
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**Reference: Vocational education in schools**

MONDAY, 4 AUGUST 2003

MANDURAH AND HENDERSON

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**Monday, 4 August 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 Albanese, Mr Bartlett and Mr Sawford

**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 9.46 a.m.**

**KING, Mr Alfred Keith, Principal, Mandurah Senior College**

**MEAKINS, Tobi-Anne**

**PEGG, Adam**

**SELKIRK, Rebecca**

**WEARY, Phillip**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into vocational education in schools. Thank you, firstly, to the principal, Mr Keith King, and Mandurah College for your hospitality in having us here this morning. Thank you to the students for your very informative guided tour; you have a great school and you are very fortunate to be students here.

First of all, let me fill you in on what this inquiry is about. We are trying to get an understanding of how vocational education and training works in schools throughout the country so that we can make recommendations to the government about ways that it can be improved. We are trying to visit a number of schools in all states and to talk to educational administrators, governments, organisations, employers et cetera who are involved in vocational education, so what you tell us today will help us to get a better understanding of how it works. What you say today will be on the public record, *Hansard*, so what you say will be preserved forever.

**Mr ALBANESE**—Don't let that worry you.

**CHAIR**—Don't let that put any pressure on you. What you say will probably be eminently more sensible than a lot of things that we say on the public record, and they come back to haunt us. So just relax; you are not under investigation or anything, it is really just good information for us.

To begin, tell us what vocational courses you are doing, why you chose those courses, how they fit in with what you are wanting to get out of school and what your plans are after school.

**Adam Pegg**—I am doing English, maths and science, all non–TE. I have three choice subjects: Indonesian TE, which is simply just for interest; furniture design and technology; and structured workplace learning. I chose structured workplace learning because it is a good option with which to enter the work force. It is good experience; it is one day a week for two terms—a semester—and it gives you hands-on experience in the workplace that you want. I did it at a cabinet-maker's because that is where I see myself going in the future.

**CHAIR**—The structured workplace learning course involves you in off-school practical work in the industry.

**Adam Pegg**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—But your other vocational education courses are all done on site, are they?

**Adam Pegg**—Every one except for structured workplace learning is done on site, yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You are doing four TE subjects?

**Adam Pegg**—No, I am doing all WSA, except for one—Indonesian.

**Tobi-Anne Meakins**—I am doing art, drama, maths, English, work studies and structured workplace learning. You usually do work studies in years 11 and 12 but some people decide to do it in year 12. They show you how to do resumes and prepare you. In week 6 we are having an interview. They employ a person to come and give us an interview and say to us what we are doing well and what we are doing wrong. I did structured workplace learning at the Performing Arts Centre because I am really interested in creative things and I want to be an actor. When I went to the Performing Arts Centre, each week I got to go somewhere different, so I found out everything that happens backstage as well as on-stage.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Have you performed in anything?

**Tobi-Anne Meakins**—I have at school. I performed in *Zombie* in year 9, I think it was, and ever since then that is what I have wanted to do.

**Rebecca Selkirk**—I am doing four TE subjects—biology, political legal studies, English literature and history—and one non-TE or wholly school-assessed subject, which is tourism. That enables me to have a certificate 2 by the end of year 12 if I complete all units as required by the Challenger TAFE. I am not doing structured workplace learning, but I do have the facilities available to me at this school anyway. Recently I approached the structured workplace learning staff and got work experience at the office of Alan Carpenter, the education and training minister, for a few days in the holidays. So the facilities are still available to people who are not strictly doing structured workplace learning, just to organise the work experience for them.

**CHAIR**—You organised that, though.

**Rebecca Selkirk**—Yes, I approached the teachers.

**CHAIR**—This is how most other students do it if they want work experience.

**Rebecca Selkirk**—If they are doing TE and they find that they have not done structured workplace learning, they can still have work experience. They sort it out for them.

**Phillip Weary**—I am doing four TE subjects—physics, chemistry, English literature and applicable maths—and one WSA, which is photography. The photography is a stress relief for me; the other subjects are pretty full on. I use the WSA subject as a relief. I can go out and have a bit of fun with the camera. It is a subject that I can have a lot of fun with and just experiment. It is also something to fall back on if I decide I want to go that way instead of pursuing a career in the Air Force or wherever I was wanting to go before. Photography is an enjoyable thing for me. The facilities here for photography are really good. You have got the computers, which you can do a lot with—the digital side of things—and for film processing we have a great darkroom which is open pretty much all day every day. Everything in that side of things is really good.

**CHAIR**—When we were walking around we were having a chat about university entrance and the relationship between your TE and school-assessed courses. Rebecca, you might like to give us an overview of how that works. How many courses do you have to do for university entrance? Do any of your school-assessed or VET courses help towards that?

**Rebecca Selkirk**—At the campus here you need four TE to qualify for a TER to get into university. However, at the campus you need 10 subjects, either TE or wholly school-assessed, to graduate. What more did you want to know?

**CHAIR**—The school-assessed courses do not count towards a TE; obviously, they are separate. Can you do any vocational course that qualifies you as part of TE?

**Rebecca Selkirk**—The wholly school-assessed or non-TE subjects do not count towards a TER mark but they do count towards your graduation certificate.

**CHAIR**—Is there a problem for students who want to go on to university that you cannot do as many vocational courses as you would like and have them counted? Is there tension there? Do you have to decide too early whether you think you want to go to university or whether you are going to focus more on school-assessed courses and vocational courses, or does it work pretty well; you have enough flexibility to cover both options?

**Rebecca Selkirk**—At the campus you have enough flexibility to cover your options. For example, you may do only four TE subjects in years 11 and 12 but still have your two subjects that you can do wholly school-assessed, so you have the options to do four TE, two non-TE; five TE, one non-TE; or six TE. It just depends primarily where you are going.

**CHAIR**—Does that put you at a disadvantage, though? I imagine that university entrance is fairly competitive here, as it is in other states. Doesn't a student who does six TE courses have a bit of an advantage in that they can pick their best four subjects, whereas, if you only do four TE courses, you have to count all four of those for your university entrance, your TER?

**Rebecca Selkirk**—I think it is fairly equal. For the people who do six TE, in reality only four of their best marks get picked. For those who do four TE and two non-TE, for example, they are probably going to do fairly well in the four TE they do because they are going to have more time to focus on those four subjects, while the other two subjects will get them a certificate for TAFE or whatever they want to do. It is also, as Phil said, a stress relief for them.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How important is what Phillip said a while ago about his doing photography as a stress release? Is that also true for you?

**Rebecca Selkirk**—I find it so. The option to have a non-TE subject is really quite good because you get the best of both worlds. For me, with tourism, I am getting qualifications to go towards TAFE if I decide I do not want to go to university at the end of the year, so it is a really good option. As Phil said, it is a really good stress relief because TE is obviously quite challenging for all students.

**CHAIR**—So you are thinking of going to university?

**Rebecca Selkirk**—I am.

**CHAIR**—What about Adam, you are not, I think you said earlier?

**Adam Pegg**—No, I am not.

**CHAIR**—Tobi?

**Tobi-Anne Meakins**—No.

**CHAIR**—Phillip?

**Phillip Weary**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—So there is enough flexibility from your point of view; you do not see a problem there?

**Phillip Weary**—There is. The only problem with having four is that if you get to the stage at the end where one of your subjects is really letting you down, you are pretty much in a bit of trouble because you do not have anything to fall back on. If you go with five or six TE subjects in year 12, it is allowable to fall behind in one of the subjects because you can drop it.

**CHAIR**—So 5-1 might be a good combination?

**Phillip Weary**—Yes. I found that six was just a bit too much for me with my courses, so I dropped down to four. I have to keep up the standard throughout the whole year; I cannot allow myself to drop off.

**Mr ALBANESE**—Tobi and Adam, when you finish this year, will you go to TAFE here full time? What qualifications will you have and what is the next step?

**Tobi-Anne Meakins**—I am looking at going to TAFE because I was not sure exactly what I wanted to do and I have an opportunity, on Sundays, to help a lady with caring for animals. She knows someone with CALM and that is what I want to do—be a CALM officer. She has also told me to do a course in animal care at TAFE, so I am looking into doing that. I have had previous experience, which is pretty important, and I am getting good marks in English and maths.

**Mr ALBANESE**—Would you do the TAFE course here?

**Tobi-Anne Meakins**—Yes.

**Mr ALBANESE**—Is that available here on site?

**Tobi-Anne Meakins**—Yes.

**Mr ALBANESE**—How about you, Adam?

**Adam Pegg**—With my qualifications, doing structured workplace learning helps a lot because with a lot of industry based jobs, like building, construction, metalwork and stuff like that, experience is a must. Structured workplace learning helps me gain the experience I need and would help give me an edge if I were to go for an apprenticeship.

**Mr ALBANESE**—At the end of this year, what will you have? Will you have a certificate 2?

**Adam Pegg**—Yes. Along with structured workplace learning, you do a unit of competence, which is TAFE based subject that you do through structured workplace learning through the campus. That also gives you a hand to get into TAFE as well.

**Mr ALBANESE**—Are there any fees any of you have to pay for the TAFE or VET component?

**Phillip Weary**—I am not sure. I know that with the Aries course you get the certificate 2 because you do a one-year course through the senior college. The fees are discounted, say, if you had done it outside the college, but you only get certificate 2. Then there is the option after that to do a 10-week night course, three hour sessions, which is run in the TAFE facilities, and there is an extra charge incorporated into that, but that gives you certificate 3, the next one up from a degree.

**CHAIR**—You would pay for that yourself.

**Phillip Weary**—You pay for that yourself.

**CHAIR**—For the certificates 1 and 2 there is no charge for the students. Does the school have to pay for those? I just wanted to clarify that. In some states the school has to pay.

**Mr King**—Currently we have what we call profile hours that TAFE hold and the school negotiates access to those profile hours, so all our certificates 1 and 2 are completed under profile hours. Any of the charges that fall in would form part of the students' normal fee structure in doing courses here.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I have a question for Tobi. Can you see yourself changing your mind, that you might want to go to university? You said you were doing English and maths. Doesn't Western Australia have the Centre for Performing Arts at Edith Cowan? Do you see yourself going in that direction?

**Tobi-Anne Meakins**—I really want to do the animal care thing but it is very competitive. I might change my mind and decide to go to WAAPA, I think it is called, to try for that. I have asked them about it and they have sent me information, and it is really expensive.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is it?

**Tobi-Anne Meakins**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And competitive in getting in, too, isn't it?

**Tobi-Anne Meakins**—Yes, very; you have to audition. There are about 1,000 people who audition and there are only 50 places. You have to be very good.

**CHAIR**—Could you tell us about the careers advice you have had at school? What prompted you to go in the direction that you have decided to go in? Did you have a careers adviser in school from, say, year 7 or 8, or was it not until you got to year 11? In how much detail did they spell out to you all the different options, what happens and what the possibilities are from those options, or did you just talk to your parents about it?

**Adam Pegg**—It depends on what you have to do as well. The careers advice is there if you want it. If you are pretty sure about what you need to do, you do not have to see the careers adviser about what you need to do. I would say it is there if you need it.

**CHAIR**—So there has not been for you, Adam, and perhaps for the others, anything formal in terms of careers advice where you spent a number of periods over a year sitting down and looking at career options?

**Adam Pegg**—No, not really. I would say that is based in a lot of careers expos that go on at the school but, no, I do not think that we sat down formally and had a talk about it. There was one at the end of year 10 but that is about it.

**CHAIR**—Tell me about those careers expos.

**Adam Pegg**—With the careers expos that we have at the school, you have a number of industries that go through. People in the work force who come—for instance, people from the Air Force and people from Alcoa. People from different universities come to discuss courses and stuff like that. It is usually held in the library.

**CHAIR**—Are they very informative? Do most students go to those or do you think, 'I am not interested in that,' and only go to the ones you are interested in? Do most students try to avail themselves of the opportunities to learn about what is going on?

**Adam Pegg**—Yes, most students want to learn as much as they can about the workplace that they want to go to so that they do not get into that occupation and decide they do not like it and have to start all over again. So they make sure they know everything they can about the workplace that they want to go to, yes.

**CHAIR**—What about the others; do you agree with Adam?

**Phillip Weary**—Pretty much. For me, my options were fairly limited. I spent a week in various Air Force bases in Sydney and from there I decided what I wanted to do, which is to fly planes. From there my options were really limited in the subjects I could do—physics and chemistry were a must. I knew what I had to do, and every now and then I would just go to see careers to make sure that I was still on track and my marks were what I needed to continue and that I was not falling behind. I talked to a lot of outside agencies, like recruiting officers for the defence force, and then matched up what the school careers officer had said to me and took their advice on board.

**CHAIR**—You are all happy, then, with the quality of the careers advice. Can you see any ways in which it might be improved?

**Rebecca Selkirk**—Because the campus is just for year 11s and 12s, for me in year 10, normally you have one of your subject teachers—I know that is how it was at Mandurah High School—who advises you on either the broadest range of subjects to get a qualification for university, if you do not know where you are headed, like I was, or specific subjects, like Phil said, to get you to your university degree. However, when you come to the campus, we have the student services as well. We visit Tomlinson and other student services teachers who can advise you if you need to change your subjects to get somewhere else if you change your mind, and that can happen any time from years 11 to 12. There is the advocacy system as well, where you sit down with your advocate and have formal meetings.

**Mr ALBANESE**—Who is your advocate?

**Rebecca Selkirk**—My advocate is Anne Wells. She is my political-legal teacher. It is normally one of your subject teachers, and they help you and advise you on careers and keep you on track. There are a lot of options at the campus.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Have you got a current work placement, Adam?

**Adam Pegg**—I would say work placement would be through structured workplace learning. The way that you are placed in the workshop, you do it through structured workplace learning.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You have not had a work placement with a local firm?

**Adam Pegg**—Not really. Through structured workplace learning you go to a local firm.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Has anyone else had a work placement with a local firm? Do any of you work part-time?

**Phillip Weary**—I work at McDonald's.

**Rebecca Selkirk**—I am a cosmetician at Priceline.

**Tobi-Anne Meakins**—I am a photo lab technician at Big W.

**Adam Pegg**—I work night fill at Big W.

**Mr SAWFORD**—None of you have had a workplace placement.

**Mr King**—Adam has been in a placement with a cabinet-maker and, as Rebecca mentioned, she did a placement with the minister for education. Structured workplace learning is a better way to hit it.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. That has been very helpful. We appreciate your time, and good luck with the rest of your studies and great careers ahead.

[10.13 a.m.]

**FLETCHER, Mrs Michelle, Structured Workplace Learning Coordinator, Mandurah Senior College**

**HARVEY, Mr Graeme, Executive Officer, Mandurah Youth Commitment Inc.**

**SHUTTLEWORTH, Mr Damian R., Manager, Enterprise and Industry Program, Mandurah Senior College**

**YATES, Mr Gary, Deputy Principal, Mandurah Senior College**

**CHAIR**—Good morning. Thank you for your time and for joining us today. Would you like to elaborate on the role that you have in the school?

**Mr Yates**—Vocational education and training is one of my portfolios.

**CHAIR**—As a formality, we prefer that any evidence you give is on the public record but if there is anything you want to say that is off the record, perhaps for confidentiality reasons pertaining to students, just let us know and we can arrange that. I invite you, first of all, to make some introductory comments, then we will proceed to discussions and questions.

**Mr Yates**—I was given the brief of describing vocational education and training at Mandurah Senior College in five minutes. That is mission impossible but I will do my best. I was also of the understanding that there may be questions to the people in the areas that they are concerned with. I think it is important to establish that Mandurah Senior College is in its third year of operation. Prior to that there were two senior high schools. In terms of vocational education and training at Mandurah and Coodanup Senior High Schools, in round figures we had a total of 60 students out of about 700, or about 8.6 per cent of our population, involved in VET in Mandurah.

I will distribute to you some figures that I will refer to, because there is a significant number of them and it might make some sense. In 2001 we had Mandurah Senior College, with both Coodanup and Mandurah Senior High Schools joined by Halls Head Community College feeding into us as contributing schools. Prior to our establishment, those vocational education and training programs were what we called discrete programs. We had students who picked a program—it might be metals and engineering, for example—but it was a self-contained package. They could neither go out nor could other people come into that program. It was fully self-contained and very expensive in terms of staffing, use of resources and what have you.

We have opened that right up at Mandurah Senior College. We can still have that discrete program with a defined set of subjects that a student would engage in totally but, because of our timetable and flexibility, students can, as I refer to it, 'parachute in,' and only experience or dip into parts of a vocational education program. When we have a look at the statistics, they are quite astounding as far as we are concerned. They are significant. We have gone from, four years ago, 8.6 per cent of Mandurah government school secondary students engaged in VET to, as of Friday of last week, 73 per cent of students engaged in vocational education and training. It is

important to establish where they are engaged in that. One area that demonstrates and expands the example that I have just given is structured workplace learning, which meets the definition of VET because it has units of competence integrated within that formal work experience program. Because of its relevance to the students, we now have four out of 10 students engaged in that structured workplace learning scenario compared to about one in 10 before. Students and parents are voting with their feet. It is clearly demonstrating to Mandurah that what the majority of students want to achieve at the end of post-compulsory education is employment. While we might promote further education and training or link employment to that, that is what the kids want. They are heading towards employment and they see that experience in the workplace as very valuable.

The growth there has been astronomical, and Michelle can expand upon that. I think the major reason we have been able to achieve that is because of the work and effort that have been put in to developing community partnerships. We have local business and industry working very closely with us to be able to give the kids that opportunity.

In terms of overall VET and units of competence, again, students have voted with their feet when they have been given the opportunity, rather than having to be contained to a specific program. It is the same reason: it is a combination of the relevance of the program that they are involved with, because they can see a direct link to their future goals and personal aspirations. It is also due to one of the often underestimated aspects of VET, that is, the altruistic nature of teachers who go above and beyond to provide these opportunities for the kids. Damian can expand on this. They adopt a different type of pedagogy. It is not so much what they do, it is how they do it.

In the past—and this is still the case in some places—we tried to deliver in a style that was outdated to the kids. They did not connect. Through enterprise education, we have been able to not only engage our students, we have been able to re-engage students who had left the system. Hopefully, Damian will get an opportunity to expand upon that. More importantly, we are retaining students. So the claim would be that, through VET four years ago, if we tracked our cohort of year 8 students through to the end of year 12 prior to Mandurah Senior College, 44 per cent of them completed year 12. What we are looking at this year is mid-60 per cent of students completing year 12. VET is a significant factor in that.

I am conscious that I am running over time but I do not want to let this opportunity pass to be able to make some points. I see two major challenges or impediments to VET at Mandurah Senior College and, I would say, systemically I assume. From our staffing we do receive a benefit inasmuch as a VET student counts as 1.1 students, so we do get some additional staffing. The delivery of VET is very heavily reliant upon that altruism of teachers. In terms of dollars, we do not get anywhere enough money to deliver VET. In fact, I would claim, with respect, that the community is getting some very positive outcomes on the cheap. I would compare VET to other more in vogue type issues within education, for example, information technology and computing. The dollars that are tagged towards those areas and their use are significantly more than what we provide for VET. Yet, kids are clearly demonstrating that VET is important to them.

I also see the need for funding to follow the student more than it does at the moment. Rather than being tagged to the system or to an individual school or institution, it should actually follow

the student. The best example I would give of that is that I would like to see a student have the opportunity to mix and match their programs, so they are engaged in post-compulsory secondary education with us, but at the same time enrolled, wherever it may be, in other institutions such as TAFE, and that funding can be used to accommodate that. At the moment, that really is not the case.

The other thing that I see as the big issue to us is that we have not been able to accommodate very well the school based traineeships. I think the major reason for that—and I believe, if I can be so bold, that government has a role to play here—is that there is a lack of incentive to employers to take up school based traineeships. It costs them to take them up. Mandurah is a good example because, with the growth in structured workplace learning, the cynic could claim that employers have been fantastic there in taking the students on, but they are getting it for nothing. That sounds unfair because without employers we would not have structured workplace learning, so to a certain extent it is. To go to that next step to take them on as school based traineeships, we have not been able to develop the levels of success that we would have liked to develop. The feedback is that it costs employers to take them on. So I believe there needs to be more incentive for employers to work in partnership with us so the student can engage in that formal training, hopefully leading to employment, while at the same time completing post-compulsory education and graduating. I apologise for going over time but I did not want to miss this opportunity.

**CHAIR**—Not at all, that was very valuable, thank you. Damian and Michelle, would you like to make some introductory comments, or will we go straight to questions?

**Mrs Fletcher**—I think Gary has covered structured workplace learning.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—I do not mind offering some key information about the enterprise and industry program and about what we are doing at the college.

**CHAIR**—Yes, thank you.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—The primary aim of setting up such a program was to focus on retention and participation, initially of students who are at educational risk, with the view that enterprise education would come across the whole college and every student would have access to it. There are very important connections to lifelong learning, ensuring that students have, for almost everything that they do, a real use and a real audience, not just teachers. The reason we do that is to try to key-in and focus on what is relevant for the students so we can engage them. That links to their participation. What we have found is that when students begin to participate, because we are tapping into their interests, they will stay with us.

The other thing that we are doing is that we have cross-curricula subjects. We are looking at a variety of subjects and mapping them across to each other and showing relevance across the curriculum and then linking those back to subjects such as structured workplace learning and the possibility of real life enterprises. For instance, some of our students are running what is called the Peel Resource Expo on 22 August when local community advisory groups will come down to the college and offer information to the public and to each other. What our students have done is event organise that, and that has been linked back to their curriculum. Again, that is focusing on a real use and a real audience.

I want just quickly to refer to some statistics. We started the fast track program last year and still run it. Of the students who enrolled in the enterprise and industry program last year—I cannot give you accurate statistics, but I have them available—we had something like a 90 per cent return rate and about a 95 per cent success rate. So at the end of year 11, 95 per cent of the students had achieved in their subjects and 90 per cent of them have returned, compared to a return rate of something like 20 per cent for students who enrolled in fast track. This year we have had an increase in enrolments in EIP of about—what was it, Gary?—100 per cent?

**Mr Yates**—Yes.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—What we are beginning to see is that we are not just focusing on those students who were traditionally at risk due to social and economic conditions and because of the backgrounds of their parents; we are getting students who would normally go into mainstream who are saying, 'This might be a more interesting way to learn.' So now we are looking at possibly that cross-college type scenario. That is a very brief background to the program.

**CHAIR**—Thanks, Damian. Can I pursue the area of funding, to begin with. You said that VET teachers have a loading of 1.1.

**Mr Yates**—VET students have that loading.

**CHAIR**—VET students do. That flows through to the extra funding that the government gives to schools for those—

**Mr Yates**—In terms of staffing.

**CHAIR**—Does that apply only to those students doing structured workplace learning or does it also apply to students doing other vocational courses as part of your school assessed courses that do not have a structured—

**Mr Yates**—They have to be engaged in units of competence.

**CHAIR**—Do all of those courses that have a competency based assessment component have to have structured workplace learning?

**Mr Yates**—I am a little bit vague about that. Graeme, can you help me there a minute?

**Mr Harvey**—By definition, no. A VET student is one who does units of competency and that is all in WA and I believe that is Australia-wide now. I think at the college it would almost be a match between those who are doing units of competency and those who are doing structured workplace learning. I think, Michelle, you have units of competency in structured workplace learning because that assists in the funding model in WA.

**Mrs Fletcher**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Theoretically, students could do their competency totally school based without a work placement component.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—They would still attract that 1.1because that is competency based.

**Mr Harvey**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Asking your opinion, if you are saying that the funding ought to follow those students who are involved in VET, do you think that ought to apply across schools, to the non-government sector as well? There is a bit of controversy about what degree of assistance ought to be given to students in non-government schools to be involved in VET. Do you think that ought to apply there?

**Mr Yates**—I have to be honest and say I am a little bit uncomfortable answering that because that really is more of a value judgment on my part than a professional judgment.

**CHAIR**—Okay.

**Mrs Fletcher**—However, we do have a partnership with a private school for placing their students, so we are working with the schools in our district.

**CHAIR**—Could you elaborate on how that partnership works?

**Mrs Fletcher**—With structured workplace learning, instead of several schools all looking for their own placements in our small community, we have been contracted by Pinjarra Senior High School and Mandurah Catholic College to place their students, so there is a contract in place.

**CHAIR**—How does that contract work? Do they pay you an annual fee? Do they pay you per placement?

**Mrs Fletcher**—Per student.

**CHAIR**—Per student?

**Mrs Fletcher**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Do you receive any outside funding for that as well, say through ECEF?

**Mrs Fletcher**—It is part of our ECEF funding as well.

**CHAIR**—It is?

**Mrs Fletcher**—It was last year.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You said that the VET funding is 1.1. It is a pity that after 30 years, VET has been flatlining in this country. It used to be 1.25 in South Australia. What I was going to ask you is: what should it be?

**Mr Yates**—Ideally in the realms of closer to 1.5. The reason I am saying that is because, to accommodate all needs, because we are dealing with individuals here, you need to be able to operate small groups at times. Small groups still require, for a variety of reasons such as duty of care et cetera, a teacher to be with them. If that is the case and you are going to meet all those needs then you are going to have to be running more classes; and more classes mean more teachers.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is in an ideal world and you are not going to get to 1.5. You know that and I know that.

**Mr Yates**—I live in hope.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is realistic? I agree with you that 1.1 is far too low. What do you think is a realistic aim? This committee is going to make some recommendations and one of those ought to be something to do with that. I think if we were going to make a recommendation to 1.5, we would get a non-response; that is my view. But if we gave 1.25, which I think was established in this country prior to 1973, prior to the Karmel report wrecking it, then maybe we would get a response. There is a history towards that. Do you think that is a reasonable recommendation?

**Mr Yates**—Again, I feel a little bit uncomfortable because I would like, in the context of Mandurah Senior College, to do a few sums to see what we could do if we had 1.1, 1.2, 1.3.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Would you get back to us?

**Mr Yates**—I would be happy to do that, yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The other question is to Michelle. You are a young person and you arrive at Mandurah in year 11; can you tell us a bit about what happens in structured workplace learning? What do the kids do?

**Mrs Fletcher**—Once they have enrolled, they have to do an induction program, and that is to establish their work readiness. It is an induction day when we get together and talk to the students. We have guest speakers come in. Alcoa is a large employer and they provide us with their occupational health and safety person who comes in and talks to the students. The students answer questionnaires and they demonstrate on paper that they have understood what the program expects of them. They advise us then of three places where they would like to be placed. Their parents have to sign off on that because it is very important that the parents support them in getting them to their work placement. It is also very important that, when we are placing the students, we place them in the industry area in which they are interested. It is no use us saying: 'You want to work on the boats, building boats. Automotive is pretty close to that, how about that?' What we find is the students will vote with their feet—as we say—and they are not as ambitious as we would like them to be; they may miss a day, arrive late or have all their dental appointments on that day. So it is very important that we match the students' aspirations with the workplace. They do not go out until they have done that induction program.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How is it timetabled?

**Mrs Fletcher**—Would you like to answer that, Gary?

**Mr Yates**—I will have a go at it very quickly. Unlike a traditional school where you tend to operate on what they call six lines, so there are six opportunities or timetable occurrences which may occur more than once, during the week, we are able to operate in extended hours, and we actually go from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. for three days of the week. We can operate on nine gridlines. A student may pick six subjects but that leaves three gridlines free, so it is possible, depending on the mix of the six that they pick, to actually create a day when they do not pick anything at all. During that time they can engage in their structured workplace learning.

**CHAIR**—They are regular placements, they are not block placements.

**Mrs Fletcher**—One day per week.

**CHAIR**—One day a week.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are employers happy with that arrangement rather than block placements?

**Mrs Fletcher**—I would say 95 per cent of our employers like the one day a week. Some would prefer two weeks at a time and others prefer one week to get to know the students, then the one day a week, and they finish up with a one week assessment block when they tidy up everything.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Just for the record, can you tell us what the employers say about the one day a week placements as opposed to the block placements?

**Mrs Fletcher**—We can, because every year we do an evaluation survey with our employers.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What sorts of things are they saying? Do they experience block timetabling in other places?

**Mrs Fletcher**—They have done. Not only Mandurah students use the Mandurah places. We have students from Rockingham and Perth. Sometimes Kalgoorlie will give me a call and say, 'Look, we've got a student coming down, what can you do for them?' So we do work with the other schools. Overall, the employers are telling us that they like the one day a week, with a very small percentage saying, 'We really need just a bit more time.'

**Mr SAWFORD**—Why do they like it?

**Mrs Fletcher**—I believe it is because that is one day that they have to take out of their timetable to look after a student. Some of our employers will write up all the duties that they want them to do, all the tasks, and tick them off as they go through, so they prepare a five-month program for our students. Other employers will wait for them to come in and say, 'Look, I've put this work aside for you so that you're not sweeping floors,' because many of our employers will say, 'Michelle, I won't have them if I have only got floor-sweeping for them to do.' My response is, 'That is really important because when you look at when you employ your apprentices, why do you employ them? It is because they are good at sweeping the floor. If they can learn that, then they will learn the tasks required of their apprenticeship.' But the employers will not take

them if they do not have tasks for them to do that are going to extend our students. In fact, one student called me, very disillusioned, after he had finished structured workplace learning and gained his apprenticeship. He said, 'I want to quit. This apprenticeship is not what I thought it would be.' I said, 'Why is that?' He said, 'Because when I did my structured workplace learning, they spent so much time with me and taught me so much and now I am their apprentice, and guess what I am doing?' I said, 'Well, that's the real world.' He is a qualified mechanic now so he got through. That was a young Aboriginal boy. That was just an example of how our students feel.

**Mr ALBANESE**—How do you get the contact with employers? How do you go out there as a school and say, 'Hey, we're here'?

**Mrs Fletcher**—We used to go through the local paper and the best response we had was from one page that we took out. We put all our students who had gained employment across the top and we thanked all our employers, and we got a great response from that. We used to have breakfasts for employers. Now we have our students do all the groundwork, because we believe that every time we do work for them, we are robbing them of that opportunity to learn. So they must research—and that is part of their induction day—what is out there in the community. We do not accept that there is a Mandurah Holden, because everybody knows that there is a Mandurah Holden; they have to know who the contact person is there and the address. Each year we find that we get approximately 25 to 30 per cent new employers that come through because the students identify them. Then, of course, it is up to us to make sure that they are suitable employers, that the students are going to be safe, and then the students are placed.

**CHAIR**—A view that is frequently expressed is that it is hard interesting students in some of the traditional trades—mechanics, building apprenticeships, et cetera—and that they are more interested going into tourism, hospitality, IT and so on. Does that resonate with you or is that not a problem here?

**Mrs Fletcher**—No, it is not a problem. In fact, this year, we did not think we would have enough mechanics in the whole of the Mandurah and Pinjarra region to place the students who said they were interested in the mechanical area. Given that Mandurah is exploding with new building, we have very limited students who want to go there.

**CHAIR**—Why do you think that is?

**Mrs Fletcher**—I do not know.

**Mr Yates**—The bulk of the building that is being done in Mandurah is being done by contractors from Perth and, to a large extent, they tend to bring their work forces with them. They do not employ the local people to the level we would like to see in that industry.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So you do not really have big local builders.

**Mr Yates**—Big local builders, no.

**CHAIR**—Michelle is saying there does not seem to be enough interest from students. There seems to be a shortage there rather than a shortage of opportunities.

**Mr Yates**—I would suggest that one of the reasons for that is because historically the kids can see and hear from parents that there are not the opportunities in the building industry although there is all this building going on around them.

**Mr SAWFORD**—There is no connect here.

**Mr Yates**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Would you agree with that, Michelle?

**Mrs Fletcher**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—My underlying question is: how do we more effectively involve or interest students in those more traditional trade courses, where employers saying, 'It's hard to get young people interested' where there are employment opportunities, and yet there are not enough students interested? How do we better communicate with students the possibilities that are there and try to develop an interest in those career opportunities?

**Mrs Fletcher**—That is a difficult one. But one of the things that we have done is a program called TIPS—the teacher in industry placement scheme. One of our female staff members has just been out into the building area and she spent four days not with a local builder, but with a representative from a tile company. She gained a great knowledge over four days—when I say, 'great knowledge,' I mean introductory great knowledge of the building industry and how that works. I believe she will be able to pass that on to our students through our induction days and our program we have planned next year. However, that will only make a small difference, but it is a start.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—I would like to mention that there may be another issue, after speaking to the manager of design technology, and that has got to do with what is going on in the middle schools and which teachers are there and their expertise in those areas. From what I have heard, quite often the workshop over at Mandurah does not get used. These are other issues that may need to be considered in terms of getting students interested. If they have not done it in the lower school, they are not going to come to the senior college.

**CHAIR**—So we need to be tackling careers advice earlier in school than just at the senior level.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—I think that is happening, but not—

**Mrs Fletcher**—Exactly.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—It is, we have started something, and that needs to go into more detail, but I think the other issue is: what is the expertise of the teachers in the middle schools? This resonates through to more academic subjects like English. I am an English teacher traditionally, and there have been issues there in terms of students' preparation for certain courses. So the issue of what is going on in the middle schools needs to be considered as well.

**Mr Yates**—Can I add a couple of points there very quickly. First of all, you have to establish the opportunities there and create opportunities for students. Mandurah Senior College is putting a heavy reliance upon that through community partnerships. We are a member of the Mandurah Youth Commitment—and Graeme could expand on that more for you—which deals with these people to negotiate opportunities with them. I know that they are presently developing a working party with the building industry. In terms of career education awareness, that is something that is sadly lacking in our system. I am a firm believer that it needs to be K to 12, right through the whole education system. At the moment it is almost non-existent within our system, and particularly at those crucial years that begin in kindergarten.

I stand corrected, but I think the Canadian model is one that could be worthwhile looking at, where they actually start in kindergarten. If the little kids happen to visit the local zoo, for example, part of the curriculum of the visit to the zoo is they have to nominate an occupation and find out what that person does, what their job is, why they go to the zoo each day and so on. We are sadly lacking that. Again, we are trying, through the Mandurah Youth Commitment, to develop a more coherent and comprehensive career education and awareness program. But the issue is a big one and it is an underestimated one.

**CHAIR**—It is a big one and we are getting that feedback all around the place. Some people have suggested that all pre-service teacher training, particularly at secondary level, ought to include a vocational education component so at least all teachers who are coming out into the work force have got a broad understanding of the workplace career opportunities and so on. How would you respond to that?

**Mr Yates**—Very positively. Most certainly, that type of thing is what is required, rather than, I suppose not blaming the teachers, but they all tend to operate in a bit of splendid isolation within their disciplines and within their subject areas. There might be some casual reference to career opportunities but they would tend to be directly associated with the subject that they may be teaching, which is fine, but that is just the starting point. They need to have a global picture.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—I think it is very important, and I think it is linking back to the holistic approach and what Gary spoke about before: pedagogy. A lot of teachers come into the system in isolation, looking at their teaching, and they have a certain view of the way students should learn and what is important. For a lot of teachers, vocational education is not important, especially in the traditional areas of maths, social science and English, and that is where there are huge issues. I think it is a very good idea. I feel the emphasis needs to be on the right type of information for the students and also on getting teachers to making a pedagogical mind shift and understand that is not their subject in isolation that is important. They have got to place that student in the real world and that involves work, employment, further training, everything.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is interesting. I have a view that the comprehensive high school system in this country, which we moved to after Karmel, has been an unmitigated disaster as far as VET is concerned. You have the figures here and they confirm what I have been saying—that less than 10 per cent of students across Australia are involved in VET in the comprehensive high school system. In other words, in 30 years, they have not changed their practices one iota. You added to it by saying there were workshops lying idle at some of those schools. What you have achieved here is around about the figure that VET training ought to achieve. You are offering VET training with options for TEE, which is what good technical education always did and what

has really flatlined over the last 30 years. We went to Wagga and Junee a few weeks ago. Junee is a little country area outside of Wagga and they have also achieved the 70 per cent mark. Congratulations on that, because that is a significant change in a very short period of time. I accept what you are saying about the funding.

I go back to the framework under which you operate. You often get feedback from VET training that the link to employment is the key. Other people still refer to the needs of industry, and a minor group of people refer to the needs of the kids; in other words, a liberal education. I get the impression that here you meet all three of those things. Is that an accurate perception? Would you like to talk about that?

**Mr Yates**—I certainly hope that is an accurate reflection. That is what we would be trying to achieve: depth and breadth of a curriculum that is not too specific and is a holistic development of that person. Then, working with our local community, through partnerships, we meet the needs of that community. We are meeting the needs of the individual students and trying to accommodate their aspirations as well and matching those, and at the same time trying to create an understanding and an acceptance of the importance of, in modern jargon, lifelong learning. But we express that more in this sense: once you leave us, wherever you go—whether it be employment, study or training—if it is employment, it is employment that is linked to further education or training.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In Western Australia, are replicas of Mandurah Secondary College linked? This is a stand-alone?

**Mr Yates**—We are pioneers, I believe, at this stage, although there are moves in other areas. From what I have read there will be differences within structures but Karratha, I think, is heading towards something that is pretty similar to what we have.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Who drove this idea?

**Mr Yates**—The local community, to a large extent.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So it did not come from the department or politically?

**Mr Yates**—I am not paid to make political comments. My response to that would be yes, most certainly that was involved in it as well. There was the opportunity to develop economies of scale, being co-located—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do they keep people involved in the planning of this college?

**Mr Yates**—Most certainly.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can you tell us who they were?

**Mr Yates**—I think at the time it was the minister for education. I need to preface it. To a large extent this is a personal opinion, but the then minister for education, the present Western Australian Leader of the Opposition, tended to have a bit of a personal interest in the development of that. From his background with chambers of commerce and what have you, he

could possibly see the links and the benefits of being co-located with a TAFE. I believe that the leader is directly associated at the local level with the district superintendents and directors of TAFE and Murdoch University. The principal of the Rockingham campus also had significant input into the structure.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How important is having 1,000 students here?

**Mr Yates**—It is very important from the point of view that you can develop economies of scale.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In terms of your experience, what is the minimum enrolment to get those efficiencies of scale? A young fellow said to us that he was doing Indonesian; there are only three of them doing it. That is not an efficiency of scale.

**Mr Yates**—No. We are breaking new ground here so there is no historical evidence of a stand-alone senior secondary or post-compulsory education.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What do you mean by 'stand-alone'? What is your instinct in terms of a minimum number to offer what you are doing here?

**Mr Yates**—I can use as a benchmark Sevenoaks College in Perth. They would not be able to offer what we do, so we would be needing to look at 600 or 700. In a comprehensive eight to 12 traditional set-up in Western Australia, I would suggest 800 or 900.

**Mr ALBANESE**—In terms of the different streams being offered, the students whom we met earlier today were all doing quite different things. Does that create any potential division between the students in terms of saying, 'You are doing TE courses and you are not'? Is there any of that at all?

**Mr Yates**—No, far from it. In fact, I think we have moved ahead in that regard. There is not this class system, if you like, within it because a lot of students are mixing and matching. We have TE students, nowhere near as many as I would like, heading towards university involved with VET. Therefore, you are getting that cross-mix and fertilisation even amongst the student body. Even the traditional ones that were tagged, like the fast-track type students, through the use of enterprise education are not being seen as an isolated, stand-alone group. They also are integrated back into the mainstream curriculum where they can make up half of their program.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How many students doing the four TE plus one or two VET training courses are in the school, or what percentage?

**Mr Yates**—For the majority of those who would be doing TEE, their link would be through structured workplace learning and where we have curriculum counsellor accredited subjects like computing. I would like to do some sums again because I was not expecting that question.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Take it on notice and get back to us. That is fine.

**Mr Yates**—Yes.

**Mr ALBANESE**—In terms of the interaction between TAFE and the college, can you outline a bit more how that works? Do TAFE teachers come across and teach in the facilities? If you are a college student here, can you be taught by TAFE teachers and vice versa?

**Mr Yates**—At the moment the majority of interaction is where we share resources. I imagine you have seen the workshops. In terms of working with TAFE, we can do that in one of two ways. The first way is that our teachers deliver the actual curriculum or the training and then TAFE provides the quality assurance through an auspicing arrangement. Or, as has been the case this year for the first time, through what they call TAFE profile, we can actually have the TAFE lecturers delivering to our students. All that is happening in the workshop scenario is through TAFE profile, so we actually have TAFE lecturers delivering.

Again, there is a bit of a difficulty there with respect to two things. One is that TAFE lecturers and class sizes are different from the boundaries that we work within, so we cannot necessarily operate everything that we do. I also believe that there are horses for courses. There is a strong need for pastoral care with our students if we want to retain them. That is no reflection on TAFE people but that is not necessarily their core business. They do not have the skills, expertise or experience that teachers have in that area.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do mature age students have access to years 11 and 12 here?

**Mr Yates**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What percentage do you have?

**Mr Yates**—It is very small. When we started in 2001, for whatever the reason may have been—perhaps novelty value or whatever—there was significant interest, but at the moment it would only be a couple of per cent of our overall population.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is there a reason for that?

**Mr Yates**—On this site, I hasten to add. I think there is a little bit of the fact that they have been seen to go back into this environment. Mandurah Senior College has been successful with mature age students more in engaging them in the alternative means of education, and I believe you will be looking at one later on, Mandurah Senior College Online. That has been very successful at re-engaging youth, in particular what I would class as at-risk—they have not graduated, they have no formal qualification but they have been out there in the community. In that environment, they are willing to come and re-engage.

**CHAIR**—Time has just about gone. Is there any final parting shot, if you like? You mentioned, Gary, two key challenges or issues; that is valuable for us. Damian and Michelle, is there any final matter that you would say really needs to be addressed?

**Mr Shuttleworth**—In terms of enterprise education, the definition that has been delivered by MCEETYA fails to recognise the actual process of teaching—the pedagogy. There is emphasis on learning but there needs to be more on what really is enterprise education in terms of the pedagogy that goes on. Also, there is the possibility and the problem of enterprise education becoming vocationalised.

Vocational education is excellent. Our program is called the enterprise and initiative program because initially we are looking at dealing with students who are at risk and if you tap into interests, quite often their interests are in that area. However, enterprise education is so much more than that. I think that the whole definition, the concept and the understanding of enterprise education, need to be developed.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The framework does not work. In fact, I had written that question down about the framework but never asked it. I am glad you added it at the end.

**Mr Yates**—They have established a reputation for parting shots so I will conclude with one. I believe that enterprise education is a sleeping giant in Australia in education and training and if you wake it up and use it within schools, the outcomes for students and our whole community are going to be very positive.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Why is it a sleeping giant? You have mentioned a process and outcomes but neither of you mentioned purpose or rationale. Is the rationale not known? Is that the reason?

**Mr Yates**—Partly. I think teachers are operating too widely in the traditional manner.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So the framework is not correct yet?

**Mr Yates**—I agree.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—Can I ask you what you mean by that question as to rationale?

**Mr SAWFORD**—In anything you do in life, particularly in education, you need at least a trinity of rationale, process and outcome. If they are not coherent then you do not know where you are going, where you have been or even when you get there. It is a confused outcome. One of the things that we have discovered in this inquiry—well, I have and I will not speak for my colleagues—is that there is a very confused rationale about VET in this country. I do not think people actually know what it is and you have contradictory propaganda that comes across to us when people are saying one thing and it is coming across as saying something else. I think the direction is very confused. So in relation to the point that you added at the end, we should perhaps have had a go at that a little bit earlier, but I agree with you and I think the point that Gary made on the end is quite right. I see the principal over there nodding in agreement in the background as well.

**Mr Yates**—I am very pleased about that.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—I think one of the reasons for this confusion is because of teachers' backgrounds, where they are coming from and what they consider teaching to be about. So you have the neo-liberals and then you have the progressives, and that is where the confusion is coming from. When I was doing some research and interviewing teachers, a lot of teachers I interviewed really felt that, if you engage students in vocational education, you are not developing the whole child. That is not accurate to begin with.

**CHAIR**—That is right.

**Mr Shuttleworth**—But not everything that you do needs to be focused on developing the whole child, because if you are looking at lots of different facets you are doing that anyway. So it comes back to that teacher's background and what they value as being teaching and learning.

**CHAIR**—Michelle, a final comment?

**Mrs Fletcher**—On structured workplace learning, we talked earlier about teachers and the work that they do at university. I do not think it should stop there. I think we need to continue that learning once they move into vocational education because it is important that they keep up to speed with what is happening out there in the community. We are recognising that here at the school and our teachers do not have an option in structured workplace learning: all of them will go out into industry placements each year. I think that is important.

**CHAIR**—For how long?

**Mrs Fletcher**—We have four days as a minimum. A week is plenty of time. You select the areas in which they go out into.

**CHAIR**—The school covers the cost of that, I take it?

**Mrs Fletcher**—Yes.

**Mr Yates**—If they have got other duties, they have to be performed, so we are up for relief costs, yes.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. That has been very informative. Keep up the good work.

**Proceedings suspended from 11.01 a.m. to 11.13 a.m.**

**HAMBLIN, Ms Deborah, Manager, Regional Development, Murdoch University**

**KING, Mr Alfred Keith, Principal, Mandurah Senior College**

**O'LOUGHLIN, Mr Michael, Acting Managing Director, Challenger TAFE**

**CHAIR**—Thank you for joining us this morning. Would any of you like to add to the capacities in which you appear before us?

**Mr King**—In addition to being Principal of Mandurah Senior College, I am chair of the Peel Education and TAFE Campus board.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. I invite you to make some introductory comments and then we will proceed to the questioning.

**Mr King**—To kick off, I think it is important to describe Peel in the context of the discussion so people had an understanding of the background that we are coming from. Peel currently has a population of 75,000 which is expected to grow to 97,000 by the year 2006. Most of the population increase is based in the City of Mandurah. Whilst Mandurah itself was settled over a century ago, the town now is really classed as a periphery of the burgeoning Perth metropolitan area—except when it comes to funding; they seem to find the 75 kilometre limit in a lot of things we do, but that is okay. The local government district of Mandurah has a population of some 45,000. This has represented an increase of 7,000 since the 1996 census, so it is growing at nearly 19 per cent. For Western Australia as a whole, the population increase over the two census periods has been 7.3 per cent while it has been 16.7 per cent in Peel, so it is growing pretty rapidly.

The Ministry for Planning estimates Mandurah's population will increase to 60,500 by 2006, 72,000 by 2011 and 84,000 by 2016—an 87 per cent increase in 15 years. What we feel is significant is that the school base of this area is extremely low. In the 2001 census, 17,098 people, or 38.1 per cent, reported that they did not use computers at home. This figure is low when compared with a state average of 43.4 per cent. Examination across the age groups suggests that, of the 20- to 44-year-old cohort group in Mandurah, only 13.1 per cent is likely to use computers in this age group. Conversely, almost twice as many Mandurah people in the 65-year-old age group, 2.4 per cent, use personal computers compared with the state average of 1.3 per cent.

In relation to qualifications held, 4.5 per cent of Mandurah residents hold a Bachelor of Education Degree, with a state average of 9.4 per cent, whilst 71 per cent claim no qualifications, with a state average of 64.7 per cent. As would be expected, the percentage of those Mandurah residents employed as professionals is 12.2 per cent, well below the state average of 17.1 per cent.

Employment in the Peel region, which is dominated by Mandurah, is noted for its instability and vulnerability to external influences. Specifically, Mandurah has one of the highest, if not the highest, unemployment rates in the state for a major population area. Valuable employment

opportunities are generated from the tourism industry. Unfortunately, many of these jobs tend to be offered as casual jobs or on a part-time basis.

In 2001, Peel's inferred youth unemployment rate was calculated to be the highest in Australia at 39 per cent. Census data reveals that the median weekly income for Mandurah people was in the range of $200 to $299, half that of the state average of $300 to $399. It is noted that the low Mandurah figure has remained constant over the past three censuses and in fact is indicating a decline in real income.

The National Institute of Economic and Industry Research database, which provides an insight into the social and economic conditions across Australia, ranks Mandurah as low as 446 out of 632 local government areas. This statistic illustrates the unfortunate social consequences accompanying a work force noted for low educational achievements, inevitably leading to an increase in unemployment. So the background which the partners work in is quite different to the vision of the canals you see when you drive into the City of Mandurah.

I will talk a little bit about the Peel model that has developed between the three partners. The key difference is that the partners have come together on one site with the desire to share facilities, which I think you had the opportunity to have a look at when you walked around. The history is that this piece of land was vested in the Minister for Education and Training in about 1994 and Challenger TAFE then developed a presence on this site. As part of the local area education planning process that the education department put in place, the community put forward a very strong desire to be linked with the TAFE on this site with the hope that, as years went by, a university would come on site as well. Very excitingly, that is about to happen.

The secondary college opened here in 2001. With that has come more involvement with the university, with a number of combined courses being offered between the three sectors and that has reached the stage where there is now a building program planned for the university on the site. The PET campus currently serves about 990 year 11 and 12 students, or just under 1,000; 350 full-time and about 2,000 part-time TAFE students, and we have between 50 and 80 Murdoch students over the year involved in a range of programs on site.

The education department is about to commence its stage 2 building program, which is valued at about $3 million. That will bring up the number of classrooms to the number of students we have on site. Murdoch University will commence its stage 1 building program in 2004, with the aim of completion by 2005, looking at some 80 to 100-plus places for 2005. With a bit of luck, if the minister opens up regional places, we may have 80 regional places come on site next year.

The strength of what has happened between the three institutions would be in the development of what we call fields of study and pathways of learning. We have concentrated on working together and looking at ways that we can progress young people from secondary through to the university sector and, in that, being able to access a number of opportunities through TAFE as an alternative entry into university.

Some key programs that have happened have been a little bit different, and perhaps the best example would be to look at ICT in the first instance. Students can come into the secondary system either university bound or non-university bound. They can access the opportunity to complete certificate I or certificate 2 as part of their normal educational program and, as one of

the students mentioned, that opens up the opportunity to do certificate 3 with Challenger TAFE as an extension to their educational program while they are here. As a result of the package, a student would complete secondary graduation; possibly have a TER score if they are university bound; have a certificate 3 qualification through Challenger TAFE, and also have access to complete two vendor courses, one in Aries and one in Cisco. This makes them a very well trained and quite an employable person.

The strength to that is they can then go on and do the certificate 4 diploma with Challenger TAFE on this site, which then opens up the opportunity for them to apply to Murdoch University and get credit for that program or they can go through and finish a business degree in IT in about half the normal time. We are also trying to develop those programs across a number of fields of study but the ICT one is a good one to put up as an example of where we have got to. The role with Murdoch University on site has been to build what we call a UniFocus program where students who are completing economics year 12 tertiary entrance, also have the opportunity to complete the first year economics university unit as part of that program. They do additional—

**Ms Hamblin**—No, that is Unitrack

**Mr King**—Unitrack, sorry, I knew I would get that wrong. So they have the option or opportunity to experience university studies and actually complete a university course as part of their year 11 and 12 studies. This feedback from students has been significant in helping them make decisions on where they want to head as far as options and opportunities in university.

As mentioned in the section from the senior college just prior to this one, the relationship with Challenger TAFE being on site and the opportunity to both auspice and profile our hours with a whole range of VET subjects opens up opportunities and gives students experience in working with TAFE lecturers and building TAFE qualifications prior to completing year 12. The board is actively working together to make sure that there is a flow-on. What we are finding at the moment is that we have significantly increased the retention rates at school—and I believe this site has contributed to that—but we have actually moved the retention rates from year 10 to year 12 and then they are dropping off. The next step the board is very actively looking at is what we can do to make sure that they then flow on into TAFE or university.

The board that originally started was representative of the three partners. With our desire to make sure the community was significantly involved in setting the direction, a place on the board was offered to the CEO of the City of Mandurah, and that person now sits on the board to bring in a community based focus.

Another of the key things from the collocation is the structure that has been established here which makes us a little bit different from what I think is happening in a lot of other places, both within the state and across Australia. The board of management has equal representation of each of the partners, so we have two members from each area. The strength of what has happened is the shared facilities, and you have had an opportunity to look at the levels that are available. One of the conditions of the partnership on this site is that, in terms of the facilities and related issues, we aim to achieve the highest standards of the partners involved. In that way, we lift standards. We have a set of memoranda of understanding so that we share costs associated with a whole range of things like utilities, gardening, cleaning, resources within those workshops and, with the

university about to come on site, this significantly opens further opportunities for us to be able to do that.

Another part of what the board has actively looked at is working with other key stakeholders like the Peel Development Commission, Alcoa, the City of Mandurah and a number of other organisations. The strongest one currently sitting that we have linked into is the work that Murdoch University has done with these groups to ensure sponsorship of HECS fees for students who are accessing university courses while still doing year 12, rather than it being an upfront fee course which would most probably take a lot of the young people in this area out of the process because of their social economic standing as mentioned earlier.

All of us are part of a number of working parties that are looking at new strategies and ideas to move away from traditional education and into the provision of educational opportunities for people within the community. We are clearly identifying that the level of training we can offer in the community is a higher level than we can actually offer on the site because of what is available. But it also opens up opportunities for education to a whole range of people who, for one reason or another, are moving away from the standard structured model of what a school, TAFE or university are about. The cross-fertilisation of experiences for staff and students is another area that we are looking at and it provides a unique opportunity for this site. In concluding, the strength again is that the partners work very strongly together. We are keen to support one another and we are openly and actively looking for new opportunities to pursue. Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Keith. Deborah or Michael, do you have any comments?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—I think I will take five or 10 minutes.

**CHAIR**—No introductory comments?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—No, Keith made them.

**CHAIR**—In your submission you use the phrase 'a seamless transition' and obviously you are making a lot of progress in that area, particularly in terms of accreditation of particular TAFE courses at uni and even year 11 and 12 courses at uni. What about transition, though, in terms of entrance to uni for those students who do not do the TEE subjects? For instance, how easy is it for students who do vocational courses, school assessed courses, certificate 1, certificate 3 or even certificate 4 courses, to qualify for Murdoch University and, more broadly, without having gone through the academic system as parts of years 11 and 12?

**Ms Hamblin**—I will speak briefly about our UniFocus program. The UniFocus program has been offered on this campus in 2003. I do not think it was offered in 2002; this year is the first time it has been offered. It gives people who have not done the traditional TEE an opportunity to come through on a 10-week bridging program. It was held here on this campus. We have tried to concentrate on the unemployed in the region, but some of the people who have come through the traditional TEE.

**CHAIR**—Could you just elaborate for us how UniFocus works?

**Ms Hamblin**—What happens is that people apply to come in and it is funded from our equity programs.

**CHAIR**—Those students who have done year 12?

**Ms Hamblin**—As long as they do not have TEE. They cannot do TEE and then try and come in through the back door. They have to have never sat for their TEE. They then do a 10-week course that takes them right through everything to do with university. It was tailored specifically for this region. We had other bridging courses but we felt that there were unique needs in this region so we tailored one specifically, and the people who were involved in that actually live in the region and did it from there.

**CHAIR**—So is there some sort of an entrance exam at the end of that 10-week course?

**Ms Hamblin**—Yes. There are exams, assignments and projects all the way through those 10 weeks.

**CHAIR**—If a student succeeds and passes all of those prerequisites, they can then go to Murdoch University to do any course they want?

**Ms Hamblin**—To Murdoch University, except for courses with quotas. They cannot get into vet or law.

**Mr ALBANESE**—As in vet science?

**Ms Hamblin**—Vet science, yes, sorry. My terminology was bad. They cannot get into veterinary science, law and anything that has quotas. But they have been able to get into primary education, business and arts courses.

**CHAIR**—Is it easy enough for them then to transfer to those quota courses, say, after one year of a more general arts or science degree?

**Ms Hamblin**—Yes. If they prove themselves they can apply just like any other student. They are accepted as a Murdoch University student regardless.

**Mr ALBANESE**—Going back a step to the beginning, because I have missed something, how do these students get selected?

**Ms Hamblin**—They apply.

**Mr ALBANESE**—How do they know to apply?

**Ms Hamblin**—We advertise. In fact, when I was sitting out the front there, I saw a big UniFocus brochure for both TAFE and senior college students. We advertise in the papers. When we do any sort of promotion on campus, we tell people about UniFocus from TAFE.

**Mr ALBANESE**—Is there a link with, say, Employment Services programs, Job Network providers et cetera?

**Ms Hamblin**—They are very well aware of it. In fact, not so much in Mandurah but definitely in Rockingham they do encourage people to apply for it.

**CHAIR**—Does this extend to other universities or is it just Murdoch?

**Ms Hamblin**—No, just Murdoch.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—I am leading from the TAFE managing director's point of view to look at articulation and credit transfer with all universities in Western Australia. We find that there are local arrangements such as we have with Murdoch that work quite well. But then, to translate that across the state, it is almost the opposite side of the coin. To quote the dean of a certain university, they are sitting at 106 per cent of enrolments. We can fill those places many times over with year 12 school leavers. Why would we set up a program to take TAFE students into our universities? So it has been extremely difficult.

One university is not even prepared to discuss the issue and the other universities are virtually saying that they see year 12 as where the market is. I think that is related back to what we are talking about here. What we are concerned about is lifelong learning. Essentially, a lot of young people in the 15-to-19-year-old age group, do not quite get it right in terms of TE, schooling or whatever it is, and this region is an example; it has a large proportion of those students compared to another region.

What we offer here is the ability to get back into the education and training framework. We have a lot of bridging programs at TAFE. An enormous number of young people come to us, almost as a second chance, and then progress. What we are finding with universities now, with the exception of Murdoch to a point, is that they have shut the door. If you messed it up at the age of 16, you kiss goodbye to your opportunity to get a university education, or people take a career choice. We are saying to universities that, if we are serious about lifelong learning in Australia and keeping up with skills and technology and so on, we have to re-think that nexus where you either get it right at the age of 16 or 17 or you never get the opportunity.

**CHAIR**—It seems to me that this is one of the problems. For those students who have no intention at all of going to university, who are happy to do a trade course of some sort, the system can work well for them. For those who are totally academically focused on the TEE, that is fine.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It does not work well for all of them.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—No.

**CHAIR**—It does not work for all of them. There are opportunities there but it is that group in the middle who are not sure whether to focus on tertiary entrance and aim for uni to do vocational courses. Unless we can find a better way of smoothing that transition to university via the TAFE system, we are never going to adequately cope.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—These people who often come back to us looking for these transitions are not 19. The average age of our students is 28. They have gone off and done an environmental science diploma, say, worked with the agriculture department or somebody like that for 10 years,

come back and really got into environmental science. They say, 'I now need to extend my level of skill.' To get into university with a diploma, the university's view is go back to square one and get a TER.

**CHAIR**—How do we address that? You are obviously trying to talk to the universities. In what way can government facilitate that process of transition from TAFE to university?

**Ms Hamblin**—I can talk briefly about the articulation arrangements that we have tried between Challenger TAFE and the university. One of them was to go from instrumentation and control certificate 4 or diplomas in instrumentation and control into our Bachelor of Engineering with two years at TAFE articulating into the final years at Murdoch. One of the things we found is that we did not want to set up kids to fail. The maths and chemistry, some of those things, just were not at a level that was helping kids articulate.

We have started looking at bridging programs again. We have set up an EngFocus, which is for students in high school who have not done TEE subjects in year 12. They can then do this EngFocus, which is similar to UniFocus, over the summer break. If they do that they are then accepted into Bachelor of Engineering courses at Murdoch. At the moment, we are waiting on the minister for education to see whether we are going to get nursing places here for 2004. If that is the case, we want to do something similar, because students who have not done TEE are not going to have adequate science based subjects to go into a nursing degree.

We are now looking at setting up a similar bridging program because, at that age in this region, they have no idea. They do not think they are good enough to go to uni, so we have to break that down and make sure that they have the confidence. We have a lot of TAFE kids who come through and we tell them that they are bright enough; they have just been told for too many years that they are not.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You also need spectacularly good teachers in those bridging programs for them to work.

**Ms Hamblin**—Yes, very committed—frighteningly committed.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—There are a lot of kids who have gone off and done other things and who can come back to TAFE and do a diploma—they might be in their 20s or 30s—with the view that the diploma is the way they will eventually get into university. There are some that do the bridging program, then there are others who do not have particular qualifications who do the diploma as a way of easing into that subject area and getting the qualification. Then they think, 'Gee, now I would like to go on to uni.' That is what we are setting up with Murdoch: to get that credit. A lot of universities will give you credit points and say, 'You have 25 credits but you cannot get into the course.' So they are some of the issues. Murdoch has been good in tracking those people through those pathways but other universities not so.

**Mr King**—There used to be a national scheme where schools used to nominate up to five students who had done a non-traditional entry to uni, and where they could access universities. My understanding is that there was only one university that took it up and did a lot of work on that, and that was ECU in Western Australia. The scheme was dropped after two years. Fortunately, we have been able to structure, through this site, a similar arrangement with

Murdoch University now where they accept into university courses people whom I nominate who come through non-traditional programs. Four students are involved in that this year, two doing primary teaching, one doing secondary teaching, and one doing medical science.

It is interesting that the young girl who did medical science had the potential to get the TER score but she was selected to represent Australia in an international decathlon competition in Mexico. Our curriculum council people who run the entrance process would not give her any credit and expected her to sit exams on aeroplanes flying between countries. She had two exams within 24 hours after competing in a youth international decathlon event. So it was because Murdoch University would take her in on our recommendation that she actually got into university.

We are piloting back to what was a national scheme. The indications that we are receiving from the pro vice-chancellor of regional programs is that the university will look at taking in some more students again next year, and that will give us an opportunity to evaluate how they are performing. Feedback that we are getting is that the four that are currently engaged are performing extremely well.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can I explore this area of cooperation between TAFE and senior secondary schools and universities, which traditionally in this country is appalling—there is no relationship. Higher education has dudded TAFE; TAFE duds senior secondary school, it goes down the line, and they all dud each other when they can.

**Ms Hamblin**—Present company excluded.

**CHAIR**—Understood.

**Mr SAWFORD**—One of the motivations for coming here was that this is a different situation. Intrinsic good worth does not necessarily make things work. I still want to explore how this happened, because this is unusual. Who drove this? Why, Michael, was your organisation willing to go—why did you do this?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—The brutal answer to the question is that the first we heard of this was in an announcement by the minister and it was driven—

**Mr SAWFORD**—By the minister.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—-by the minister for reasons of cost saving in building a campus and sharing facilities. I was in the Department of Education and Training at the time. When I came into Challenger TAFE as the 2IC, and this was part of us, and they were designing, building and moving on with the program—Keith was not here at the time—all the architects were lined up and talking about shared libraries and laboratories and those sorts of things. Our response was, hey, we are missing a fantastic opportunity here to make this driven not by a building agenda but by pedagogy, students, the needs of students and how we can best meet the needs of students.

We had to do a bit of a quick catch-up to drive the whole thing from an educational perspective and not a building perspective. We put the architects in the background and then got the educators to the foreground. There were issues such as the pathways and we did some

visioning exercises and those sorts of things. That was the driver. Whether that depends on individuals, I am not sure, but it is very important that education and training is at the forefront, not the architectural issues.

There were a number of things we had to work through, and there were a couple of rocky points, but I think it is fair to say that we saw that as the opportunity, particularly in this region. If you looked at the region—low participation rates, low qualification profiles and those sorts of things—you really had to address something; the traditional education and TAFE systems were not addressing those things. The pathways, particularly based on the concept of lifelong learning, are bringing back people to the education and training system.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Did you replicate this in metropolitan Perth?

**Mr King**—As was mentioned before, the government is looking at trying to place a number of these. My biggest concern is that there has been no evaluation of this one. As Mike said, there has been goodwill amongst the partners and we have most probably progressed it a long way, but there has been no post-occupancy or even further evaluation. To assume that one model will fit all does not work. The numbers issue is significant. I remember the question you asked at the last one. I would say 600 is not enough.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I agree.

**Mr King**—You need to get up to the thousand to be able to provide the breadth. Also you need the goodwill between the sectors, and that is very strong in the current relationship.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Could you not do it just with TAFE? I am sorry, I am not trying to exclude the others.

**Ms Hamblin**—That is all right.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—You would have to if it were in the metro area because you would not be building other campuses.

**Mr SAWFORD**—They could if they had the existing campuses.

**Mr King**—I would say you miss out again on what I believe is the strength of the VET structure here. Every student has the opportunity to do VET, and that is also brought about by the fact that you are co-located. There is flexibility to move. The numbers you require to embed it into your normal timetable, but with easy access, is another significant part. I just hope we can break down some of the industrial issues about cross-sectorial teaching and that kind of stuff. Then you will open up the flexibility of this place enormously and that will lead into an explosion of development of shared courses et cetera that will give unbelievable opportunities to young people. I think that goes right through to university, not just TAFE.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Your deputy principal, Gary Yates, when we were talking about funding and resources, said that he thought that VET students ought to be funded on a 1.5 basis compared with, say, a comprehensive high school student. Is there a need for incentives for TAFE to get into closer relationships with secondary schools and universities? What incentives

would people like you as a TAFE director be attracted to in terms of going into positive relationships with universities and senior secondary schools?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—That is a bit of a hard question to answer. Funding is not a problem from our side of the world. There is a different culture between the two organisations and a different way of working. Keith and I have got some schemes going—we probably should not put that on the record, should we?—where we use the flexibility of the TAFE system to achieve an outcome that cannot be achieved through the school system.

There is probably just one caution, though. 'Seamless' should not mean 'sameness.' We need to remember that there are a lot of young people who have a bad experience at secondary school. People say, 'Well, your only option now is to go back to that, but you are doing TAFE,' in roughly the same environment. So we have been very careful. Whilst we are co-located, the average age of our students is 28. In the Mandurah region most of the community says, 'That is the senior college,' whereas the TAFE is getting in the background. Then a lot of people who had bad experiences at schools say, 'I am not going back to school.' That is one of the reasons we are looking at off-site facilities to try to keep that profile and that little bit of separateness.

For example, there is a bit of a co-location issue but they are separated by 200 metres in an area with a high Indigenous population, and the Aboriginal people just will not go to the school. That is the end of it. So they have had to build a TAFE campus close enough to cater to those students and get some articulation, but not that close that it appears that they are going back to school. So there is that balance.

**Ms Hamblin**—For us, funding is one of the main issues. I have spent a lot of time in the last 12 months getting up Unitrack. We have been sponsored by the local area commissions, local industry and local government to help pay the costs of putting year 12 or TAFE people through those units and the university is picking up the other two-thirds. In the end, it is a funding issue for us. But because we have such great community support here, we manage to get in some funding. I think that the lecturers are more than happy to come down and offer the courses and all those things, but it is funding—

**Mr SAWFORD**—In specific terms, what funding are you talking about?

**Ms Hamblin**—At the moment I have been going out and getting the equivalent of what would be HECS for every student. If they are doing intro to economics, the foundation unit or intro to IT, I go out and try to find enough money to at least pay what would be the equivalent of a HECS payment, and then the university picks up the other two-thirds.

**Mr ALBANESE**—You have spoken a bit about some of the problems of co-location from a student perspective. It seems to me that there must be enormous potential of co-location in terms of benefits for students. The young people we had here before were 16 going on 30, but I am sure they were not typical. I would like to think that everyone was as articulate as that. I am sure they are not atypical—I am not suggesting that. In terms of positive experiences that younger people can have in education, having more mature, older people next to them to guide them can be beneficial and it can be a very positive two-way interrelationship. I am wondering how you can take advantage of that dynamic, in what way you are doing it, and what you see as the potential for that across the three tiers.

**Mr King**—The dynamic is there. I would say you had a very broad cross-range of the student population. They were not picked by me, so I was surprised when I saw the four who were picked. I think the strength of it is that the year 11s and 12s are treated as adults. They work in an adult ethos. We do not have bells—we do not have a whole range of things. The opening up of the timetable gives them flexibility and responsibility for managing their times. They can fit in part-time work, structured workplace learning, or access to either TAFE or university courses by flexing around within their timetable. Some of the less incidental things are seeing and talking to somebody who is doing a TAFE course. I think as we walk through the workshops, particularly the food and hospitality area—

**Mr ALBANESE**—Would there be any joint classes? Would they be in the same room at the same time?

**Mr King**—I think it will come.

**Ms Hamblin**—They are currently with the university course. With the foundation unit that we offer here, our students who enrolled at Murdoch and live in Mandurah were attending that foundation unit. So there were year 12s doing the foundation unit from both Mandurah Senior College and Pinjarra, which is one of the other schools down here, and a number of our university students. One of the issues we had to be careful with was the difference between the teaching styles in a school and the lecturing styles—'stop talking in class'—those sorts of things. Mature adults do not want someone to tell them to stop talking in class. They are some of the issues.

**Mr King**—There is the opportunity to work in something like the workshop where they can see the first year apprentices or the pre-apps under way. As the program develops and more industry skilled training comes into this site, they will see industry based people working here. I know that has been a strong incentive, particularly in the ICT, where the students have had the opportunity to work in the TAFE part, see people and get involved in those sorts of programs.

There are some challenges—I mentioned the industrial one earlier—that we have to work through to provide the opportunity to share. To me, if the resource in this place is ever going to work to its maximum, that opportunity for kids and people to join classes and share with one another is going to be significant. There are still a few challenges for us to break down and that is why I am saying that a key thing that we need to push for is this post-occupancy review, and that will become even more important when the university comes on site.

**Mr ALBANESE**—It seems to me that if you are a year 11 or year 12 student and you see what someone who is just about to complete their apprenticeship is physically producing, that must be more important than watching videos or being told what to do.

**Mr King**—The other thing I probably have not mentioned yet is the Youth at Risk programs, not only at this campus but more north of here in our other campuses, for the kids who are just not cutting it at school. We run about 10 programs now for youth at risk, and often these are kids who have been in contact with the juvenile justice system and the Department for Community Development. We run them in maritime and automotive. These kids who, as you can imagine, are fairly streetwise kids are in our college working with our lecturers in our workshops or on our boats. We run a maritime program, for example, and it is enormously successful.

In the early days we had policemen as part of the class. These kids are those types of kids, so you had to have a policeman and a community worker there, but that gradually phased out. I think we ran an automotive Youth at Risk program last year. We started off with 15; three, on the advice of the community workers, were directed elsewhere. We then had 12, and eight of those 12 got automotive apprenticeships. There was no way they were going to get an apprenticeship had they not gone through that program. It has really turned them around. The parents who come along to the graduation ceremonies for those kids—it is often the first time their kids have succeeded at anything. So that is a side of it. We have the thing this afternoon that Graeme is going to talk about, which probably would help.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Of the 900 or 1,000 kids who are here, how many of those do you expect at the end of this year to go to uni, TAFE, apprenticeships or employment? Where are they going? Are you tracking them?

**Mr King**—Yes, we are tracking them. That is the challenge that the board has. Last year's take-up to university and TAFE was very disappointing and we are working very strongly on strategies—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you want to put those numbers on the record?

**Mr King**—Yes, 90 out of 300 took up TAFE and university places. As I mentioned earlier, we have shifted the retention from year 10. By increasing the number of kids that we are keeping at school, this campus has built the concept that it is a good thing and it is necessary to get to year 12 graduation. We now have to build in the next step.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I appreciate what you are saying—that this needs to be evaluated—but I must say that this model is very impressive. The three of you represent three organisations and you can really lift the bar.

**Mr King**—Sure.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You can lift the bar for how schools operate in VET, and even in TE schools as well. You can lift the bar in terms of how TAFE and universities operate.

**CHAIR**—And how the three work together.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes, and how the three work together. You are on the ground floor of a very exciting concept. We wish every strength to you.

**Mr King**—Thank you.

**CHAIR**—And that is probably a good note on which to finish, given that we are over time.

**Ms Hamblin**—The other thing is that we are all true believers—that is the bottom line. Everyone is very committed to what we are doing.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much; that is excellent.

[12.05 p.m.]

**HARVEY, Mr Graeme, Executive Officer, Mandurah Youth Commitment Inc.**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. Would you like to make some introductory comments before we proceed to questions?

**Mr Harvey**—Yes. Mandurah Youth Commitment is the host organisation to the Peel Local Learning and Employment Partnership. I will try to give a quick background to the Mandurah Youth Commitment and the Peel Local Learning and Employment Partnership. Gary Yates is here with me as a bit of moral support. Gary was also fairly instrumental in the early days of the Youth Commitment, so he will make some comments as we go along, I imagine.

The Peel Local Learning Employment Partnership is an initiative of the Department of Education and Training. There are four 12-month pilots in WA. They have $300,000 funding each. We believe half of that has come from the federal government but we are not a hundred per cent sure. At this stage there is no suggestion that they are going to go past that. They are based fairly heavily on the local learning employment networks in Victoria. The key function is to provide local input into the vocational education and training and transition of youth into these areas. Their motto is 'putting local learning into local hands'.

A brief history: Mandurah Youth Commitment commenced in January 2002 and we had a 12-month roll-out period where we had two community forums. We had a stakeholder group that was working all the way through. Mandurah Senior College was heavily involved—it was probably their idea for the Mandurah Youth Commitment to be in place—and the vision of Mandurah Senior College matches Youth Commitment's.

Mandurah Youth Commitment is linked to Dusseldorp Skills Forum, which has a national youth commitment, and there is obviously also a link there with ECEF. Although we are linked to those, there is no financial assistance from Dusseldorp or ECEF in those things. ECEF does put some funding in via VET in Schools, which is through the office of education, and that comes into the VET clusters which operate with government schools, but there is no direct funding into the Youth Commitment from those two organisations. It was funded originally from contributions from the community, small grants and considerable in-kind. For example, Mandurah Senior College allowed me to do the job of executive officer and I was on their staff up until this year, they funded that part of it.

We followed the guidelines of the Dusseldorp skills forum in rolling out the Youth Commitment. In June last year we became an incorporated organisation—that is not quite true. We were working with the Peel VET cluster and with Mandurah Murray Vocational Program, which was an ECEF funded program, and that was incorporated. Their funding was going to disappear, our two management groups were the same, so we amalgamated them and changed their name to the Youth Commitment so that we were an incorporated organisation rather than fold one and start another one. So at the moment we are an incorporated organisation.

In July the same year we ran an environmental scan which was to look at the position of youth throughout the Peel region. We looked at youth unemployment rates, delivery from registered training organisations, youth agencies, the socioeconomic situation and so forth. That took us about three months. From that, we have drawn up our strategic plan of the areas we are going to move into. That was phase 1. Our intention is that there will be further phases because, from that, we have found that there are certain areas that we did not get information from. We found out the people who live in Mandurah, where they work, and the people who are registered as employees in Mandurah, where they live, but what we did not find were the people who live out of Mandurah, come into Mandurah, work and go back out, which is a fairly large number of people. Building and construction is a perfect example of that. So as soon as we got the information back, we realised there was information we still needed to get, and that will be done as we go along.

The Local Learning and Employment Partnership was announced probably in September last year by the Department of Education and Training. They selected four areas, and we were one of them, and they went around and did a roadshow in the four areas. In September 2002, the roadshow came down here. We called the meeting together through the Youth Commitment; it was a community meeting. There was unanimous support for the LLEP being taken on—I suppose the $300,000 had something to do with it. An interim committee was set up. It was termed an interim committee but in fact it was the old Mandurah Youth Commitment management committee; they just changed roles slightly.

We held another couple of meetings and the Peel community decided that the Mandurah Youth Commitment best fitted the outcomes of the Local Learning and Employment Partnership and would be the best one to host it. That was a bit of a change from the original intention with Local Learning and Employment Partnerships. The original intention was to set up a committee, become incorporated and continue. But we put the point that our outcomes were already similar to the LLEP and also with a 12-month run-out, you were taking probably three months off your period to go through all that process. So all the other three are also now being hosted by the organisations.

From now on some of this Local Learning and Employment Partnership will be different from the other three, because the other three started from scratch; we had been in place for 12 months. I believe we are able to start having outcomes quicker than the others, so it would be a bit unfair to compare them. Some of what I am saying is going to be slanted a little bit towards that.

At Mandurah Youth Commitment we look upon ourselves as a community-owned partnership, rather than a community based partnership. We are quite happy to take on the $300,000 but we still believe that the idea of the Local Learning and Employment Partnership is that it is a grant from the government for local learning to own what is happening, rather than a lot of the other ways where you have a government agency which is put in place locally. That is where we believe we vary a little bit from the original intention, perhaps. We signed the resource agreement in April this year and we got our first payment as a result of that.

One of the guidelines for the Local Learning and Employment Partnership is that it is not a deliverer or a provider, so we are not there to compete with employment directions networks or any of the federal government agencies. We are a broker, facilitator and negotiator; later on we will become a mediator. Our main role is to bring together all the organisations at the table, such

as like this, and broker a deal between all of them—where is their common ground, where are they not common and how can we better use the resources? That is the way we always saw the Youth Commitment and we believe that is where the Local Learning and Employment Partnerships is working.

I will deal briefly with some of the initiatives and projects that we either have in place or are working on. The fact that they are in place does not mean that we stop working; they are ongoing. A number of projects have been done in partnership with local groups and agencies and are being facilitated through Mandurah Youth Commitment. So we do not do them; we simply facilitate their coming together. The Committed to Youth Award is one that the local Peel chamber of commerce and industry have taken on board. They award their local small businesses which are committed to youth. They have some guidelines, which are the number of work placements they give, the number of opportunities for workplace learning and, of course, the number of youth that they employ or take on as apprentices.

The Mandurah Senior College Online Centre, which you will see a little later on, was a situation where we basically brokered the deal. We had links with the Mandurah Forum, the shopping centre, and we obviously had links with Mandurah Senior College and with the Peel Development Commission, so we basically brought the parties together and brokered the deal for this to be put in place. They are renting it from the Forum, but it is at a better rate than normal, and it fitted in with the fact that the Mandurah Forum wanted to do something for local youth. They wanted to put in a program to change the way people in the shopping centre saw youth. So that was the situation; we were able to bring two or three things in together. The Peel Development Commission have what they call 'Peel portals', an online facility. They could not fund that so we were able to then put that into the online centre, so now it is a three-way partnership.

The year 10 SAER program—which is the students at educational risk program—is the one that Mike mentioned earlier. That program involves year 10 kids who do not fit in and who are round pegs in square holes. So we have a program where they come into TAFE for one day a week to do a trade taster. They come in another day when they do a leadership program and the rest of the time they are back at school. So that is a three-way partnership once again.

Year 10 Aboriginal School Based Traineeships is a pilot that the Department of Education and Training has in place. We are facilitating that at this end where year 10 kids do a certificate 1 in work readiness and then they do some work placement. The rest of the time they are at school. Once again, we facilitate that.

We have focus groups. The Peel Regional Youth Support Scheme—PRYSS—deals with the alienated youth, the real high at-risk kids, who may be at risk from social background, family and that sort of thing. What we are trying to do there is work out a way in which we can better match education and training to them. In the past it has always been: how do we move them to education and training? We now believe we have to move education and training to them. The online centre and other off-site centres are the sorts of things that we are looking at. So kids, as Mike mentioned, are able to get back into education and training but they do not have to come to this site if need be. We are trying to bring them closer together.

The job agency is another focus group where the job agencies, both federal and state government, have outcomes they have to meet. They have to give career education advice and assist children with transition through, so we are working with that to try to better bring those two together. Probably the most difficult and the most important issue here—and I think Gary would agree about this—is to get schools to accept that these agencies have expertise and resources that can come into the schools and use them. We are into our second month in terms of that focus group.

Careers Expo has been run in the past by Mandurah Senior College. It has now been taken over by Youth Commitment, but this time we are targeting at-risk kids who have dropped out of the system. We are identifying them through the online centre and Billy Dower, which is a local council drop-in centre. They are going to run the Careers Expo, which is very similar to Damian's Resource Expo, as an enterprise. We are working with TAFE to give them credit towards some certificates for the work that they do there. Hopefully then we will fit them back into the system.

We are working with Vocational Education and Training programs and a whole lot of others. We are trying to work with Waroona and Boddington district high schools to deliver VET in an isolated school by using the online centre and also by using Challenger TAFE to deliver the VET part of it. We believe the kids will be able to do quite a bit of it on the job and use the Challenger TAFE as a registered training organisation. That way we will be able to give a bit more flexibility. At the moment, if you run one program, not all the kids want to do that, so we will be able to do a bit at the district high school, a bit on the job, and a little bit with the online centre.

We also work quite closely with Mandurah Senior College on the vocational programs. Our role is to look at the model and then we go to people like Gary, to the senior college, and work out how it can fit in there. Then we go to Challenger TAFE to see what they can do, and then we go to other organisations such as the Curriculum Council, the Department of Education and Training and that sort of thing. Another example is the multicultural Aboriginal Dance Enterprises where we are working once again with the college, TAFE and the local Indigenous community to put a program in place.

I will leave it at that, because you may have some questions. That is basically our view of the role of LLEP and Youth Commitment. We are bringing together all the different organisations; we are the legs when people do not have the time to do those sorts of things.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Graeme. Just for my information, could you outline your link with structured workplace learning and Michelle Fletcher's role there? How does that work? You are not actually involved in finding work placements, are you?

**Mr Harvey**—Not directly. Michelle sits on one of our working parties. We have a management group then we break up into five portfolios and we have working parties underneath that. One of them is business employment, and she sits on that. We can use that to perhaps put the message out to business and employers that we require placements and so forth, to push school based traineeships, but that is the main role there. Michelle is employed by the senior college but there are other employees. We employ one of the people there through Youth Commitment, so there is a partnership there. We invoice the Catholic college and look after those funds and those sorts of things. Because we are an incorporated organisation, we are able

to be a bit more flexible with our funding than government organisations, so we work in a partnership there between those two.

**CHAIR**—It seems to me that one of the key issues with effective vocational education is finding adequate work placements so there are links between school and the workplace in a way that really enhances the value of what is being learned and develops those key competencies but also leads on to employment opportunities post-school. What is your view of the best way to be tackling that? Is it to have a school based coordinator who makes the work placements? Is it better to have a cluster of schools working together with an external organisation such as yours with a full-time paid professional person making those links between employers and the school?

**Mr Harvey**—I am probably a bit biased, but I believe the latter one, where schools are working with another organisation that goes across the community. This one is slightly different in that we have a senior college, so you have only one post compulsory, but we still work across Pinjarra, the district high schools and the middle schools.

I think that one of the real benefits that something like the Youth Commitment has is that it is a neutral forum. We are able to go out and talk to employers and businesses, listen to what they say and to what the schools and registered training organisations say. People seem to be more willing to talk to you about the warts and so forth, because they are not talking directly to the school.

**CHAIR**—You work with government and non-government schools, I take it, from what you said before?

**Mr Harvey**—LLEP is supposed to, yes. We have had a little bit of difficulty with the non-government schools wanting to come on board. I think as soon as you look at vocational education and training, they tend not to think it is their area.

**CHAIR**—The non-government schools?

**Mr Harvey**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Maybe it isn't.

**Mr Harvey**—That could be the case too. Particularly, there are two here and one of them has nothing to do with VET whatsoever, the other one tampers with it a little bit.

**CHAIR**—Why do you think that is?

**Mr Harvey**—I think maybe they can get a captured audience. They can cater for that particular group of kids, particularly TEE-bound kids. Those sorts of kids I think are less difficult.

**CHAIR**—But aren't there also a lot of non-government schools that have students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students who are perhaps not TEE focused but are vocational focused?

**Mr Harvey**—Yes, there are, and more so in certain areas. I worked previously in Kwinana-Rockingham where we had three. They do cater for the kids but I do not believe they cater as well as a government school in that they are more restricted. For example, there is one in particular where the governing body of the school puts far more restrictions on what it does than a government school would. Government schools, I believe, are able to be far more flexible. I suppose you answer through several layers and there is much more at the top. I think in a lot of private schools, the governing body has much more influence on what they actually deliver. Some private schools do deliver VET.

**CHAIR**—But the needs of students are obviously the same in all schools are they not?

**Mr Harvey**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—What sort of response do you see in the area generally of employers to the Mandurah Youth Commitment and vocational training?

**Mr Harvey**—Good, very good.

**CHAIR**—Are there ways that could be improved?

**Mr Harvey**—One way would be, as Gary mentioned earlier, the school based traineeships. Part of the problem in WA, although I suppose it is Australia wide, is that we cannot do a part-time apprenticeship whereas the rest of Australia can. So we still have the terms school based traineeships and school based apprenticeships. I believe changing the term to a school based apprenticeship would help in that area. I do not suppose it is just school but with subcontracting, the privatisation businesses now have to address the bottom line much more than they did in the past.

I think government agencies and large businesses like Alcoa felt that part of their role was to train people in trades and that sort of thing. With subcontracting, it is very competitive. I think that has gone and not many build the training sector into their costings. In terms of building and construction, as Gary mentioned, we are trying to work with the organisations. I think it is getting to the crunch point. There is a shortage of skills, so they have got to look at it. For a little while, that was not a problem.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You say in this information here that there are 10 partners represented on the management board. Who are those 10 partners?

**Mr Harvey**—We have the senior college, Challenger TAFE, Alcoa, the Peel Business Enterprise Centre, the Chamber of Commerce, Peel Training and Employment, which is the Job Futures plus a registered training organisation, Pinjarra Senior High School from the Murray area, Murray Job Link, which was a Job Futures before there was a bit of a reshuffle, the council, Peel Development Commission. I think that is about the 10.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I see Murdoch is not on it?

**Mr Harvey**—Not on that one. That is an interesting one because Murdoch was originally involved in the career awareness portfolio, so they sit on that one. We have got 10 on the

management group but we have another 30 organisations across our portfolios, and some of them felt that they did not fit in with the management group at that stage.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What happens with the $300,000 pilot? Will you still continue?

**Mr Harvey**—Yes. Part of our strategic plan for Youth Commitment this year was that we will look at a sustainability project and I am pretty sure we can convince the management committee that part of that funding should go towards that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You are the executive officer.

**Mr Harvey**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What support base do you have?

**Mr Harvey**—With LLEP I now have an administrative officer and we use some clerical assistance from time to time.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is your role that of a broker? Is that really what the role is?

**Mr Harvey**—I believe a lot of it is, yes; in fact, probably the majority. No, it is probably more than that. The brokerage is probably when it all comes together. Part of it is to try to identify needs. Because we talk to lots of different organisations, we can match where there is demand and supply and where they are not coming together maybe there are two lots of supply doing the same thing and we can better rationalise those sorts of things. At the moment, one of the areas we are looking at is the equine industry. They have a Horse Industry Association. They are talking about all the things they want to encourage more people to become involved in, but that is about it. They put adverts out. We are able to say that Challenger TAFE is interested in looking at that sort of thing, and that Mandurah Senior College and Pinjarra District High School are interested in doing VET courses in those sort of areas, so we can bring those together. I suppose brokering is the working part of it after we have identified needs and over-supply, gaps, that sort of thing.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you have a framework for evaluating your success or failure? How do you do that?

**Mr Harvey**—Yes. With the resource agreement, they have given us certain guidelines such as you must state who your partners are, what your management committee looks like and that sort of thing. They will ask for certain information. From Youth Commitment, we are looking at things like retention, participation, transition into further education, training, employment, and unemployment rates eventually.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Tracking?

**Mr Harvey**—Yes. Our overall goal is for all kids to have the opportunity to go to end of year 12 or its equivalent, so that might involve, as I think Gary was talking about earlier, maybe a mixture of school, TAFE, training or employment which is an apprenticeship. It may be mixtures

of all those sort of things. It was something to get them through to that level. That is our goal. So they will be our main measures.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Does you organisation have a role in avoiding resource duplication? Can you identify those things and get away from that?

**Mr Harvey**—Yes. That is certainly one of the roles of the local learning and employment partnership. Youth Commitment also saw it as that and that was where the environmental scan was. One of the downsides of something like a community partnership, and maybe even a local learning and employment partnership, is you do not have a doctrine, responsibility or authority for these things. Identifying gaps and getting resources to work better we have to do through negotiation, brokering, that sort of thing. That is what those focus groups are there for: to try, first of all, to get people to realise there is a duplication or there is a gap and to overcome the nature of that. Over years, competitive tendering has become part and parcel of it. It is particularly difficult to work in that area in this region because it has become pretty cutthroat. There have been huge needs in the area. There is high unemployment, high youth unemployment and fairly high numbers of homeless youth. So bidding for funds has been fairly competitive, and that is one of the biggest problems. So, yes, we do have a role, but it is not like government or some authority says, 'You must do it through this organisation.' We have got to work with them to do that. I think in the long run that is good; it is just a bit more difficult.

**Mr ALBANESE**—I want to explore the relationship between Youth Commitment and the Indigenous community. How big is the Indigenous community in this area? It is one of the terms of reference, by the way, for this inquiry.

**Mr Harvey**—That is a good question because knowing how big it is, is one of the problems. With our original community workshops, we invited Indigenous groups along and they came along, but one of the difficulties we had was finding out who they were, where they were and who you should speak to.

**Mr ALBANESE**—I noticed there was no representation on the board.

**Mr Harvey**—No, but we do have an Indigenous portfolio which now is probably the most well attended, and they are very keen. We put that in place for the exact reason you described. When we got the opportunity to program the Aboriginal school based traineeships, a high impact program came down which identified at-risk kids. We could never identify the kids. We could never find them and by the time we did, it was too late. One of the ideas in the Indigenous portfolio was to get the different groups in the community aware of what we were doing. It is twofold. The first one that came up, talking to them, is that they do not know what these programs are. Yes, they did hear about them; the word went out, but they did not know what it was. They had no idea what it was all about. So, one, is to get that information out, and the second one is to get them to identify the kids who need to be involved. For the Aboriginal year 10 program we identified 13 kids this year. The best we could ever get before was about two kids

**Mr ALBANESE**—What are those 13 kids doing?

**Mr Harvey**—In the year 10 one, they do the year 10 certificate 1 in work readiness. They are doing 15 days paid work, and then they are doing other stuff back in the school—their numeracy and literacy. The work placement they are doing is in an area that they identify. There is a group training company that looks after the work placement. By having the portfolio in place and actually having the information, we were able to say that these were the Indigenous kids in the school; we were not able to do that in the past.

The other point is that there is Murray and there is Mandurah, and there is tribal friction between the two. That has caused problems. We have had people come over from the eastern states and they have not been accepted by either community. We are hoping that the portfolio will overcome that in that they will hopefully see us as neutral. That has been part of the problem: identifying people. If you talk to this person, they will not identify the other people, and there are times when they virtually will not be there. We seem to have overcome that a little bit, I do not know how well, but we certainly seem to have.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Following on from that, does your organisation have links to them? I would have thought that they would be much easier to identify at primary school than at secondary school. Is that a valid point to make?

**Mr Harvey**—Yes, it is. I think it is a very valid point. It is interesting that you say that because the Local Learning and Employment Partnership is targeting 15- to 19-year-olds. The state government is targeting 15- to 19-year-olds.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is too late.

**Mr Harvey**—But everywhere we go people say that we need to move further down, and I think that is very valid. Gary mentioned earlier that career education research indicates that some kids, by the time they are in grade 1, have already made career decisions—not where they are going to go but they have certainly eliminated certain things. As time goes by, it will become more evident that we do need to move down. The year 10 kids and some of the year 9 kids are not our target group.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But some of these at-risk groups do not know what the rules are. They need a lot of reinforcement, and that can come in a very non-threatening way at younger ages. It always bothers me that higher ed, TAFE and senior secondary schools do not pay enough attention to what goes on in primary schools. Maybe the answer is identifying just where it is but how you do it is another question. You might need some money too.

**Mr Harvey**—Yes. I think it is very valid. The more you talk about it, the more people say, 'Yes, but what about these kids?'

**CHAIR**—Graeme, time is up, but I will ask you one other question. You mentioned the Peel regional traineeship and apprenticeship strategy. Could you just briefly elaborate on how that works?

**Mr Harvey**—Yes. Peel Training and Employment is a Job Futures group. This is one of the times when we were trying to look at saving resources and they wanted to look at apprenticeships and traineeships. We indicated that the schools were looking at school based

traineeships, and two other organisations, Peel Employment Advisory Committee and Mandurah Job Link, were also looking at them. There was quite a bit of flak at the time that Peel Training and Employment picked this up. So we brought them all together and they came out with a booklet, probably about the size of what you have, which identifies that the intention is to increase apprenticeships and traineeships within the region. Then it goes through a process by which employers can become involved, all the different agencies that are around, if you are at this stage, who do you go to, who do you talk to, and if you go to a New Apprenticeships centre you may go to a group training company. It outlines all the different ways you can employ people.

Unfortunately, it ran out of funding and did not get to the next step of keeping it going. But it was aimed at being a bit of a handbook where would people go out, talk to employers and say, 'These are the ways you can do it; when you get to that stage, here it is, here are the contacts, here is how you go about it.' It was to explain that there is more than one way to take on apprentices. Building and construction is a perfect one where they probably cannot take on a full-time apprentice, but they may be able to share one.

**CHAIR**—Do you have group training companies in the area?

**Mr Harvey**—There are two that operate. One is based in Bunbury and one is based in Fremantle. One specialises in school based traineeships; the other one tends, although they are looking at it, to vary in their efficiency and the view people have of them. I think there is a bit of politics involved there. But, yes, they are certainly here.

**CHAIR**—We will not pursue that, although that would be interesting. I am afraid time has gone. Thank you, Graeme, for your time this morning and for your input; we appreciate it.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I hope you get some funding next year.

**Mr Harvey**—So do we.

[12.39 a.m.]

**HOPE, Mrs Jocelyn, Cluster Coordinator, SWISlink**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. We invite you to make some introductory comments and then we will proceed to questions.

**Mrs Hope**—SWISlink—the south-west independent schools vocational program—represents four schools in the south-west region: one independent school and three Catholic high schools. It covers a geographic region of 25,000 square kilometres, so it is rather large.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Where are the four schools?

**Mrs Hope**—The four schools are Kearnan College in Manjimup, Bunbury Catholic College in Bunbury, MacKillop Catholic College in Busselton, and Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School in Bunbury. Our schools have gone into a cluster arrangement due to the large geographic distance mainly, the fact that our schools are quite small and in order to make best use of resources and create opportunities for the students. The cluster was formed in 1998 and it began in 1999, when there were approximately 14 per cent of year 11 and 12 students undertaking studies.

**Mr SAWFORD**—VET studies?

**Mrs Hope**—Yes, 14 per cent undertaking the VET program. That has now risen to 18 per cent in 2003 and we anticipate even greater numbers next year.

**CHAIR**—One of the aspects of your submission that I found interesting was the structured workplace learning program model that you have that seems to focus on a broader range of experiences for students rather than on one particular industry—it focuses more on generic industry based schools. That seems to be one of the real dilemmas in vocational education: do we best prepare and link students with the work force by developing those generic employability skills in a range of contexts, or do we focus on a particular industry and a particular course—hospitality, tourism or whatever? Could you elaborate on that and whether you have had any evaluation of the effectiveness of this program compared to perhaps those other sorts of programs?

**Mrs Hope**—To answer the last part first, no, we have not had a comparison evaluation, but most certainly we do have evaluations that go through the year through the program. Our schools, possibly because of the small number of students participating, decided originally to go with not locking students in early to a specific industry area and that has proven to be one of the key successes of the program. At about this time of the year, students are doing student selections for next year in year 11, so asking them to lock into an industry area seemed not to be following the guidelines of trying to expose students to as many career opportunities as possible. We know these students are only 15 years of age. We have found that to lock them in too early is not the way to go. Students in our program are able to choose three different industry areas

during year 11. They will complete two work placements normally, but can have up to three work placements.

**CHAIR**—In block placements?

**Mrs Hope**—No, they go out one day a week. They have a minimum of 15 days. In fact, we found most of our students average 22 to 30 days per year. Many of them will go out during their school holidays on work placement as well with the same host employer because they want to get more skills. We do engender in them that employability skills are very much worth picking up, because that is going to make them employable, and the only way to do that is to get out there on the job and do it.

In year 12, under the Western Australian Curriculum Council subject structured workplace learning, students must choose an industry area because it is called industry specific. However, if the student is still uncertain, you can enrol them, for instance, in metals and engineering. They can do such a variety of placements that they still might get exposure perhaps to the retail or the administrative and management side of that industry.

**CHAIR**—What level of qualification does that structured workplace learning program bring at the end of year 11? Is it just certificate 1?

**Mrs Hope**—Partial completion of certificate 1.

**CHAIR**—What else needs to be done to complete certificate 1?

**Mrs Hope**—They may need to top-up on some more units of competency in year 12. The way that our program is run is they go to off-the-job training out of school. In fact, it is not run on the school campuses. The value of that to these students is that, again because of the nature of our schools being small, there may only be one student who wishes to undertake retail studies or information technology, so it may also not be available in his town with a registered training organisation.

Currently we have a two-week block of off-the-job training at registered training organisations. We use three registered training organisations in the region, and one of them is proving to be very expensive—that is, TAFE—to run off-the-job training. Part of the challenge for me for next year is to be able to bring those training costs down considerably through auspicing. Two of the registered training organisations that I deal with, I believe, give us excellent service and value for money, and TAFE fees are very expensive.

**CHAIR**—I will pursue that in a moment. The off-the-job training is in order to complete the certificate 1?

**Mrs Hope**—Yes, a certificate 1 or a certificate 2, although there may be partial completion in fact. Again, because of the nature of our program, we are not enrolling the students in a full certificate in a particular industry area. They may do three units of competency out of the business studies certificate and then they may do another unit of competency out of the information technology certificate 2. It is very much a mix and match. Our kids do not come out

at the end of it with a full certificate, with the exception of certificate 2 in automotive, and that is an alliance that we have with Automotive Training Australia and those students are preselected.

**CHAIR**—Do you think that is a disadvantage for your students? What outcomes do you have then in terms of their employability? Do they all generally find jobs?

**Mrs Hope**—It is not a disadvantage if they are going to TAFE, because it gives them the opportunity to again try some different industry areas. The national training has not locked them into anything. It is also an advantage if they are seeking work because they can look in a broader range of industry areas when they are looking. In the country, possibly there are not as many job opportunities coming up. The kids, in their very first job that they are going to be paid in, need to realise that they may not get the particular job they first thought they would. They have to be prepared to go anywhere and do anything to gain that real experience. They need to be very flexible. We try to engender that in them.

**CHAIR**—Have you got any figures or evaluation of their employability following this particular path? You say that it sounds like a good way to go because they have a broader range of skills, but is that measured in any way?

**Mrs Hope**—I do not have a formal evaluation, I must confess. This is anecdotal evidence from employers who have employed our students and, in turn, have come back. Again, they will phone the schools and say, 'We have a previous Bunbury Catholic student who is an apprentice and we wish to put another one on; can you please give us five students?' It is anecdotal evidence from the employers when they are either phoning for a real job or phoning back for another work placement student, or when the VET coordinator goes out to the work placement and speaks to them. They have said they much prefer the way our program is run, as opposed to the students who have taken one pathway.

**CHAIR**—We are getting both messages.

**Mrs Hope**—I am sure you are.

**CHAIR**—I suppose it is partly horses for courses but it is hard to determine which is the better way to go. You mentioned the cost of TAFE courses, and this is an area of contention for non-government schools. As I understand it, in Western Australia public schools are not charged anything for accessing TAFE courses.

**Mrs Hope**—Correct.

**CHAIR**—What would be the average cost for one of your students to access a construction, hairdressing or hospitality course at TAFE?

**Mrs Hope**—I have just had 12 students run through TAFE and it has cost $4,500.

**Mr SAWFORD**—For a semester?

**Mrs Hope**—No, for two weeks training—

**Mr SAWFORD**—So it is almost $400 per student for two weeks.

**Mrs Hope**—That's right, about $400, as opposed to other RTOs whom I have used who have also done around 50 to 60 hours units of competency and they were between $200 and $240 per student.

**CHAIR**—If I asked you what is the answer to this, presumably you would say, as other submissions have, that TAFE ought to charge the same fees or not charge fees in the same way that they do for government schools. There is obviously a real point of contention there. Would it be a reasonable compromise to say, for instance, that they ought to charge on a pro rata basis, perhaps as a percentage of the AGSRC, in the same way that the formula for funding non-government schools is worked out? For example, if a non-government school gets 50 per cent of the funding of a public school, that could be applied to the purchase of vocational courses from TAFE. From your point of view, would that be a reasonable outcome?

**Mrs Hope**—Not having had an opportunity to study the formula—

**CHAIR**—Perhaps you can think about that one.

**Mrs Hope**—I cannot really answer that. Having access to profile analysis I think would be equitable. I cannot understand why other RTOs in the region can offer the same and tell me that they make a profit and TAFE cannot. I have spoken with the managing director of our regional TAFE and I understand that all the managing directors in WA have agreed to a certain price structure and that is the price structure that we now have to adhere to. Previously, I could negotiate the rate far lower and my local TAFE negotiated far lower. For me in the regions it was a disadvantage that the price structure has gone state wide, whereas I believe in the metropolitans it was an advantage.

**CHAIR**—As for the other RTOs who you say are cheaper, are their credentials for the students who do their courses accepted as well by industry as the TAFE courses?

**Mrs Hope**—Yes. They are well recognised in the region as well and just as accepted, and their standard of service and duty of care is excellent.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How far is Busselton from Bunbury?

**Mrs Hope**—About 45 minutes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is not far.

**Mrs Hope**—No, it is not far.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Manjimup is down here, is it?

**Mrs Hope**—No, Manjimup is about 200 kilometres away.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How far is it from Bunbury?

**Mrs Hope**—Honestly, I do not know how many kilometres. It takes about an hour and 20 minutes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Maybe 120 or something like that.

**Mrs Hope**—Something like that. It takes me about an hour and a half to go to Mandurah from Busselton, so it is a bit of a circle.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You made a point about keeping student study options open to year 11 and 12. Do you think in your schools that you do the same when the kids lock themselves into mathematics 1, physics and chemistry? Do we do the same with those kids who get locked in and the kids who get locked in to doing other academic packages?

**Mrs Hope**—I think the academic packages play a part in our general education studies.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But a lot of kids get locked into those and they are unsuited to them as well.

**Mrs Hope**—They do, but they have an opportunity to change courses as well.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Catering VET for a hundred students in diverse campuses must be very difficult.

**Mrs Hope**—It is, it is interesting. This is probably why they employed me to take the problem. There are four coordinators, one in each school, who have the direct contact with the student on a day-to-day basis, and my role is to broker the off-the-job training, build relationships with industry areas and to put the processes and planning in place for the program. The day-to-day monitoring is certainly done by the VET coordinators but it is not really that large. When you look at somewhere like Darwin up in Northern Territory, it is huge.

**Mr SAWFORD**—No. Mandurah College has got a thousand kids and when you have got a thousand students doing VET, you can offer a whole range of choices, whereas with a hundred, you are severely limited.

**Mrs Hope**—I see what you mean, sorry.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In Bunbury, for example, which I suppose is the centre of these four schools, is there an equivalent to the Mandurah Senior College?

**Mrs Hope**—No, not currently.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is there a government school in Bunbury that would have 70 per cent of their enrolments doing accredited VET?

**Mrs Hope**—Yes. I believe it is Australind Senior High School.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do any of the students from your schools do VET at that school?

**Mrs Hope**—No. Currently, due to the political machinations of independents, Catholic, government and non-government schools, they do not use each other's resources. However, my counterpart in the government school and I do work fairly closely together in that, when we can, we run industry programs together. The example is the automotive program that I have mentioned in there I think where Automotive Training Australia and the Motor Traders Association are in fact funding the certificate 1 level training. The student catchment for that has come from both government and non-government schools, but that is a program that is operating out of the school premises.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In a former life as a school principal, it always seemed to me that the most successful secondary schools, public or private it did not really matter, were the ones that actually made a choice about what they were going to be. If the school made a choice of making sure 70 per cent of their kids got VET, they really became a technical training school under another name, and they always seemed to work very successfully. Those schools which took the academic road worked successfully too, because they knew exactly where they were going. I think in secondary education a lot of schools have confused outcomes; they mix and match both and they never seem to know which way they are going. Would it be better for your kids who are doing VET in your schools to do it at somewhere like Mandurah Senior College rather than in your own school?

**Mrs Hope**—That is certainly a choice that their parents can make. I do not think that any of our schools would sit down and recommend to a parent that they take their child elsewhere because Bunbury Senior High School offers a—

**Mr SAWFORD**—For their child a better option.

**Mrs Hope**—–for their child a better option.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Shouldn't we be doing that though? And the other way too, that maybe the kids would be better off in a far more academic school. These things go both ways.

**Mrs Hope**—I think that is an idealistic view to take and it would be wonderful if that was the reality but I think that—

**Mr SAWFORD**—I am interested that you have not rejected it, Jocelyn.

**Mrs Hope**—Each school encourages enrolments, particularly in the country where they require numbers. Parents go to Catholic and independent schools for things other than education. They are looking at the values, perhaps, that suit their family better at one particular school rather than another. Certainly parents are becoming more questioning in the VET area when they are enrolling at our schools, and I am thinking of Bunbury Cathedral Grammar particularly which, in the past, was known as an academic school, and due to the parents' requests is now going more down the VET road. Parents still wish their child to be part of the school community at Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School, but the student may not be a TEE student, so they are asking 'What are my options are here?'

**Mr SAWFORD**—This is a very unfair question, Jocelyn, so if you do not answer it I will understand. I have this picture in my head that successful schools either have these benchmarks:

70 per cent academic, 30 per cent accredited VET; or 70 per cent accredited VET, 30 per cent the TEE schools. I do not have a great deal of time for the schools that fall in between because I think they are just confused. Are your schools achieving a growth rate? You mentioned the growth rates going from 14 to 18. Do you anticipate your schools having 30 per cent of the enrolments doing accredited VET? Is that possible in those four schools?

**Mrs Hope**—I think that is achievable; I think that is becoming achievable.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Would it be a good thing?

**Mrs Hope**—Yes, it would be, particularly with the changes in the West Australian Curriculum Council. Subjects that are coming up, that you are probably aware of, within the next few years, and post-compulsory schooling, are all going to change and I understand that part of those subjects is going to be a component for career exploration through work placement.

I think parents and students will realise that, because of the way that we are certainly trying to give information, there is more to life than going to university. There are more pathways to university than the current tertiary entrance examination. The pathways that have been created are probably one of the governing forces that are increasing participation rates up to that 30 per cent that you are talking about. There are students taking tertiary entrance examinations who should not be and they are doing that because mum and dad still believe they should be brain surgeons. But that is because that is the school that we came from and that is our cultural heritage as parents. As educators, we are trying desperately to educate parents through information evenings, parent nights and career expos so that they do realise that their child may still become an engineer but he might in fact be an automotive technician to start with because that is where his abilities are right now.

**Mr SAWFORD**—We had this debate 30 years ago and we never really progressed the VET part until probably the last 10 years and in the last 10 years it has only progressed in certain areas around the country; there has not been an overall progression. New South Wales prides itself on its participation in VET, yet it is only 30 per cent when it ought to be 70 per cent, so there is a long way to go. Yet, federal and state governments around the country have not added any additional money to VET in the last budgets, and that is a very bad signal. Can VET grow in your sector without—

**Mrs Hope**—Without additional funding?

**Mr SAWFORD**—Has your management, at a larger level, got the ability to put the necessary funding in? If you are going to grow from, say, the current 14 per cent to 30 per cent, for example, twice the amount of money has to be put in from somewhere. Where is it coming from?

**Mrs Hope**—The current sources that you are describing are not going to get any larger. If the current sources are the only sources that we have then probably our schools could not sustain it. If they get to a point where they wish to be able to deliver an industry area in their own school, they possibly do not have the resources to create a new building because they fund their own building programs to build a commercial kitchen or an automotive workshop to industry standards. When you are looking at the AQTF standards that must be adhered to, possibly they

do not have that. That is one of the reasons we deliver currently off-the-job training out of schools, because they do not wish to put the money in place for a commercial kitchen and then find that next year there are not enough students to fill the VET course.

**CHAIR**—One of the arguments put by a number of schools is that we do not really need that duplication. It has been put by the TAFE sector that we ought not to have that duplication and that it is a much more efficient use of resources to have out-of-school training. The argument from the schools on the other side, though, is that the school teachers and the schools have a better understanding of the needs of their students, they have responsibility for the welfare of their students and they have much more of a nurturing role. Do you see the loss of that as much of a problem if we move towards out-of-school training?

**Mrs Hope**—Currently, because we do out-of-school training, it is not a difficulty for us. Before the students go to off-the-job training, I meet with the lecturers and discuss with them any particular student needs. We have such a relationship with the lecturers and the registered training organisations that they will phone me immediately if—

**CHAIR**—You do not see it as reducing your ability to nurture your students and to carry out your responsibility for their welfare if they are off campus?

**Mrs Hope**—Not if they were only completing certificate 1 or 2 level. The time commitment at perhaps certificate 3 level, where they would be off campus a lot more, would mean that, yes, you do not have the access to them to nurture them. But at the lower certificate levels the hours of the certificate are such that I think you can still maintain that contact.

**Mr SAWFORD**—One of the consistent messages that have come from schools right across Australia is that where they have tried to grow the VET area over the last 10 years, the teachers are a bit burned-out, they do it more through altruism, they are doing more, working harder, and you can only do that for so long. Is it true of your sector that the VET teachers have to put in more than the others in order to make it work?

**Mrs Hope**—Yes, they do. One of the key successes, as I alluded to before, was building relationships with your host employers, parents and students. In order to do that you have to put in the time. The time allocation for VET teachers is not sufficient to do this.

**Mr SAWFORD**—There is one other thing I picked up in my reading. There is a bit of tension between the VET teachers and the other teachers in your system; is that true? You do not spell it out but in the submission you can see an undercurrent of tensions that are there. It is not unusual. It is certainly in every other system we have seen, so why shouldn't it be in yours? Are there any special tensions that are caused and how do you overcome them?

**Mrs Hope**—The tensions that possibly you are picking up are that the teachers are trying their hardest to teach their curriculum in years 11 and 12, given the fact that a student is not going to be there one day a week. So there are timetabling issues at the schools. Despite the best efforts on everybody's part to try to create the best type of timetable for these VET students to be out of school, it still means they are going to miss one lesson a week. That is what I think you are probably reading in there. The teacher may only have one or two VET students in perhaps that

particular English or maths class, but he has to work the entire class around those one or two students because he needs to ensure that assessments are not conducted when that student is out.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It would not be a problem if 70 per cent were doing VET though, would it?

**Mrs Hope**—Probably not.

**CHAIR**—We are running out of time. Thank you, Jocelyn; that has been very helpful.

**Proceedings suspended from 1.10 p.m. to 4.10 p.m.**

**BROOKES, Miss Maree, Senior Human Resources Officer, Austal Ships Pty Ltd**

**HOWORTH, Mr Grant, Human Resources Manager, Austal Ships Pty Ltd**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into vocational education in schools. Thank you to Austal Ships for your hospitality this afternoon, your time and your submission as well. Thank you to the staff, in their absence, who have shown us around as well; it was very interesting. Would you like to make some introductory comments to begin with, then we will proceed to questions and discussions.

**Mr Howorth**—I will pass on that.

**Miss Brookes**—No, thank you.

**CHAIR**—We are particularly interested, as you know, in vocational education and training in schools. As a background, could you perhaps outline for us your policies with regard to apprenticeships and traineeships, how many apprentices and trainees you have, male, female, and roughly in what trade areas they are.

**Mr Howorth**—At present, amongst all our three subsidiary companies here—Austal Ships, Oceanfast and Image Marine—we have 170 apprentices across six trades: paint; fabrication; electrical; marine fit-out, which is cabinet-making; engineering; and our workshop, which is machining.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is 170 a deliberate number—about 10 per cent of your work force?

**Mr Howorth**—No, it is not a deliberate number. Every year we recruit, and recruitment is based on production. Some years we will have a smaller recruitment, other years we will have a larger one, and we would have started off this year with somewhere in the 200s. We have had a number of apprentices that have completed their time and have come out of that now, and we will start running our advertising campaign next month for the 2004 intake. Based on orders, we will take a certain number there.

**CHAIR**—That recruitment is what I am interested in. How do you go about doing that? You mentioned advertising. What do you look for in terms of the vocational training background of the young people you take on as apprentices or trainees?

**Miss Brookes**—Depending on the trade, we would look at year 10 completion at secondary level and then, if they had gone further, we would look at whether they had done a pre-apprenticeship in any of the trades. The marine training centre, which is TAFE, is up the road here and we work very closely with it throughout the year and call on a lot of its students throughout the year as well.

**CHAIR**—What about vocational training in schools? Have you got preferences as to whether they have done—

**Miss Brookes**—Metal fabrication and—

**CHAIR**—So it is industry specific or general employability skills and a range of workplace experience. The reason for the question is that we have had differing views put to the committee as to what employers want. Do they want people with industry specific courses that they have done through to year 12, or do they want students who have a good understanding of industry—they have done a bit of industry workplace experience and have a broader understanding, generic skills, and broad competencies but no expertise in any particular area?

**Mr Howorth**—The electrical trades are industry specific. With our fabrication and marine fit-out, it can be a broader range. As long as they are showing initiative to want to do a skill which has some hands-on experience and is in a capacity of fabricating or putting together modules and things like that, they can fit into those groups. The tendency from the kids is they have gone down a cabinet-making side of the business or have stuck to a metal industry type training within the school, so we can fit them either into those two places. But the electrical certainly has to be very industry specific because they have certain requirements they have to meet, such as colour blindness—they cannot be colour blind. When we test our students coming through or people who are applying for jobs, we rate that higher for their skill levels; we are looking for As and Bs in their science, English and maths levels, whereas we would go a little bit lower with the metal trades.

**CHAIR**—But again, you would take someone with good results in their general education rather than necessarily having done, say, up to certificate 2 in school for an electrical trades course.

**Mr Howorth**—It would depend on the number of applications we have. We would look at the ones that have done the training in the schools first before we looked at someone who had not done any of the training at all. Then we would start to compare the school results, what practical experience they have and all those issues before we actually made a judgment.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You do those assessments in-house?

**Mr Howorth**—We do a number of assessments—the mathematical, some English and some abstract testing to get all those done.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You do not use an agency, for example?

**Mr Howorth**—No. We used to some time ago, but we stopped doing it. Our chairman decided that it was the wrong thing to do. We know our industry better than anybody else. We do all our recruitment. We use no recruitment agencies whatsoever.

**Mr ALBANESE**—What career path can you offer people when they have finished their apprenticeship? Do they stay with you?

**Miss Brookes**—We have a high regard for our apprentices here and we encourage them to stay on with us. We have previous apprentices who are now supervisors; in fact, our fit-out manager was once one of our apprentices. We use that as a selling point as well when we interview applicants.

**Mr Howorth**—At least 70 per cent of all apprentices stay on with us and the others are made up of people seeking other career opportunities. A lot of them go and travel—they want to get out after four years and have a bit of a trip around the world—but they will often come back to us.

**Mr ALBANESE**—I think George Campbell's Senate skills inquiry came here as well a little while ago.

**Miss Brookes**—I am not familiar with that.

**Mr ALBANESE**—One of the things we are looking at in terms of vocational education in schools is skills shortages. Have you had any difficulty finding people to take up apprenticeships?

**Miss Brookes**—We certainly get a huge response from our program. We get around 300 applications to fill about 70 positions—that is an example from last year. I do not feel that we have a shortage in interest. As for a shortage in skills, I guess I could not really comment because I do not see them out on the job. But there is certainly big interest.

**CHAIR**—You do not have trouble filling your positions.

**Miss Brookes**—No, not at all.

**Mr Howorth**—There are a couple of trades where we probably would like more and where we do not get as many as we would hope for, aluminium fabrication being one of those. With the exception of apprentices, in Western Australia the shortage of qualified fabricators is huge. We have a huge shortfall of qualified fabricators.

**CHAIR**—Why is that? How do we address that?

**Mr Howorth**—The amount of work, especially in the north-west, is dragging a lot of people up there, so they are not here and not working here. Obviously there is a huge difference in the pay rates, but there is also a huge difference in the living standards and everything else as well. We offer what we would call a well above award wage and good working conditions. Everybody is supplied with their uniform, there is no need to buy any of that, or your PPE, the tools are supplied, so it is all there for the tradesmen, but a lot of them do want to chase the dollar.

Our experience, especially in recruitment, is that getting people to shift from one state to another is near on impossible. We have advertised through Newcastle, Wollongong and South Australia to try and get people to come here, and especially in Tasmania when Incat had a downsize to its business, but we just cannot get people to move.

**CHAIR**—Back to the issue of apprenticeships, I notice you made the comment that you no longer have school based apprenticeships or traineeships because of differing expectations.

**Mr Howorth**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Do you feel like elaborating on that for us?

**Miss Brookes**—I am happy to do that. This year we did evaluate our school based apprenticeship program. It was brought to our attention by our supervisors, more than anyone else, that they did not feel that the commitment was there on the trainee side of it. Maybe it was the fact that they were not really sure whether this was the path that they wanted to go down; they may have just been directed down that path. We have not had a very good success rate in keeping the school based trainees over time.

**CHAIR**—Do you mean after they leave school, not continuing on or keeping them while they were still at school once they had started?

**Miss Brookes**—Keeping them while they were still at school on the program. We have had a fairly high drop-out rate. Financially it was not feasible after we did a study. I think I have something here. With what we have left now with our school based trainees, it is costing us $9,100 over a two-year period to keep them.

**Mr ALBANESE**—For each person?

**Miss Brookes**—That is right. For an apprentice who we would keep for a four-year period, it is costing us $12,500 for four years. From a financial and commercial point of view, it was not fulfilling our needs. We do embrace the concept of it; we think it is a good concept. I have a very good example. We have taken on an office based school based trainee and she has been with us for almost two years. That has worked very successfully in the office environment but, from the production perspective, it did not work for us. We do quite a lot of work experience with students from high schools. We take on about 40 students a year for two weeks, three weeks, whatever they request, and we try to accommodate them the best way we can.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do the schools broker those placements?

**Miss Brookes**—Yes, the plain work experience, not the structured workplace learning. We find a lot of those students end up applying for apprenticeships anyway.

**Mr SAWFORD**—There is often a very different attitude in terms of government and even private secondary schools towards VET. There are some that take VET as their core purpose. Unfortunately, there are a minimal number around the country. But for those where, say, 70 per cent of their kids have access to accredited VET, do you deal with any secondary schools that have that benchmark?

**Mr Howorth**—Not that I know of.

**Miss Brookes**—Not that I know of, no.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You are dealing with just comprehensive high schools that have VET as part rather than core business.

**Miss Brookes**—Yes.

**Mr Howorth**—We are only dealing with one high school. There is only one that has ever approached us for the whole exercise, and that started back in 2000. We have had 28 students

come through. Of those 28, 10 are still with us working as apprentices, four are still here as school based trainees, and the balance have never taken up an opportunity or did and were terminated later on because they did not fit the bill. So we are not exposed to a great deal as far as only dealing with the one school and we have never been approached by another school to take on any more or have a look at the system.

Those experiences and the cost factor have led us to say, no, this is not the path we want to go down. Our experience with these kids is that they are not here long enough to keep an interest in the job. They come, they do a day or two day's work and they do not finish what they are doing. They go away and come back again, and they are on to something else and there is not this completion for the kids, they just do not seem to get that.

This school supplies the Navy as well and has a number of programs there, so we are competing with the Navy. There is a little bit of argument as to who is getting first choice about what students, or who wants to go where. A lot of the students are choosing, because the school is based in Rockingham, to go to the Navy because it is very close to it and not having to come to Henderson to do the work.

**CHAIR**—The aim of this committee is to make recommendations to the government. How can the government make the whole VET in schools system work better from an employer's point of view? What are the obstacles? Maree, you said you take work placements but not structured workplace learning; you just take work experience. What sort of things do we need to be doing to make it easier for you to take students as part of a structured workplace learning program?

**Miss Brookes**—Maybe we could recommend that, prior to signing up for a school based traineeship, the students did come for a block period to see if it was exactly what they wanted, if they liked the hours, the environment. It is not a very pretty environment out there and it is very daunting for a lot of these apprentices, so we do not blame them for wanting to get out of the program. But that might be one way of assessing the situation to see if they actually like the industry before they come in on their first block.

**CHAIR**—Perhaps not even for a traineeship or apprenticeship necessarily, but just for taking students on as part of a course they are doing where their VET component is embedded in another subject but they have got structured learning as part of that.

**Mr Howorth**—This year we have spoken to the school and they were a bit disappointed that we were not taking anybody on. We have an agreement with them. I think it is in November that we have allocated a four week block and they are going to give us eight students. We will have them for that entire four week block and put them through a training course. We see that as more productive because they get four weeks when they have to front up for 20 days. They actually get to start and finish something and it gives us a better look at the students as they go. We would like to move that from November probably to somewhere around July when those kids can come and have a go at it and we can then have an assessment of them prior to us offering an apprenticeship at the end of the year. In a lot of cases, the ones that do want to be here and like the environment are quite keen to then take on an apprenticeship. We have already had a look at them and it gives us a feel for where they can go.

With that school base as it is, we get this feeling with a lot of the kids that they just do not want to be here; it is something that they have been directed into by the schools. The programmer there obviously has some quota that he needs to fill and we get it back from our supervisors on the floor that they are not the ones. They do not turn up regularly, they miss days, they are away, and they are not showing an interest in it. Probably what Maree said makes a lot of sense. We know from some of our apprentices that is a very daunting environment. It is very daunting to come to an environment where there are 1,700 people of all ages, shapes and sizes and get thrown out into that. They come from the school environment to that as their first taste of being in the work force, and it is something that they need to be nurtured into.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It seems that we are getting mixed messages about whether people should do 22 days, a single day or do it on a weekly basis, but maybe the differentiated point that you are making is that this is a high school manufacturing sort of area. You are putting forward the block base, big work force, and that may be the differentiating sort of sense because all the other groups, such as regional New South Wales, were saying exactly the opposite. They said that, with the four-week block, by the time you got to know them they were gone. They would much prefer to get to know them over a regular period of 22 weeks, or whatever they were doing.

**CHAIR**—It really does vary, I suppose, according to the type of industry.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But they were not firms of 1,700 people either.

**Miss Brookes**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—With regard to these eight students you are taking on for the four week block, would you anticipate that they would flow into apprenticeships at the end when they leave school providing they shape up okay?

**Mr Howorth**—It is unfortunate when they are going for it that we have already advertised for apprentices, but I would estimate that some of those will already have applied. Given our previous experience of some of these students who are doing it, we would expect maybe two or three of them would come through our apprenticeship system at the end of the day. Our experience has always been that in relation to some of the young ones who come here, it is unfortunate that six months into an apprenticeship they are not working out and we find out later that it is a parent who is pushing them to do a trade: 'Get out, get a job, do a trade.' They get here and they are not cut out for it. It is not what they want to do, it is not where they want to be, and they fall on the wayside. I think it is the same with some of these coming through the VET system; it is the parent saying: 'Here is an opportunity, go there. It's a big company, have a go at it.' But they really do not want to do it, they would rather be back at TAFE or somewhere else and not here.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is your relationship like with the TAFE?

**Miss Brookes**—Excellent.

**Mr Howorth**—Excellent, absolutely. The local TAFE more so than the other two. We have three: one here in Henderson, which does our marine fit out and our fabrication side of the

business; the Rockingham TAFE does our engineering and some electrical; and Fremantle does the electrical. We have a fantastic relationship and I represent the company on the TAFE board.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So it is a continuing relationship.

**Mr Howorth**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What about higher education and universities, is there any relationship with the unis?

**Miss Brookes**—No.

**Mr Howorth**—No, none whatsoever.

**CHAIR**—Do you have any special programs for Indigenous students? Do you allocate a certain number of traineeships or apprenticeships? Do you do workplace experience particularly for them?

**Mr Howorth**—No.

**Miss Brookes**—No. We have never had any request for it either.

**CHAIR**—You have not?

**Miss Brookes**—No. We have had Indigenous students on work experience, but that was without prior knowledge that they were Indigenous. We have not had any real program in place.

**Mr Howorth**—We have never had any program and never been approached by anybody to do it. We have a very multicultural work force—in all shapes and sizes—and if we need an interpreter we can usually find one out there, because we have got just about every country in the world covered.

**CHAIR**—Have you picked up any differences in the work readiness of students who have done a VET in Schools component compared to those who have done a VET component through TAFE while they were at school? Some students do VET courses while they are at school but do it through TAFE; others do it in-house in the school. Have you picked up any differences in the students who, say, become apprentices with you in terms of the quality of their background?

**Miss Brookes**—I have not.

**Mr Howorth**—I would say there is a slight favour for the ones that have been to TAFE, especially given last year's electrical group. They seemed to be further down the path of not where we would like them to be but where their learning is. They are certainly ahead of—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is that because they are older?

**Mr Howorth**—Some are older. I think what is offered at TAFE is very specific and their minds are concentrated fully on that. At school there is a short block on one thing—it is a couple of periods doing this and then it is back to the next class and move on again. TAFE is very concentrated on the one thing, and we find it very much so in the electrical trades.

**CHAIR**—Is there enough of a difference that that would be a factor for you in making an employment decision between two applicants for an apprenticeship, or is it not so significant?

**Mr Howorth**—It would be part of the process but not the whole process. There are a number of other factors that have to be considered in every appointment. Last year we took on 70 apprentices; 22, I think—and I might be wrong—came from the country. There is a great deal of difference between the country kids and the city kids. The knowledge of the ones coming from the country is far more advanced. Maybe that is because they are on the farm and they are learning and they are having to be more hands on—I think that has a lot to do with it—but they do—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Practical knowledge?

**Mr Howorth**—Practical knowledge, practical experience, and it probably is because they are subjected to that while they are growing up. They are out there working, they are mixing with dad on the machinery and all that, and so they have very good practical knowledge. We do have some difficulty sometimes with them because three or four have gone back, they have not stayed with us because they are homesick, but the ones that are still here are probably a little bit more advanced. There is also the tendency of the ones we have seen to do more TAFE work in the country. Once they get to year 10, they are then going to TAFE rather than continuing with high school and doing training through high school.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Country kids who shift places often are more confident too, aren't they?

**Mr Howorth**—Yes. They are more independent, although there are ones that do get homesick and certainly want to just jump ship and go back to the farm.

**CHAIR**—As there are no more questions, thank you very much. That has been very helpful.

**Miss Brookes**—I hope we have helped you.

**CHAIR**—Yes, you have. Every person we talk to has a slightly different angle on it, and I suppose it is coming down to a matter of different issues for different circumstances and different employers.

**Mr ALBANESE**—How many of their skills are there which you require that no-one else would require? There are no shipbuilding facilities in our electorates. How much does that have an impact in terms of your recruitment and the skills that you are looking for?

**Mr Howorth**—Probably in the development area. Aluminium fabrication is not something that is widely and commonly used outside shipbuilding and small boat building firms. The ability to be able to weld aluminium really comes from people that have been here. We are probably the biggest trainer of people who, when they leave and go to the high-paying jobs up

north, have worked here before, because we are the only ones offering that sort of basic training. Our competitor, Incat, would be offering exactly the same. We have a division in the United States, a company over there, and we have had to bring their people here to teach them to weld because they cannot weld aluminium. It is a totally independent one-off structure that no-one else can do. We now have to send people continually to the US to continue that program to train them and they are just starting up a TAFE over there to try to skill them up to that level.

**CHAIR**—So it is harder than welding steel, is it?

**Mr Howorth**—Yes. A lot harder, there is a lot more to it. It is a specialty area and we would say that the welding and fabrication in aluminium is a specialty area of the shipbuilding industry, both here and across Australia, wherever they are doing aluminium. It is not something you can get from doing an apprenticeship in steel or anything like that; it is not the same. Electrically, most electricians are electricians and there are some skills that they need to learn to work on our vessels but, if they are a good electrician, there is no difference there.

Marine fit-out, our cabinet-making section, is certainly a trade within itself. We are not working with the normal types of woods and everything a cabinetmaker would be used to—it is marine plywood and different types of things, lots of low grade steel that they are working with and aluminium. So they do not get that exposure doing houses and putting in cabinets, so there is a specialty in that. With our paint section, there is probably no real skill in that; a painter is a painter in that regard.

We have three areas in engineering: plumbing, pipefitting and hydraulics. They are probably pretty standard for any industry. They do need to have the qualifications for this. We can teach them the rest that they really need to do, but aluminium fabrication is the biggest one. I just wanted to add one thing there. You asked about this when we first started—out of those 170 apprentices, there are two girls.

**CHAIR**—In what trades are they?

**Mr Howorth**—Aluminium fabrication. For every 100 applicants we would be lucky if we got one application from a girl. We do not discourage it.

**CHAIR**—Has that always been the case or is the pendulum swinging back, do you think?

**Mr Howorth**—No.

**Miss Brookes**—I think the maximum we probably get is around five applicants per recruitment.

**Mr Howorth**—The one girl that had an interview last year did not turn up.

**Miss Brookes**—She did not turn up.

**Mr Howorth**—For whatever reason, we have not come across the answer to it yet, but girls are not looking to take up these sorts of trades here. We do not know why. We have a number of

women in our design departments and throughout the administration blocks and everywhere else, but we do not have them in our trades.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Seventeen hundred blokes would be pretty intimidating!

**Mr Howorth**—It is. Some 96 per cent of the overall work force is male. There are not too many girls about.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is like boys going into teaching these days.

**Mr Howorth**—Yes.

**Miss Brookes**—They are pretty sought after, aren't they?

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is the same for the opposite reason.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. That has been very informative.

Resolved:

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

**Committee adjourned at 4.38 p.m.**