools—or vocational learning in schools—is one of those National Goals for Schooling. From a Commonwealth perspective, we have said in our states grants legislation—that is, the legislation that pushes about $6.9 billion worth of funding this year to government and non-government schools for schools and students—that no money can flow under that legislation unless every provider commits to the National Goals for Schooling, of which one is VET in Schools.

It is not right to be arguing, certainly from a Commonwealth point of view, that one of the objectives that we want from our contribution to schools funding is, rightly or wrongly, delivery on those common agreed national goals, one of which is VET in Schools. Therefore, there is not just a bucket of $200 million, $20 million or what have you but the totality of the bucket that is available to be drawn on to deliver those national goals, including VET in Schools. At this stage, we are saying that when you do this costing you are getting a sense of what that is. I take the point that there does not seem to be, at this stage, a similar costing around on what the general cost of education is so that you can really nail down what that margin is. This is a very good indication built bottom up from data from schools, identified by states or territories, and including data collaboratively prepared by the Commonwealth, states and territories in the non-government sector. It is providing us with a good insight, a good indication, of the order of those costs, but there is quite a large well of funds that can be drawn on to support VET in Schools from mainstream general recurrent funding.

Ms Whittleston—We are doing a number of things in the area of careers education and careers information for young people. You might be aware of an OECD report on careers guidance, and Australia participates in that.

CHAIR—Yes, I have seen that.

Ms Whittleston—That report says that a number of things are happening, but we need to bring them together in a more coherent way, and that is exactly what we are trying to do. One of the big things that we have done is myfuture, which is an online careers information system. That was launched only in July last year and we have had over 24 million hits on that site already, so it is obviously fulfilling some need out there. Myfuture has three components to it. There is a facts area, which has information about jobs and what they are. A very important part, which seems to be developing and is being used more and more by all Australians—it does not have to be young people—is called My Guide, where the person using it identifies their interests and what they perceive their skills to be, and they work through a guide to come to a point where they could make some informed choices about where they might like to go in the future. The third component assists careers teachers, parents, career companions and counsellors, to help the person make those career choices.

We have a number of pilot programs around Australia at the moment: career and transition pilots—there are 23 of those. The key elements of those pilots include having a career and

transition adviser working, in this case, with young people—13- to 19-year olds—and we encourage the participating young people to have a transition plan. That plan goes with them throughout school and from school into further education and training.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is a good idea.

Ms Whittleston—That plan, though, almost becomes a contract between the teacher, the young person and their parent: where do I want to go; what do I want to do; what do I need to get there? That might include a choice about a VET in Schools option or a structured workplace learning option, as well as careers information and careers education exercises.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—In those projects, are you funding the persons taking part in the project as well?

Ms Whittleston—No, we are funding the adviser.

Mr Greer—The coordinator. That is being evaluated at the moment. I am not sure whether that is formalised yet, but, again, the committee might like to see the very positive nature of how that exercise is going. As I said, it is a work in progress, but I think it goes straight to the point that you are making.

Ms Whittleston—The preliminary report findings show that access to a dedicated adviser is very important, and the transition plan has really made a difference—those kinds of things. Yes, we could make the preliminary report available.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Thank you.

Ms Whittleston—Amongst other things that are happening is a blueprint for career development. That is actually a Canadian product, and we are looking at what advantage there would be in doing an Australian version of that. That is a guide for practitioners on how they might assist in the provision of careers education and information—how you measure success and how you measure the tools that people need to make those decisions.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Yes, that is very important. That is the crux of this.

Ms Whittleston—Yes. That is a work in progress. It is a Commonwealth-state MCEETYA project. That report is due at the end of September and advice will be made available to ministers in November. The other thing we have is again a Canadian product, The Real Game, which we are piloting in some states. We are trying to make it relevant to the Australian situation. Those games are very experience based things, where parents come into schools, as well as school teachers and perhaps the local bank manager or the local hospital administrator, and the young person has the experience of being in a community and finding out how to make a decision about wanting a hospital there and what skills are needed, and that kind of thing.

Finally, I will pick up on the point that Mr Walters made in relation to skills shortages in careers education. It has been the very strong view of industry that careers education information does not pick up on skills shortages. We are in the process of getting some industry reps and the Australian Secondary Principals Association together to have a forum to come up with some

strategies on how we might make sure information around the skills shortages areas is made available to careers education teachers and principals and, therefore, schools and students.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I am interested in that area. Is it your opinion that certification of some form for careers advisers would be useful?

Ms Whittleston—Professional development of careers teachers and advisers is something that we are looking at. There are only two or three courses in Australia for career professionals. Two are at universities and I think one is at a TAFE. We are actually providing advice at the moment to the minister on how we might address the need for professional development for careers teachers. In the CATs pilots, that has come up as an issue because sometimes young people are looking for careers information and sometimes they are looking for what we have been calling transition support. They are asking, 'How do I hang in there? How do I stay at school?' and, 'What other things do I need to keep me engaged?' So it is quite a difficult area.

CHAIR—What sorts of things do you think ought to be happening in terms of professional development?

Ms Whittleston—One of the key things we are most definitely looking at is the possible need for some formal course, through universities, in the preparation of teachers, as one of the units that they might choose to do within their degree for education or their diploma for education. At the moment that is not offered in general. It is a course that people choose to do as an add-on after their degree—a diploma or a certificate or something like that. If schools are going to be more a part of the holistic support for young people in their transition then we have to make that information and that development available for teachers so they can take that active role.

CHAIR—Some witnesses have suggested that that ought to be compulsory for secondary teachers and that there ought to be a unit or units there in careers. What would be your response to that view?

Ms Whittleston—I am not sure about it being compulsory, but I think it should be built in to teacher education programs in some way. My personal view is that, yes, there should be courses, but careers education should also be part of any course that a young person is doing. That is what employability skills are about as well: if you are looking at maths, what do you do with that and how is that relevant to your future life in your work? Careers education can be treated separately, but it can also be a part of a young person's experience throughout their vocational learning at school. I think it has to be integrated in some way, not just separate.

CHAIR—It is very hard to integrate it within discrete university courses though, isn't it?

Ms Whittleston—Yes, but it could be a unit available within the bachelor of education course. That is something that we would have to talk to universities about. The professional development program that we are developing for the minister to have a look at does suggest that we might look at one part of a course. The other thing we are looking at is possibly providing some online support for careers advisers in the CATs program.

CHAIR—Not wanting to cut across what you are doing for the minister, but would it be possible for you to give us an outline of the sorts of things that you think would be worth while in that regard?

Ms Whittleston—I think that the evaluation for the CATs would give you some help with that.

CHAIR—That could very useful.

Mr SAWFORD—When we are at the stage of drafting our recommendations, would you be prepared to come back so that we can bounce them off you again?

Mr Greer—Certainly.

Mr SAWFORD—This is a very comprehensive submission, by the way, and we all thank you very much for it. I still think the rationale is confused, but that is part of our problem. We have recognised that in the six months that we have been doing this inquiry so you are not an orphan in all of that. If you were looking at current champions of technical training in this country, who would you be looking at?

Mr Walters—ANTA ran a campaign about two years ago and they managed to get some of the leading industrialists to speak, in terms of commercials, people like Roger Corbett from Woolworths. Some of the chairs of our major companies are really quite keen on training. To throw that back to you, I would say this: it depends who you are trying to get through to. When you are talking to young people, they do not necessarily relate to the chair of a major public company because the pathway between being 16 and being 60 and very rich and famous is a bit of a long one. What we have tried to pick for the New Apprenticeships campaign, which is about to go onscreen, is people who are young enough or who can relate well enough to young people to be able to see a pathway there. It would be interesting to have your views. Most of the people we have shown the rushes to think it is going to work. But if you are talking about champions to get through to young people, the department has wrestled with that a lot, for example, in literacy and in the indigenous area.

CHAIR—I am not necessarily talking about champions to get through to young people, but champions to get through to government, champions to get through to bureaucracy.

Mr Greer—I can pick an example close to your own state—Salisbury High School. Helen Paphitis is the principal down there and she is doing—

CHAIR—That brings up a whole new debate and we will not go there but, quickly, I agree with you. Do you know how much trouble her predecessor went through in trying to convince a bureaucracy to allow those programs to go through? There is a similar principal at Gosford, I think, in the New South Wales system. They were basically threatening to sack him because of some of the initiatives he was going to do in the system. They sort of said, 'You are not going to do that.' Peter Turner can tell a lot of stories too, about the South Australian education bureaucracy and how disingenuous they were in terms of encouraging him in a particular area. These people are lighthouse people—I understand that—but they are few and far between.

Mr Greer—There is an analogy in relation to Indigenous education. The APAPDC is the Australian Principals Association Professional Development Council, a professional development association that is representative of all the school principals in the country; it does not matter whether they are from the primary sector, the Catholic system, the independent system or the senior secondary system. With Commonwealth support, they have become champions for us in local communities on the issue of driving Indigenous education. It is a model that has worked and it is a model that is working well.

Mr SAWFORD—So there is no John Walker? There is no minister called John Dedman? There are none of those people, are there? You cannot think of anybody like that?

Mr Greer—This is a ground-up exercise.

Mr Walters—If we were rolling the credits at the end of the film here, I would say that you have to give a great deal of credit for the promotion of vocational education and training in all its forms over the last few years to the peak industry associations, and I would include the ACTU in that. They have all made the point consistently that a strong, well-educated, technical work force—people with strong vocational skills—is crucial to the future of this country's economic welfare. I would include all of the peak industry associations, but an example this week was the Australian Industry Group, who have released a report on innovation and where the economy is going. I do not think you would have a vocational education and training system in this country of the size we now have—with the worldwide recognition that we are at the forefront, we are amongst the leaders—without the support that has been given by all the peak industry associations.

Mr SAWFORD—You mentioned Corbett; do you have any stuff available that he has written?

Mr Walters—I am using him because I know he has talked to ANTA a lot. ANTA ran a campaign about two years ago, using industry leaders really to try and get through to other industry leaders. I will ask our people to pass on to you the material that was put out in that campaign. If it was not Mr Corbett, I will apologise to him on the record, but I think he was one of them. There were several people of that sort. You can see the way in which that campaign was managed.

CHAIR—Thank you. That would be helpful. I want to briefly touch on the problem of the perception of VET in Schools as being a second-rate option, and the integration of VET in Schools and university entrance. You mentioned in the submission the progress in terms of a standards reference approach. I think you said that some 20 universities look like taking that up. We do not have time to pursue it in detail, but are you confident that that is going to effectively address that issue? What other things should we be looking at in terms of encouraging that sort of development so that students who want to go to university are also encouraged to do so? I think it was on pages 28 and 29 of the submission. One other question in relation to that: is that standards reference approach going to make it more difficult for the less academically capable kids? Will it mean actually raising the academic standard of those courses and thereby making it more difficult for those kids who are not academic?

Mr Greer—I have some updated information here but it might be better if I take that on notice just to put this in context. We will be able to get you a more updated snapshot of that exercise than has been reflected here.

CHAIR—That would be helpful, thank you.

Mr Greer—I think the model is being validated in 70 schools in all jurisdictions except the Northern Territory at this stage. A final report on that assessment model is due early next year.

CHAIR—It would be useful to get an update, including some of the areas which still need addressing to bridge that gap between the academic and the non-academic. Thank you very much; your evidence has been particularly helpful. Perhaps you will make available some of those other reports which you mentioned. As Rod said, towards the end of the year, as we are developing our recommendations, we might try to get you back in to bounce a few ideas off you, if that is okay.

Mr Greer—Certainly, we would be happy to do that.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

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

That this committee authorises publication of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 10.26 a.m.