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**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Vocational education in schools

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Tuesday, 5 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, Mrs May 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

ARNOLD, Mr Andrew, Head of Department, Design and Technology, St Stephen’s School, Duncraig Campus	967
BARRETT, Mr Rees, Director, Accreditation and Moderation, Curriculum Council of Western Australia	921
CARNEY, Mr David, President, Career Education Association of Western Australia	937
DAVEY, Mrs Kathleen, Executive Officer, CareerLink, Catholic and Independent Schools Cluster.....	967
DEAN-BULL, Mrs Sue-Ellen, Head of Department, Home Economics, St Stephen’s School.....	967
DELLAR, Professor Graham, Dean, Faculty of Education, Language Studies and Social Work, Curtin University of Technology	932
GOFF, Mr Malcolm, Acting Deputy Director General, Training, Department of Education and Training	905
JEFFERY, Mrs Norma, Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council of Western Australia	921
MOORE, Mr Eamon, Executive Officer, Education, Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia Inc.	958
MOORE, Ms Cathy, Careers Counsellor, Head of Enterprise and IT, Mater Dei College	967
NELSON, Mr John Edward, Post-Compulsory Education Consultant, Catholic Education Office of Western Australia.....	945
PLAYER, Mr Robert, General Manager, Training, Department of Education and Training	905
ROBSON, Mr Gregory, Executive Director, Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Policy and Support), Department of Education and Training	905

Committee met at 9.05 a.m.

GOFF, Mr Malcolm, Acting Deputy Director General, Training, Department of Education and Training

PLAYER, Mr Robert, General Manager, Training, Department of Education and Training

ROBSON, Mr Gregory, Executive Director, Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Policy and Support), Department of Education and Training

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into vocational education in schools. I welcome you to the hearing this morning and thank you for your submission and for your time. As a formality, I remind you that proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. We prefer that all evidence be given in public but if at any stage you wish to provide some evidence in private, please let us know and we will consider that request. I invite you to make some introductory comments and then we will proceed to questions.

Mr Goff—Thank you, Chair. I will provide a little bit of context and background and then invite my two colleagues to have some input into the introduction. We would be keen to spend as much time as possible getting some direction from the committee, and therefore we will keep our initial comments to a minimum. Since the submissions went in, there have been some changes to the state agency arrangements in Western Australia. At the beginning of February, we had a new agency established which has seen the merger of the former departments of education and training into one department known as the Western Australian Department of Education and Training. I mention that not only for the record but also because it signals a very important development in the state to do with the rationale behind the merger—that is, the very clear intent and priority of the minister and the state government to focus on the 15- to 19-year-old age cohort, so as to enable that particular cohort to achieve better education, training and employment outcomes, a part of which is to do with vocational education in schools but it is broader than that.

The focus of the minister is not only VET in schools but also to look at increasing the year 12 retention—the target has been set at 90 per cent in the out years. It is to do with retention to year 12 or equivalent. We are currently undertaking some policy work to establish the precise nature of what we mean by ‘equivalent’. Broadly it will be in terms of achieving formal vocational education and training qualifications and/or sustainable employment outcomes. So that work is ongoing. Clearly, the view of the minister and the government is that by bringing the two departments together we can better capture the educational synergies to provide those better outcomes through the development of a range of strategies.

Moving on specifically to vocational education and training in schools, this state has somewhat of a history in the development of VET in schools going back to the 1980s and before. In particular, in the 1980s there were some early attempts at dual accredited qualifications or studies being delivered in schools, albeit in a pilot mode. That occurred in about 1987-88 and was subsequently incorporated into what we now know as vocational education and training in schools, which of course has resulted from the national reforms in vocational education and training.

By and large, the delivery of vocational education and training in our schools, both in government and non-government, is done in three ways: through an auspicing or partnering with a registered training organisation; through schools directly purchasing vocational education and training from registered training organisations; or by schools themselves becoming RTOs—and no doubt my colleagues will comment more comprehensively on those options later.

As a part of the vocational education and training in schools, the minister has set a target of increasing the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships in schools. In the last two years we have seen a significant uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships in schools throughout Western Australia. Within that objective we also have a particular focus on indigenous school based trainees. We are currently piloting an arrangement with Commonwealth government departments, both DEWR and DEST, to look at how we can address that particular issue. We have had some early success and the take-up this year has been at record levels.

In addition, the other subtarget of the VET in Schools initiative has been more generally youth at risk. That extends to age groups below 15 years of age, and there are some forms of work being done for youngsters in what we would call year 9 and year 10 who, for whatever reason, are disenchanted and are becoming disengaged with the formal education system.

There is a variety of programs emerging trying to look at an alternative educational program which brings relevance and alternative learning style so that these disengaged youth at a relatively early age can be re-engaged. This is happening in a number of schools in cooperation and partnership with TAFE colleges throughout Western Australia. Again, we can provide some details later on.

I understand the committee visited the Peel campus yesterday. In a previous life I had responsibility, along with my colleagues in schools and at Murdoch University, for that development. I am more than happy to provide some observations about that particular development later.

Mr SAWFORD—It is a good development.

Mr Goff—Yes, we are very pleased with it. In fact, that particular initiative won a Premier's award at the Public Sector Management Awards at the end of last year. More importantly, the early indications are that it is achieving good outcomes in terms of improved retention rates and articulation rates through to TAFE and to university and to employment.

In the middle of last year, two ministers, the then Minister for Training and the then Minister for Education—we now have one minister—commissioned a report known as the Tannock report, chaired by Professor Peter Tannock, which looked at the school-TAFE interface. It has come forward with a number of recommendations both at a policy level and also at a local level to get better coordination and capture those synergies which provide better outcomes for the 15- to 19-year-old age group. We are more than happy to provide comment on some of the key recommendations that are being picked up and are being implemented. Perhaps with that brief introduction, I will hand over to Mr Greg Robson, who has particular responsibilities in the curriculum area in the school side of the development.

Mr Robson—From a schools sector point of view, as I think our submission indicates, we regard the VET in Schools initiative as probably the most successful initiative in reforming curriculum and in engaging students more broadly in relevant learning, years 11 and 12. Certainly, going back over 20 years we regarded it as a real success, not just measured by the fact that in the space of six years we have lifted the proportion of the cohort from about 2,000 kids to 15,000, from eight per cent of the cohort to 40 per cent of the cohort. That gives some indication of the strength of this particular initiative. As I said, we regard it as a most significant initiative and one that we are keen to build on.

We are also particularly keen in the school sector in this state not to have any dilution of the standard of VET. We accept entirely the premise that what we deliver in schools occurs in a general educational context and we do not want to move from that particular position; neither do we want to dilute the quality of training or the quality of VET. Our reason for that is simply that for too long we felt, particularly in the seventies and eighties, that we had a very strong reference point in years 11 and 12 curriculum to universities and everything else has been second best. We have been particularly keen to try to build and ensure parity of status and parity of quality with the traditional academic subject compartmentalisation with VET. So that is a particularly important underpinning principle for us.

We do see, as my colleague Mr Goff mentioned, that we are now moving into VET in Schools phase 2 with the merger of the two departments and with the very significant work that is being done nationally through the MCEETYA task force. There is a number of significant reports to which we have been active in our contribution that we see as setting the agenda for us as we go forward over the next couple of years. We see a focus on making sure that we are compliant with the standards that VET sets nationally—in particular, that VET in relation to information is complied with not just for the sake of compliance but also in order for us to have a decent information base to assist our planning as we go forward.

This is both a national and a local issue. We see phase 2, VET in Schools, being about the full integration of VET in Schools in a curriculum sense with the changes that are occurring here in the reform of years 11 and 12. So the full integration of the VET in Schools component into that curriculum framework and, in particular, the full integration of VET operationally within schools. That is a key message that comes out of one of the MCEETYA task force reports on best practice in schools that we are keen to pick up on.

Obviously there are issues that we will have to keep chipping away at in relation to funding and resourcing—again, issues that are both local and national in their implication. We accept from the schools sector point of view that one of the tasks we have is to improve the overall and particular alignments between industry areas and what youngsters get access to in VET in Schools. There has been some criticism of the schools sector in that regard. Anecdotally, people suggest that VET in Schools programs are more focused on teacher interest than more broadly looking at what the industry needs and what the school's profile of a particular region or corridor needs to be. We think we have started to address that in our cluster arrangements in planning both across schools and in collaboration with industry partners and so on, but we accept in the schools sector that there is a way to go for us to improve on that match.

In summary, we feel that this has been a remarkably successful initiative for us, but we are not complacent about it. We do see the need, as Mr Goff indicated, with the government's very

strong intentions and agenda with the 15- to 19-year-old group, to build on the successes that we feel we have made to this point.

Mr Player—After those two opening comments from my colleagues, I can fill in some gaps. I would like to pick up the point on quality of VET in Schools. It has been a major issue in terms of both the state and national agendas. The decision that was made in this state was somewhat different from other states in relation to the quality assurance arrangements for VET in Schools. The decision that was made was that at that point in time when we had two ministers, who signed a joint ministerial policy statement in relation to VET in Schools which is alluded to and referred to in our submissions. If I can table that, it might be best to do so.

Under those arrangements, schools were allowed to become registered training providers under certain conditions. They could only deliver up to certificate II level and there are another couple of conditions that went with that. Primarily, it allowed schools to enter into partnerships with TAFE colleges and other registered training providers, it allowed some organisations such as agricultural colleges to become registered training organisations and so on.

It comes back to my colleague Mr Robson's comment that the position has been taken in the state that there is one standard for vocational education and training and that the standards in VET in schools were equal to and compliant with the standards of VET in general or VET mainstream. In accordance with that, we had 23 schools or thereabouts originally take on the position of registered training provider and five agricultural colleges became registered training organisations. All of those schools were audited by our Training Accreditation Council in 2001 and were all found compliant with the Australian recognition framework. So all schools involved were audited.

In relation to the Australian Quality Training Framework, those schools—there are about 16 of them now in that position—will be coming up for registration under the Australian Quality Training Framework later this year. To this point a desk audit has been conducted by our curriculum council of the schools, and they seem to be going quite well in relation to compliance with the standards.

The second point follows on from Mr Goff's statement. Again, I will table this because both of the submissions from the former Department of Education and former Department of Training make reference to the Tannock review, which is the parliamentary review on the interface between education and training, and its primary focus was looking at the most appropriate means of retaining 15- to 19-year-olds in education, training and employment. This gives a lot of insight into where the state is going.

One of the things that Mr Goff said is that vocational education and training in schools is pursued in the context of not only vocational education and training but the retention of 15- to 19-year-olds. In this state, nine per cent of that cohort or roughly 13,000 people are not engaged in employment. They are out of the work force and they are not engaged in either full-time or part-time training or education. So we have this significant proportion who are at risk. There is no doubt, and the Tannock review points to this fact, that VET in Schools is one of the mechanisms where we can engage those people in meaningful education and training.

The third point I would like to make, picking up on Mr Robson's point again, is that we are moving into what could be described as phase 2. With the amalgamation of the departments, we are placed in a very good position to do so. One of the areas that we are looking at particularly is Pathways. Having been to Peel yesterday, you can see that there is an emphasis on meaningful pathways for young people through education, training and employment. I will leave it at that point.

CHAIR—Thank you. They are very valuable comments, and a lot of questions arise out of them. I would like to pursue a little further the role of TAFE in providing VET in schools. We have had what seems to be contradictory views presented by various witnesses about the role that TAFE ought to play. There is a fairly strong view, on the one hand which says there is a greater role for TAFE, that we ought not be duplicating in schools what our TAFE colleges can provide and are providing, and that we ought to be maximising the use of our human, financial and capital resources and encouraging students to be accessing TAFE wherever possible. An alternative view has been put that distances school teachers, who have the prime care and responsibility for students, from that aspect of their students' education. Would you like to comment on that dilemma and what you see as the way ahead? Also, what are the Western Australian government's policy and plans for the role of TAFE?

Mr Goff—There are at least two key policy issues that need to be addressed in determining the respective roles. First of all, one needs to ask the question: what is the purpose of VET in schools? There is quite a range of views from, on the one hand, saying it is about getting kids jobs to another view which says that the primary focus is to do with giving them lifelong learning skills, employability skills. I suspect ultimately where the policy position will come to—and there is some work going on at the national level now—is that the primary purpose, not the sole purpose, is a focus on giving youngsters employability skills as opposed to getting them jobs as a result of VET in schools. The other aspect, getting a job, would be a bonus, but the view is emerging that it should not be the primary focus. That is the first issue.

The second issue is that I think to some extent asking what is the role of TAFE and what is the role of schools begs the question. It is not the initial question that one should ask as a means of getting through this issue. It is about getting better outcomes in education, training and employment for this particular cohort, 15- to 19-year-olds or, if you want to narrow it down, 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds, but generally 15- to 19-year-olds captures the age range. To do that, I would have thought the focus should have been on how we harness the available education and training infrastructure, both physical and educational, regardless of where it sits in the sectoral sense to achieve those VET outcomes. That will vary from location to location. You saw an example down at Peel yesterday where, because of the demographics and so forth, the view was to configure secondary education around the middle schools or feeder schools into a senior or an educational precinct where a years 11 and 12 campus is co-located with TAFE and shortly to be co-located with some higher education infrastructure. That is seen as the appropriate solution and, as a consequence, youngsters in the Peel region will be able to access, as Rob mentioned, pathways that will lead to better education and training outcomes.

In another part of Western Australia, because the demographics are different, you will come up with a different configuration. To me, the question that should be asked is not so much about issues to do with turf, if I can put it like that—that is, this is where TAFE's role fits and this is where schools' roles fit and for that matter higher education, because they need to be brought

into the equation. One of the things you would have seen at Peel, for example, is youngsters accessing in part of their high school program university studies. So we should not discount higher education. It is about bringing in policies which will allow the best local solutions to local circumstances and which are ultimately in the interests of the student client—the 15- to 19-year-olds. That might not directly answer your question but it gives you the context, and perhaps Greg and Rob might want to drill that down a bit.

CHAIR—To come back to the specifics, obviously what is happening at Peel is very exciting, but is it your view that there are instances where schools are duplicating what a TAFE college is doing fairly close by? Ought there be greater cooperation between the two and a greater use of TAFE rather than duplicating those courses in the schools?

Mr Goff—That is one of the motivations behind the merger which led to the Department of Education and Training—we are talking public dollars. If we are talking infrastructure, clearly to get value for money we need to minimise the amount of duplication that goes on. Inevitably there will be some, but it is about ensuring that if there is investment in VET infrastructure at the local TAFE college there are policies in place that allow the local schools to be able to access that for VET purposes. Greg, do you want to comment?

Mr Robson—Yes. Just following on from what Malcolm has said, in regards to what you saw yesterday at Peel, we have a similar sort of arrangement at Kalgoorlie, for example, with a co-located senior campus that involves a connection between the senior high school, the training component and the Western Australian School of Mines, which is a faculty of Curtin University, the idea being to try to provide to those youngsters, as at Peel, a seamless education with a focus not so much on the sectors but on the client's eye perspective and to try to push to one side the various things that sometimes we bump into in looking at issues across those sectors.

We have in prospect a similar co-location arrangement being explored in the north-west at Karratha. Karratha Senior High School and Karratha College might be looking at that, and possibly a similar arrangement will emerge at another one of our regional centres in Geraldton. So that notion of trying to physically push the sectors together to drive the sharing of resources and to provide a client-driven approach is the way we see it.

The other comment I would make is that we have tried to follow fairly closely the policy in the schools sector that funding an allocation of resources should follow the student. So, where we have youngsters doing part of their VET in Schools programs in TAFE, we have insisted that schools do not hold the resources we have allocated through the staffing formula for the schools and that it goes with the student. We are really mindful, as we make the case in our submission, that VET is a much more expensive delivery option than that of a standard academic. It is 25 per cent more expensive, we believe. We have to be very mindful that there is not unnecessary duplication of resources.

Thirdly, we take the view that we have to be completely pragmatic about saying where is the best place for youngsters to get the sorts of skills and programs that will help them along. That is not to say that there are not tensions between some schools and some colleges. It would be foolish to say that uniformly across the board we have this wonderfully open and fraternal relationship. But we recognise the problem and we really are working on that. So for us it is a

question of what is the best place for clients to get the sort of seamless program that we know we have to deliver to them.

CHAIR—It is 25 per cent more expensive to run a VET course: does the Western Australian government fund schemes to an extra 25 per cent for those teachers who are teaching VET in Schools courses?

Mr Robson—I think our submission indicates that we get roughly 45 per cent of our VET in Schools funding from state government sources that we push over into this area, but it remains an issue for us. The more we expand, the more pressure there is in terms of stretching our resources.

CHAIR—You do not have a formula whereby you are funding schools at that 25 per cent premium?

Mr Robson—No.

CHAIR—I do not think any state is—there is a challenge there.

Mr Player—I think future resourcing of VET in Schools is the subject of a major inquiry at the moment.

CHAIR—On the TAFE issue, we spoke yesterday to a representative of SWISlink at Mandurah, a consortium or cluster of Catholic and independent schools in that area which do not provide much in-house VET. They purchase a lot of their courses from TAFE and other private RTOs. They argued that the cost of purchasing those courses from TAFE was significantly higher than from the other RTOs there and that the quality was no better, but it was a lot more expensive and was discouraging them from using TAFE. Is there a way ahead whereby we could be making TAFE courses more affordable, more accessible and more available to non-government schools? Presumably that would have benefits in terms of economies of scale for TAFE in teaching VET in Schools courses more broadly.

Mr Goff—I think the answer to that lies in the vexed question of resourcing, and particularly the Commonwealth-state share of the resourcing, of VET in Schools. There is some history to that issue, as the committee is probably aware. I personally have been involved in that issue since the mid-1990s. From a state perspective, it has always been an issue for governments of all political persuasions in this state that the Commonwealth has not contributed any additional funding, even though it has encouraged the take-up of VET in Schools and remains an outstanding issue. In terms of the specific issue of non-government schools being able to acquire their VET from the local TAFE, there is an even-handed approach taken by our government. I do not know what the proportions are. Rob or Greg might be able to help me.

Mr Player—This is the \$2 million?

Mr Goff—No. I would have thought that a very significant proportion of certainly the Catholic education schools' VET programs are acquired from the local TAFE.

CHAIR—But they have to pay for them, whereas the public school students do not. I understand the funding follows them, but the school does not have to pay for them and the students do not.

Mr Goff—Prior to the end of last year, both government and non-government schools had to purchase from the TAFE. There is some piloting going on with a small cohort of delivery in the government schools where there is access and where the local school does not have to pay; the government still pays, of course. That is only really a very small proportion of the total amount of VET that is going on in government schools. I think the broader issue is at the end of the day the Commonwealth and state resolution to the funding of VET in Schools and through that will be addressed the non-government access issue.

CHAIR—I would like to take that up later on.

Mr SAWFORD—Our chair opened up with the point about the contradictory information that this inquiry has received. It is almost endemic in every state that you go to, in trying to get a handle on where it is. My first questions go to the rationale, or go back to the purpose that you were talking about, Malcolm, and also resources. Firstly, by way of prefacing my question: if you go back over the last 100 years of technical training in this country, there was a big initiative after the 1890s depression in terms of technical training. There was a big initiative after World War I. There was a big initiative after the 1929 Depression. There was a big initiative after World War II. Intrinsicly, the only money that came other than from disasters came in the 1970s. Since that time, technical training has seemed to oscillate between meeting the needs of industry, meeting employability skills and perhaps, as some people call it, a liberal education for meeting the needs of students. It seems to have been all over the place. We have put this question to a number of people. It is a simple question to ask, but not an easy one to answer: what is and ought to be the rationale for technical training in this country? A lot of people cannot answer the question. I am going to put that question to you and I want an answer on the record from a Western Australian viewpoint. What is that? Just link it to resources and to my prefacing comments in terms of what has happened over the last 100 years.

Can you answer the next question, which is: in the Western Australian budget were there any additional funds added to VET? It is a growing area. Greg, you mentioned an eight per cent to 40 per cent growth of the cohort in recent years. That is significant growth. But we have noticed that federally there was no extra money: in South Australia, there was none; Victoria, none; New South Wales, none; Queensland, none; and I do not know about Tasmania because we have not been there yet. There are two questions, basically. Could you sum up the rationale of the Western Australian Department of Education and Training as far as VET is concerned? Could you tell us: have there been any initiatives in the recent Western Australian budget?

Mr Goff—As to the purpose of technical education, I assume you are not just focusing on 15- to 19-year-olds; you are talking about the overall purpose?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Mr Goff—There are two related foci. One is to do with equipping people to make a successful transition from education to the world of work, which is about employability skills. The other one is about meeting the industry skill requirements. Clearly, the two are interrelated. So it is

about employability and it is about employment, fundamentally. Employability focuses on equipping people to not only make the initial transition from education to training but also throughout their life on upskilling and retraining, given the nature of the world of work in terms of multiple changes of jobs and so forth. That is our clear focus. It has been the mission of the former department of training and it is inherent in the government's and our new minister's vision statement that he put out about the purpose and the direction for vocational education and training.

There are a number of strategies that sit underneath that. I am happy to talk about those strategies, such as the Pathways strategy, which is about ensuring there is this concept of seamlessness so people can move between all forms of education, about skilling in the workplace and so forth. At the end of the day, two budget outcomes that are part of the budget statement for vocational education and training relate to employability and employment and skills formation, consistent with industry requirements.

In terms of additional money, the state has for vocational education and training this year a contribution that has been required consistent with the ANTA agreement. But there is no new growth money as such. Can I just add, though, that the minister has already put on record his disappointment in terms of the ANTA agreement's expiration at the end of this year. We are currently in negotiation for the new Australian National Training Authority—ANTA—agreement, which is effectively the Commonwealth's contribution through what is referred to as a maintenance effort requirement from the states.

While the Commonwealth minister has a different view from my state minister, all the states have the same view that there is no additional growth money apart from indexation in the ANTA agreement for the next three years. That is of significant concern given the increase in demand for vocational education and training that is evident in the out years.

CHAIR—How did you grow the VET sector in Western Australia from eight per cent to 40 per cent without any extra money—VET in schools?

Mr Robson—Again, as our submission makes clear, through the \$20 million that is allocated annually from ANTA funds we get approximately \$1.4 million on top of what we would have got for general education. The state government each year has supplemented that to the tune of \$1.2 million. That does not cover the cost. We have done some broad projections about what the actual costs are. But effectively, what we have done is shift resources into the VET in schools sector. Just to give you an example, for the standard staffing formula allocation for after-school classes in the academic stream, we work on a figure of about 25. For VET in schools classes we work on about 20. There has been a significant subsidisation of the move into VET in schools funding through the traditional vote by shifting resources across to it. Schools say that while they have covered it resources have been stretched. Our sense is, coming back to Malcolm's comments, that if we are to achieve the retention and growth targets that we set ourselves, the pressure on resources is going to be very significant indeed.

Mr SAWFORD—One of the messages also came from Andrew yesterday in not so stark a version. But a lot of teachers who were involved in VET training in schools report that they are working on altruism. There is a huge energy. They cannot continue that. They cannot go on forever and a day. That is a bit of a danger. Do you have any comments on that?

Mr Robson—My comment from a schools sector point of view is that, by and large, I think we have been well served by the enthusiasm of our teachers. As is usual in all things to do with educational change, there is a small core of enthusiastic, committed and really hard working people who carry the bulk of the effort. Those people wear out. It is an issue for us. Overall, our demographic in terms of our work force is going up and up. The baby boomer generation is now looking to do other things. If we are to really build on the gains that we have made, a key strategy for us in the 15- to 19-year-old area is the retraining and the revitalisation of our work force.

Mr SAWFORD—I have two more questions, one on the 1.25 per cent loading that you need in VET. That loading, it seems to me, was recognised 30 years ago. This is the 30th year since the Karmel report came down. I remember reading in the Karmel report—which I thought was rather negative for Professor Karmel at the time—that there was in fact a 1.25 per cent allocation to technical training in the old technical schools system as against the academic high schools. It seems that from that particular time, when comprehensive high schools became the norm in this country, technical training took a great dive. I think numeracy and literacy in primary schools took a great dive after the Karmel report. Higher education was highlighted. Senior secondary was highlighted. I think technical training stalled. Maybe that has changed, I think, in the last five or 10 years. It flat lined; it did not go anywhere.

In your figures, you go from eight per cent to 40 per cent. That reinforces that. We went to Mandurah yesterday. Keith King, a very good principal, said that way back in 2000 it was 8.6 per cent involvement in VET in that particular area. Now there is way over 70 per cent, which in a technical training sense is, I think, a good benchmark. Are we going around in circles in VET? The other thing I wanted to point out, which also goes back to Karmel, is that you get from a lot of people involved in VET—sometimes I do not know whether it is denial or whether we are only suffering from delusion—this theme of integration that keeps coming across. Again, that came out of the Karmel report as well.

I would have thought the theme of integration has been a disaster for technical training in this country. There seem to be a lot of people around who are trying to defend integration. I am surprised that—I do not want to put that question to you—you actually have combined your two departments. I think primary school lost out when they did not have advocacy with a separate department. I think they have been duded. I think junior secondary education in this country at a public level has been diminished since the Karmel report. I think technical training has been reduced, with somewhat of a resurrection more recently.

You also mentioned that a number of inquiries were going on at the moment. I have three questions. Is there a need for a national inquiry in education and not just in technical training at the moment? Everywhere you go in every state there are a number of reports being done, but they are all sectoral. Is there a need for an overview of all education in this nation? So we have questions about integration and the need for a national inquiry.

Mr Robson—Your analysis of historical trends, I think, is an accurate one. But in addition to that, one of the things that in the schools sector we now accept as a given is that we have a new client group. Back in the seventies and the eighties there was a debate about the purpose of schooling. I can remember those debates well. There was a clear, if you like, dividing line that was drawn by people who insisted on the liberal education view and that we must not turn

schools into the servants of industry. That was a clear line. My view is that that argument has now gone. We accept that there is a client group that we have to serve; it is called industry. Why we accept that, I think, has to do with the blurring of the boundaries between the old traditional liberal view of education and the emergence of a more sophisticated technical education.

So if you look at initiatives such as the Meyer core competencies, if you look at the employability skills framework put out by the ACCI-BCA and if you look at the descriptions of skills there, and in other lists in all the curriculum frameworks around the country, the No. 1 skill that comes up is communication. No. 2 is teamwork. No. 3 is about problem solving. No. 4 is about self-management and project management for kids. Those sorts of skills, it seems to me, are linked to what we used to see as solely the province of the old liberal education purpose. Now they are in a vocational context what industry is telling us—and the ACCI-BCA employment skills framework is a good example—exactly what we were saying 20 years ago should be the focus of our teaching and learning programs in schools—that is, improving the foundational communication skills of kids, improving the capacity of young people to work in teams, and improving their capacity to solve problems in a range of contexts. I think one of the interesting bits has actually been the blurring of the boundary between that sharp dichotomy that used to exist and what we have got now.

Mr Goff—Perhaps I can add a couple of comments building on what Greg has said. Clearly, looking at history, trends and so forth is informative. Nevertheless, I think it would be a mistake simply to take any period of time, whether it be the 1890s, the 1920s or 1970s, and simply transpose what happened then to the 21st century. I think the world of work is quite different from those previous periods. Dealing with the blurring because of technology and other considerations but primarily technology, firstly, the skills required are quite different. Secondly, the traditional work demarcations by and large no longer exist. You have only to look at the automotive mechanic. These days, the automotive mechanics are walking around in white coats and, according to my friends in the automotive industry, when they recruit people into the apprenticeship area they are looking for people with good diagnostic and basic IT skills. This is for an automotive mechanic.

In that context, we come back to this notion of integration. The flip side of that is to say that VT is there, school education is over there and higher education is over there. The world of work is not like that, I would submit. I would put a proposition that I have used in other forums—that is, from a VT perspective there should be integration but not assimilation. You say, ‘Malcolm, what’s the difference?’ I make the point that the mission that I just articulated for vocational education and training, which is about equipping people with employee ability skills and at the end of the day jobs and meeting industry requirements, has an emphasis and a focus which is different but overlaps the mission of general education. General education, particularly in the latter stages, also focuses on those transition skills, those lifelong skills.

Nevertheless, in a curriculum sense, at the end of the day there is a distinctive VET product captured in the competency based training packages which are industry driven and pretty much keyed into those objectives that I have talked about for VET. At the delivery end, what I am saying is that you cannot have into the 21st century simply publicly funded infrastructure that is exclusively for the purpose of a particular sector. Firstly, there is a value for money argument—avoiding duplication—and, secondly, in a curriculum sense you have this linkage going on.

The ideal arrangement would be to provide highly accessible and linked vocational education and training with the higher education and schools. At any one time individuals will want to access any one of those things or more than one of those things concurrently. Increasingly, we have students engaged in—as you saw down at Peel—higher education, VET and general education all at once. Look at a person who is re-entering the work force at the age of 40-plus and who has been out of the work force for whatever reason. They will want to hone their general education as well as look to getting a job. They need to be able to access curriculum, infrastructure and expertise that is able to deliver those outcomes. Hence I talk about the notion of linked-up curriculum and linked-up sectors in a policy sense, in a funding sense and at the delivery end, depending on the local circumstances. It is the client focus.

Mrs MAY—We have not spent a lot of time this morning on industry, which is something that interests me in terms of how we deliver these VET programs. You have put down your goal as a 90 per cent retention rate in terms of keeping these young people at school. We have talked about the quality of VET in schools, outcomes of getting kids jobs and employability. How are you working with industry to make sure that you are delivering the sorts of courses that are needed looking at the market trends out there and the labour needs in industry?

We have heard around the country from different industry groups that young people are not work ready. There are huge problems with literacy and numeracy. The delivery of some of these programs is not what they are looking for in industry. We have also talked this morning about a shortage of funding. It is more expensive to deliver VET in schools. Is that putting a cap on what you can deliver in schools while not meeting market needs? Would you like to comment just from an industry point of view?

Mr Goff—Are we focusing on the 15- to 19-year-old age cohort especially?

Mrs MAY—Very much so, yes.

Mr Goff—I will make a general comment and Rob Player may want to provide some further detail. The Department of Education and Training has a very comprehensive industry planning function, which engages the network of industry training councils, ITABs—you would have heard those terms; there are 14 established in the state—along with other peak employer and employee groups, the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Minerals and Energy Employees Association, the unions of WA and so forth. Each year we prepare rolling industry plans which inform how we go about the skills requirements and how we use the public dollars to purchase the training, whether it be from TAFE, private providers or wherever. It is a very comprehensive focus. In terms of linking up that planning process to be able to better inform schools, Rob may wish to comment, and Greg as well.

Mr Player—I think that is a very good question, because it has been one of the concerns over time that industry has raised both here and nationally—the link between the actual needs and the outcomes. I guess it comes back to some degree to the purpose of VET in schools. We see it in the context of a broad general education. But is it to give them a taste or is it to provide them with a direct job? Their motivations often differ.

Our VET in schools can be linked to our state training profile, which was the end result of what Malcolm was talking about. I will quote a couple of figures for you. 20.9 per cent of VET

in schools is in the business and clerical area. Our state training profile, which is a result of our analysis of the needs of industry, indicates that overall in the state 17 per cent of the state training effort should be in that area. So there is a close match there between the highest areas. Computing, engineering, mining, primary industries and tourism/hospitality are also the major areas where VET in schools is actually taking place. There is a fairly close linkage, or correlation, between that and the requirements in the state training profile. For instance, in terms of engineering and mining, 14.1 per cent of the effort in VET in schools is in engineering and mining. The requirement for the state training profile across the state is 13.6 per cent. There are some areas where in fact there is a bit of a mismatch. For instance, I can pick up community service, health and education: in schools, 3.7 per cent; state needs, 18.2 per cent.

Mrs MAY—Why?

Mr Player—Why would that happen? There are a number of reasons. Some of the reasons relate to the nature of the programs, the training packages and so on. For instance, we are capping our VET in schools which can be delivered to the standards required by the Australian Quality Training Framework to certificate II. Some of the areas where we need people in the state at the moment are in aged care, nursing and so on. You cannot actual marry those up or conduct them at schools.

I guess that starts to raise the question of new and emerging industries and so on. Sometimes it is difficult to cater for those, particularly solely within the school environment. I think that this comes back to the question of integration and the point I made earlier that we have something like 70 per cent of the VET in schools programs in this state being delivered in a partnership arrangement with both TAFE colleges and private providers. One of the advantages of that, in fact, is that it gives a wider spread of options and the utilisation of resources and cuts down the risk involved, because some emerging industries and skills do not actually emerge at the end of the day. There is a risk in devoting resources and dedicating resources to that. So we pick that up.

In working with industry, I point back to the Tannock review, which did talk about a need for closer integration with industry and partnerships and so on. The partnerships that I am talking about are not just between schools and colleges or private providers; industry has to be involved in that. Mr Robson mentioned earlier the move to a clustering arrangement at the local level. One of the advantages of this is that we are beginning to more definitely sit down at the local level and look at the local needs in terms of the vocational needs and so on. Given the diversity of this state, that is what is different, because I can give you a state figure but those figures may not reflect the needs of the local area. So there is a lot of work going on there.

There are a number of other initiatives that are being taken by the state to improve planning. One is that we are piloting this year what we are calling local learning employment partnerships at Joondalup, in the Peel area, in Albany and also in Geraldton, which are trying to look at the local needs and come up with mechanisms and training programs which will in fact meet those more particularly.

There are other examples. Mr Goff mentioned the industry training advisory bodies. We have a very good example in the automotive industry where we have a shortage in this state, both in light automotive and in heavy automotive, whereby the industry training advisory body, the

schools and the VET system are working together to overcome those shortages. So I do not think there is a cookbook solution to it; I think it would be foolish to say that. What we are doing is using the information that we have and trying to line that up as best we can and looking at it very much at a local level within the context of the broad state training profile.

Mr Goff—One of the advantages or benefits of the merger will be our ability, through our department's labour market planning unit, to be able to provide labour market information to the local planning committees to better align the VET in schools programs with labour market forecasts. That is not to suggest that it is a one-on-one type of relationship, but it is a case of contributing that state labour market information and also taking into account the regional labour market which, as Rob said, is often quite different—the local labour market. But given that we have a mobile work force these days, you need to be able to look beyond your immediate region. So that will be happening. That labour market information, which is very sophisticated, will be able to be provided to the schools' and TAFEs' local area planning groups in the coming years.

Mr Player—Can I add that I think a real example at the moment in this area is—as Mr Robson mentioned before—the Karratha region. We have a major development on the Burrup Peninsula, which I am sure you are aware of. We have done a complete analysis of the future skill needs as a result of the Burrup developments. Down the line there is a need in the processing area and also in the electronics area. It is not an immediate need because we are in the construction phase, but this is at the end when we are actually in operation. What we are currently looking at is how we can start to utilise the bringing together of the senior high school and TAFE college in that area to start to look at the VET programs in that area so they start to give that pathway that we were talking about earlier.

Mrs MAY—And, of course, you would have to know that you have got the teachers who can deliver those programs, and we could go into that. I know we are running out of time, but there is a lot more that we could discuss there.

CHAIR—Did you have another question?

Mrs MAY—No. I am particularly looking at the shortage of skilled teachers, which is a real issue.

CHAIR—We have not got time, unfortunately. Can I just ask you one other question, if I could—and I know that we are over time. We are all agreed that there needs to be extra funding and we have had put to us various suggestions as to how that could be used. Teachers who teach VET courses in school argue that there should be greater release from face-to-face teaching because of the extra load. Some schools use money to employ administrative support staff to assist with the vocational coordinators. Another use would be for release for professional development for teachers. Also, there is a need for the employment in cluster regions of coordinators for work placements and so on. If there was extra funding made available by state and federal governments—both—what would you recommend as the best way to use that extra money in order to maximise the use of that and get the best outcomes in terms of VET?

Mr Goff—In terms of additional Commonwealth money, my view would be that one of the mistakes in the past has been to try to determine fixed strategies for the utilisation of often one-off funding, but even recurrent funding, and strategies that may make sense at a national level

but do not make sense at a local level. Again, the state government has adopted a very strong view in respect of specific purpose grants, and that is that they should be untied. Notwithstanding that, clearly from a Commonwealth point of view, it needs to be satisfied that it is going to get the outcomes that it is seeking. So the money should be linked to outcomes, be they the take-up of school based apprenticeships and traineeships or other outcomes in VET in schools terms rather than to specify particular strategies. I think that would be a mistake and not the best use of that money. Stipulate the outcomes, by all means—put that in the form of a Commonwealth-state agreement—and then allow the state to determine how to do it, to determine those outcomes.

CHAIR—What about the extra state money?

Mr Goff—The extra state money? There are two streams of money coming into this area at the moment. There is some amount coming through from the ANTA agreement—at the moment it is tied to \$20 million—and there is some coming through the school grants system—and I will get Greg to comment on that. In terms of the ANTA agreement, that is tied up in the maintenance of effort agreement. Where there is additional Commonwealth money, it requires matching allocations from the state.

I think, again, the strategies that we would engage here would be, where appropriate, to look at multisector campuses. Yes, it would involve some professional development programs where it is necessary in a particular region to either attract expertise or upskill existing expertise, be they in the TAFE college or in the schools. Some of it would be related to infrastructure programs, be it bricks and mortar or equipment, and some of it would be through better planning/labour market information. There would be a raft of things which suit local circumstances.

CHAIR—You do not see a reduced teaching load for VET teachers as part of that?

Mr Goff—You are talking about TAFE lecturers as opposed to schools?

CHAIR—Schools.

Mr Robson—I think the answer to the question was contained in some of the examples that you gave. We have issues to do with building the skills profile of teachers. So there has to be some investment in that. That is buying time and providing higher quality and better targeted PD. I think that there has to be some judicious allocation of resources to provide more release time.

This sort of teaching, this sort of linkage to industry, requires coordination. It requires working across sectors. It is not your standard ‘lock the classroom door and deliver’. It requires getting outside the classroom. It is buying time. So, yes, I think there is a case.

The third point I would make is that we need to target the resources carefully rather than make general across-the-board changes to the staffing formula, because we know we have particular tension points. We do not have strong VET in schools programs, for example, in our country areas in relation to district high schools. If we want to keep young people, particularly Indigenous youngsters, attending those district high schools, there is a fair degree of resource

investment that is required because they are small schools, and the cost of delivering will be probably much more than it is in the metropolitan area. So I think some judicious targeting of resources to key areas of need is important. I would suggest that we need a blend of targeted resources but not standard, across-the-board formula increases.

Mr ALBANESE—Just following that up, do you see from the lower perspective, if you like, from the consumer perspective, students having to pay fees for VET in schools? What we saw at Mandurah yesterday was essentially the school covering it in terms of costs to TAFE. Is that an issue in terms of participation in VET, particularly in terms of equity issues and encouraging kids to go into VET? What I have heard around the country—I did not hear it here yesterday, I have to say—is that the financial cost of having to pay to participate in a VET in schools program is a disincentive to participate and is also a disincentive to schools if they end up bearing the costs. Is that an issue here at all?

Mr Goff—There are clearly some issues, and it comes back to the different funding flows that are coming in at the moment. I think it is important that we take a principled stance that where we are delivering VET, whether it be in a school or in a TAFE, from a public funding point of view the commitment to deliver the same quality has to be assured. Therefore, you should not have differential funding. The delivery unit, whether it is VET in schools or TAFE, should be funded at the same level.

Because of the mix of Commonwealth and state moneys that are currently going in, one through the training system and one through the state system—and historically certainly the state government's point of view and the point of view of all state governments is that the Commonwealth has been unwilling to come to the party to bridge the gap—it has resulted not only in this state but in other states in differential levels of funding going in at the school end versus the TAFE end. Therefore, the state governments have been required to make some compensatory measures, and Greg has mentioned those earlier in the presentation. Until there is a resolution at the state-Commonwealth level, it will be very difficult to resolve at the delivery level.

Mr Robson—The state government has adopted a very strong position on school fees and charges. It has set quite clear ceilings on fees that can be charged and has provided in the last budget, and I think in the preceding budget, a subsidy to schools in the case where their own collection of fees has led to a decline in funds at the school level. It has been particularly strong and conscious of the growing cost burden on individual consumers.

CHAIR—I am afraid our time has run out. There are a lot more issues we would like to pursue, but unfortunately we cannot. Thank you for your time this morning. It is much appreciated.

Mr Goff—Thank you.

[10.22 a.m.]

BARRETT, Mr Rees, Director, Accreditation and Moderation, Curriculum Council of Western Australia

JEFFERY, Mrs Norma, Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council of Western Australia

CHAIR—I welcome the representatives from the Curriculum Council of Western Australia to our inquiry this morning. I invite you to make some introductory comments. Then we will proceed to questions and discussion.

Mrs Jeffery—We will make joint comments. I will start. We welcome the opportunity to talk directly to the committee. Our role is to develop year 11 and year 12 courses of study and to quality assure student achievement through school based assessment and external assessment and also to certify that achievement.

The growth of VET in schools has had a significant impact on the role that we undertake. As it has grown, it has impacted on the way we certify and the way we develop our courses. We recognise and applaud the growth of VET in schools, and it has been recognised in the 15- to 19-year-old strategy that we have now embarked upon. Part of that 15- to 19-year-old strategy has been the publication of a document called *Our Youth, Our Future*. This is the blueprint for post-compulsory schooling commencing in 2006. As part of that, we have had to examine the best way to develop VET in schools in courses of study.

CHAIR—Can you leave us a copy of that document?

Mrs Jeffery—I can. We have VET integrated into some, though not all, courses of study—the ones where it is most appropriate. We have VET as a course of study. For example, in media production and analysis, we will have a general education course called ‘Media Production and Analysis’. It will then have VET units of competency integrated into it so that the students can also achieve certificates I and II. We will also have a mirror course which will be VET as a course of study which will also be a media production and analysis course. Students will also be able to do VET stand-alone, as they do now. This will be delivered in schools or in partnerships, again as it happens now.

Throughout the whole of the inquiry that we had, which lasted around three years, it was very clear that people highly valued being able to be involved in VET in schools. So the vision for the future is a seamless education—vocational education with a focus on general education but recognising that for some students their preference is to focus almost solely on VET in schools. We have constructed our new WACE to have as much flexibility as possible so that it caters for those who are tertiary bound but so that it also caters for those who want to be in traineeships and apprenticeships. We are in the process now of developing those courses of study. We are having to do a lot of investigation to understand the context as we go.

The issues that we have—I heard you ask questions of the previous group, so I thought I would outline them at the beginning—relate to which units of competencies and which

certificates we package into courses. We have tended to focus on the ones that students have shown significant interest in. Sometimes they match industry needs, and sometimes they do not coincide exactly. But we have now thoroughly analysed units of competency and the certificates, and we have a suite of them that we are now focusing on in our new course development. They are the ones that we are also providing support for in the current system. People can of course work way outside the ones that we have identified, but we have tried to capture the ones that are most appropriate for delivery in schools in particular with resources and teacher competence—where teachers have the background and the interest, and the schools have the capacity.

One of the things we found is that there is a lot of criticism of VET in schools and we find the training packages do not make explicit the workplace learning that needs to occur. If we cannot put it explicitly into the courses, then it is difficult for the schools to arrange for it to be delivered. Western Australia has probably a very strong record in structured workplace learning. In a sense it is a general skills list. We also have it with an industry focus, but we feel if the training packages have more of a focus and are more explicit about what is required, then we will be able to build it into the courses in such a way that schools will be able to seek partnerships.

Another difficulty that we find—and, again, we are part of the policy—is the capping of certificates I and II. We have never gone down the track that other states have gone down in allowing students a tertiary entrance score for their VET studies, because universities do not consider it is a high enough level of complexity. So we are probably the only state that does not have a way of getting into tertiaries directly with a tertiary entrance score. There are many other ways that students do get in. That is something at a state level that we need to work on, I think.

Another difficulty is the consistency of notional hours. One example is that it takes 50 hours to set up and operate a video camera. In a general education course that would take a lot less time. The 50 hours then constrains the delivery. So we are hoping we can have a bit more consistency across Australia in the next few years on what we mean by ‘notional hours’ and how much is really required, particularly with students moving from one place to another.

The provision of new emergent industries is always an issue for us because we take a long time to develop our courses, because we require so much consultation, and yet industry needs change quite quickly, and we do want to make sure we can reflect the new directions. On the whole, I think we have succeeded reasonably well at that.

The employability skills is another area that we have built in specifically to our curriculum framework. The curriculum framework then influences what we have in here, but we want in the future to make that a bit more explicit. As I said, our structured workplace learning skills lists are very thorough and very popular. We actually offer them as separate courses. So I believe the students have that opportunity, but they do not coincide exactly with industry needs.

From the curriculum development side, they are the sorts of issues we are facing. We are hoping that our forward direction, which is integration/stand-alone, will meet the needs of as many students as possible. Our other main area is quality assurance, and we have resourcing issues as well. I think Rees will now talk a bit about quality assurance.

Mr Barrett—Since we put our submission to the inquiry, we are aware that ANTA has been conducting a project on the quality of VET in schools. As the chair of the ACACA VET in Schools group, at a meeting last week I was able to be briefed by one of the ANTA representatives on some of the preliminary findings. In a sense, they line up with the opinion that we were expressing in our submission. In summary, there is really no difference in the standards of the AQTF and how they are being applied to schools in the audit process. In fact, you could argue that, because of the concerns about perceptions of second-rate VET, schools have been over-audited compared with other RTOs.

Certainly, for the 23 schools that have registered training provider status in this state, our major concern under the Curriculum Council Act is that we are charged to ensure that the assessment of student achievement that we record on our database and we report to employers, universities and TAFE colleges for selection purposes is comparable from one school to another or from one RTO to another. That is a slightly different perspective from the emphasis given in the AQTF, which is more a quality systems approach, as we understand it. There are provisions for quality assessment specified within those, but it is a different emphasis.

What we have found in working in quality assurance both in schools and in VET in the last couple of years is that there has been a synergy between them. The schools that are having to meet the AQTF standards are being encouraged to pick up a quality system approach that is more part of the training culture. There are some advantages for those schools that have gone down that track and have made the effort.

We would agree that teacher training in competency based assessment is critical, and I think that has been specifically identified in the preliminary report in the preliminary findings as an issue. It is called 'embedding'. We prefer to use the term 'integration' because the way we look at integration is that things can live together but their differences are respected. So the requirements of competency based assessment, the industry connection and so on, can still be respected and attended to, but at the same time you can also be looking for evidence that might meet general education assessment. We believe this is the approach to follow. It helps teachers but, more importantly, it helps students. They can then see the connection between demonstrating competence in communicating in the workplace, but that also relates to these communication skills that teachers are teaching at school about critical analysis and so on.

The other point that came out in the ANTA briefing was that in terms of perceptions of quality the issue revolves around institutional based VET. That is not an issue that is confined to VET in schools. I guess it is more easily associated with VET in schools as opposed to the really important emphasis on workplace learning and assessment of competency. That really comes through.

I believe a conclusion made in the ANTA report will be that the training package review needs to attend to this. It needs to be specifying that workplace assessment is a requirement here. I would say that simulated workplace assessment should also be encouraged. To use a simple example, take a Qantas pilot. They do not let Qantas pilots loose in flying jets even under supervision right from the start, for obvious reasons. They use a simulated workplace environment to ensure that a certain standard is met, but that is not sufficient in itself. Then you are put in a situation where in the real thing under close supervision you have to apply it. I think that kind of approach, if articulated clearly in the training packages, could help to address a

number of issues, including the difficulties for industry in trying to find placements for all the students, which I know comes up a lot.

I would like to touch briefly on resourcing for data collection. One of the important roles that we play is that, in essence, the Curriculum Council is a giant database recording student achievement. It is amazing the number of times it will come to us even 30 years on in a particular situation: 'Can I have the data about my achievement?' There is a particular case we came across recently. The importance in having a central independent body that collects that data is critical. It certainly has emerged in the VET in schools agenda in that way. The boards of studies, such as the Curriculum Council, have been asked to meet the AVETMIS standards for data collection so that we can be sure we can collect nationally consistent information about what is happening.

That has a big implication for us in terms of our resourcing of that. Data collection for us is quite complex. I am sure it is for the schools as well. Our policy is that we collect the data from the school, even if they are in partnership with an RTO. The principal of the school signs off on the quality of the data. What we find with the VET in schools is that the number of bits of data that we are having to handle has grown exponentially. In one year we noticed 70,000 extra bits of information that had to be inputted into the system, checked, sent back to the school for checking and so on. This has big implications.

Mrs Jeffery—Just to finish off, when we certify students' achievement we report all of their best achievements as well as their general education achievements. That is why having the database correct is very, very important—and it is growing.

CHAIR—Thank you. Rees, I think you mentioned that schools have been over-audited compared to other RTOs, yet there still seems to be a perception within industry particularly that there is great variation in terms of the quality of the same credentials, and particularly question marks about VET in schools compared to VET qualifications achieved through TAFE or other RTOs. How do we resolve that issue? Do we need an external and national auditing body that accredits everyone that ensures compliance? Even the AQTF, whilst it is supposed to achieve uniformity in standards, does not seem to achieve that, at least in perception. Is it only a problem with perception or is there a variation that needs to be addressed?

Mr Barrett—My view of it is that the AQTF gives us a very strong national framework and is a significant advancement on the ARF, which preceded it. The standards required of the training organisations have been made clearer. The main issue is about the institutionalised delivery and the perception—and I guess it is easier to stereotype and generalise—that teachers compared with TAFE lecturers do not generally have the same industry connection or the same understanding of industry standards. That needs to be addressed, but it is definitely an issue at the moment.

They do not have the same understanding of competency based assessment, although I believe that has been a challenge for TAFE lecturers as well. That is in part, in my opinion, due to the shift broadly from a curriculum module based approach—for example, the old national modules in training—to a competency standard based approach. It is much harder to get your head around and plan a program around those standards, and there is significant PD involved for teachers and TAFE lecturers, I believe. I think it is that which the training package can partly deal with that is

the main cause of the issue. It could partly also be the maturity of students; the fact that they are not being fully exposed to the workplace environment.

I have spoken with apprentices, for instance, who say the reason the number of hours in a quality workplace situation is so important is that it is all of those information interactions you have with masters of the trade. They can give you tips on how to do things, and you build and deepen your understanding in that way. I guess that is another issue.

Mrs Jeffery—The point that Rees made about competency training for teachers is very important. We have been changing the whole of the general education system to an outcomes focus, and that has been the most difficult change for teachers. Yet competency based training was brought in with very little recognition of that enormous shift that you are expecting in terms of the focus of the teacher or the TAFE lecturer. I believe part of the problem has simply been that teachers did not have a clear understanding of what assessment means. We have been working very hard within our role to improve that and we have moderation workshops and we have get-togethers on assessment so that we can help teachers develop common understandings. I am sure that is what Greg Robson was talking about in that last presentation. It is largely around that whole understanding of the assessment.

I would also like to follow up on another point that Rees made about students being only 15-, 16-, 17-year-olds. I think sometimes there is an expectation that they should be behaving like adults who have lots of experience. I think we sometimes overlook that. One of the ways we are trying to help with this now that I am also responsible for the Training Accreditation Council is to make sure that we have complementary processes between the Curriculum Council and TAC so that when schools are audited there is a recognition that some of the things that have a school label are the same as some of the things that have a slightly different TAC label. I think that was part of the comment that they feel they are being over-audited, because they seem to be being asked the same question for two different audiences. One is a school audience and one is a training audience. Hopefully by having us working together we will overcome that.

CHAIR—Can we resolve some of those issues with a much greater focus on professional development? Also, do you think the Western Australian government is doing nearly enough in that regard?

Mrs Jeffery—Thank you very much!

CHAIR—For instance, I noticed Curtin University is offering a postgraduate course in PD—professional development—and vocational training but it has had no starters for it.

Mrs Jeffery—In fact, we offered a scholarship to our staff to do the course and we had no starters for that, either.

Mrs MAY—Was that paying all the fees for it?

Mrs Jeffery—Yes.

Mrs MAY—So the scholarship covered all the fees?

Mrs Jeffery—Yes.

CHAIR—Is that because there is not enough incentive or there is not an acceptance that there is a need? What is the problem there?

Mrs Jeffery—I think there is probably not an acceptance that there is a need. Teachers have been assessing student achievement sometimes for 10, 15, 20 years and sometimes it is not recognising the difference. Through our workshops we are trying to focus on what is different. You are making a different judgment. In one judgment you are asking, ‘Can the student drive the car?’ In the other judgment you are asking, ‘How well do they understand the rules of the road?’ It is actually seeing these things as two different judgments, or it might be a complementary judgment. My suspicion is that people feel they have the background in assessment and do not recognise that perhaps they would benefit from further study. It is hard to speculate.

Mr SAWFORD—Is there a reason for that confusion? I accept what you are saying about the confusion about assessment and maybe not discriminating between what is quantitative and what is qualitative. But this is a very frustrating inquiry in that a lot of the information that we have come across is contradictory and confusing. There does not seem to be an agreed rationale. It is confused. The strategies that are put across to us are all confused as well. Some are quite contradictory. It is the same with outcomes. You acknowledge assessment as being the same. To focus on two areas, you used the theme of integration and the previous people used it as well. In your submission you used a statement which has come straight out of Karmel—and I quote:

The Council supports the concept of a general education with vocational focus.

That was 30 years ago—Karmel, May 1973. It is 30 years during which VET has not done too well. After that report there was integration, meaning uniformity, meaning conformity, often meaning diminution—no, I am just taking a thesaurus approach to it—as compared to diversity, which grows and looks more outward. It is just that it has been my experience in my own state, in my own seat, and in this inquiry that the best VET that I have seen in schools is where people have ignored the theme of integration and encompassed diversity. That is the first point.

The second point is that they have ignored that Karmel absolute of general education with a vocational focus. What they have actually done—and they say it; it is on the record—is to say, ‘We deliver VET because we see it as our core business.’ I think that is quite different from the orthodoxy that has been presented to us. From your position in terms of being on a curriculum council, what is your view on that?

Mrs Jeffery—What you will see in our blueprint for the future is an acknowledgment of all three options. One is diversity. Students can access whatever VET they want that suits them. But also because we believe that all students need access to some VET in schools, and particularly experience in the workplace, we are building it into the more traditional courses and subjects. So those people do not miss out altogether. We are finding that you can do that. So in our blueprint for the future we are actually looking at both—VET as a stand-alone, and people can specialise in VET if they wish, or they can have it as part of a more general education.

One of the things we have been told by industry groups—and it was mainly down in the Kwinana area—is that sometimes students appear to be competent, and they are when they get

their first job, but because they are lacking a background in mathematics and language in particular—and they did focus very heavily on mathematics; Rees, you were with me on that occasion—they said that once they get to a certain level in the job, when it requires a better understanding of technology, better mathematical understanding, better knowledge of perhaps rudimentary physics and chemistry, then they are the first students who lose their jobs. Because they do not have the basic platform of underpinning skills, they are the ones then who stay out of work longer. This was what was said to us by a group in the industry area down in Kwinana. They prefer students to have stronger and higher achievement in some of the basic underpinning skills, because then they can build on that platform.

Mr Barrett—We might be using a different thesaurus, but we would define integration as respecting that diversity, because from a student's perspective, especially if we are trying to breathe life into lifelong learning, I think the council's belief is that they have to be able to see that 'if I am doing IT in class, because I need it to be a citizen'—more the general education focus—'it does actually connect with the sort of IT skills that I need for the workplace'. But I cannot just assume that because I have done it in a general education way that that equals the workplace standard. That has diversity in that it has some related but different standards. Equally, if I want to go to university and do a computing degree, there is a loose connection—maybe—between all three, and that is how I as a student can progress in my life from, say, a general education to more of a VET focus and maybe then go across to a university focus.

I have heard a student at the Peel campus, which I believe you might have visited yesterday, talk in this way. What stunned me when this student got up a couple of years ago, because they had developed a specific way of communicating with the students—'This is how it all connects in your IT learning'—is that that student was able to stand up in front of an audience of adults and say, 'My plan for my career development is to go on doing this Curriculum Council IT course, then at the same time I am doing an Oracle based course, which has been recognised by the council for my WACE, my WA certificate of general education. I need to get a job, but then I reckon that my long-term goal is to go to university, use what I have done and do software engineering.' To me, that student was actually able to articulate what I understand to be a lifelong learning plan. We are respecting the diversity, but the integration is about trying to show kids how it all connects, how they can make it connect.

Mr SAWFORD—I will just make the point before you go on that some of those VET courses in some of our high schools are very successful. In actual fact, the assumption that they have lesser maths and lesser physics is wrong. They need higher mathematics and they need higher physics. In actual fact, those people address those within those sorts of courses. So this assumption that because you do VET your language or your communication skills or your mathematical skills are less—that is wrong.

Mr Barrett—Absolutely.

Mrs Jeffery—No, I am not saying that it is necessarily VET; I am just saying that it is important for students to make sure that they keep on with those core general—

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Mrs MAY—The submission also points to outdated VET courses being offered. You have touched on that in your submission. I wonder if you would like to expand on that and whether that is connected with industry. How have you identified that? What do you actually mean by ‘outdated courses’ being offered?

Mr Barrett—We had an example yesterday of problem solving whereby some RTOs that the schools are partnering have offered in the partnership old VET modules. We see that as an issue when it can be established that there is already an endorsed training package with competencies that are equivalent to those. So that is what we were referring to in saying outdated VET. It has become less of an issue, because we have worked hard with the office of training and schools to target that. But it was mainly that some RTOs out there are offering through partnerships the old modules. In some cases they may have even been discredited, which is of no use to the students.

Mrs MAY—Has that been fairly widespread? Have you been able to stop it?

Mr Barrett—It was more widespread about five years ago, and then when we targeted it as a risk we have been able to prune that back significantly. I have not researched the issue that I referred to that came up yesterday, but that is a process where we now need to liaise with the office of training to find out—access their database and the information that it contains—about the status of these modules that we do not have on our database.

Mr ALBANESE—Just addressing your submission regarding Indigenous students in particular—and it is impressive, the figures that you quote in terms of participation and retention in schools—I just wonder if you could expand on that. You say that an essential element of the involvement of the Indigenous community is through the CDEP. I am not quite sure how that works—how that would fit in. It seems to me that that is contrary to what you also say later on in the submission about it mirroring the mainstream model of school. The CDEP is of course a somewhat controversial program, that is, we set up Work for the Dole for a whole section of the community—which is basically what it is. In terms of channelling Indigenous young people through that model, to what extent is that a success? Is it actually enabling them to get into mainstream jobs and employment?

Mrs Jeffery—I think you are probably looking at the Department of Education and Training submission there. We have made a comment about Indigenous students, but it is slightly different.

Mr ALBANESE—Yes.

Mrs Jeffery—The comment that we have made and the reason that I want to expand on this as well is that because of the remoteness of the communities, there is often great difficulty for them in partnering with an RTO. I had a son who once worked at Wangkajunja. There is no TAFE nearby, there is no RTO nearby and there also is not anywhere for work placements. So I imagine that is what they picked up in that submission. But we are hoping that, with the changes that ANTA might make in the high-level package review, they might be able to acknowledge the difficulties that some states have, particularly Western Australia and the Northern Territory, where we assume that there is a partner down the road that you can work with and that there is a

business around the corner. Perhaps that can be acknowledged and alternatives can be offered. That was all that our comment was about, unless you want to add to that, Rees.

Mr Barrett—I just think there needs to be a variety of strategies for quality assurance. What works in Perth does not necessarily work out in the lands east of Kalgoorlie, and yet there are some remote communities there where VET does offer a real opportunity for students to engage in learning and at the same time build their literacy, numeracy and citizenship skills through a hands-on practical orientation which students find attractive about VET.

The strategy that we referred to in that situation may be allowing—and it is our state policies that have not allowed this—a kind of auspicing arrangement between a number of remote schools and the district office, for instance. You would not necessarily make that your blanket arrangement for the whole state, but you might say that is the strategy to ensure equality in that particular geographic context.

Mr SAWFORD—You mentioned ANTA.

Mr Barrett—Yes, what is good and what is not about ANTA.

Mrs Jeffery—I think the whole development of training packages has been very helpful across Australia. I think they are very explicit about what the competency should be, what the underpinning knowledge and skills should be, and that has helped enormously in terms of developing programs for young students.

In terms of the AQTF, the standards apply across Australia. In this example which we have just pointed out, maybe sometimes there have to be things to do with regional differences. Rees knows more about this than I do, but I have found that the whole approach by ANTA, the whole approach through training packages, is that if we had perhaps less diversity between training packages it would be helpful for us and for teachers in developing curriculum and providing for students to have those training opportunities in schools.

That has improved in the last four or five years. The AQTF has improved it yet again because it is much clearer what you need to deliver in a course, what the resources are, what the standards are, what the teachers need to know. Would you care to add anything else?

Mr Barrett—Only that I think one of ANTA's strengths is that it is responsive. I believe it has done an analysis of training packages and has come to the conclusion—this was a verbal report last week—that 50 per cent of the competencies are similar across all the training packages. So there is a generic employability skills relationship where schools could offer a lot in terms of its delivery. To me, the fact that they are having a high level review of training packages and making statements like that is healthy because it is helping us to progress the agenda. It is not saying that our first solution to the framework we are trying to create here is the only solution that we are ever going to look at.

Mr SAWFORD—What is not so good about ANTA?

Mr Barrett—The fact that sometimes it can be a bit remote from Western Australia. It might be a bit harder for us to access it and get a view expressed. Overall, as far as we are concerned,

and certainly speaking for the ACACA VET in Schools group, we have a very close relationship with ANTA.

CHAIR—On that issue of the competencies that are across most courses and those generic skills, do you think that ought to be the way ahead? Do you think there is a much greater capacity for a general course in structured workplace learning that involves students in a range of experiences across several industries and that focusing on those key competencies would make them more flexible in the workplace, more able to adapt to a range of situations and perhaps offer something to a broader range of potential employers? Is there a way in which that can be done that could achieve national consistency and also somehow reach accreditation for university entrance? Is that asking too much in one course?

Mrs Jeffery—We are developing a career in enterprise course, for which Rees is responsible, which attempts to do more or less what you are suggesting. Rees might want to go through that.

Our experience of universities in terms of university entrants is that they are always looking for predictability. They are always looking to see if the achievement is of a standard that they can predict how successful that student will be. We are trying to develop all of our courses so that students can achieve at the highest level, which is level 8 on our scale of achievement, no matter what the course. There will not be high-level courses and low-level courses. All courses will aim to meet the needs of all students at the highest level but will also be broad and flexible. If the focus they want to have is on VET and only VET, then there is a brick there to enable them to do that. At the same time, if a student aspires to university, then they can undertake units at a more complex level. Do you want to explain about your careers course?

Mr Barrett—Yes. Before I do, I think in answer to your question—off the top of my head—there would be three features that I would say would be preconditions to success of that kind of strategy. You would need to make sure that the underpinning knowledge and skills are articulated. Some training packages do it very well; others do not.

One observation we would make is that quite often as teachers, whether it is VET or general education, we assume that people know how to communicate. We assume that people know how to work in teams and all of those complexities. I have to confess that at my age I believe I am still learning how to increase my levels of communication and working in teams. So it is more of a developmental notion. It is not just something you catch and you have it and you go out and you use it. That development notion is quite fundamental.

The second observation would be that, if a focus on generic meant that we closed the door to industry specific, I would see that would be a loss. I think that is what really turns the kids on. They enjoy being out there being treated like an adult in the workplace, having a mentor looking after them, scaffolding their learning. It is a really valuable relationship for them. It has had a transforming effect for some kids, schools and communities that I have observed.

The third condition would be they have to see the connections, the pathways, for them. The generic qualifications need to demonstrate to them how this connects and there should be pathways that industry is using as an opportunity to show the connections, rather than saying, 'You do that because it is in schools and we do not really value what you do in schools as much as we value what is happening over here.' I think that would be a necessary condition.

The fourth condition would be we have to find ways—and I believe ANTA has a project that Patrick Griffin is leading—where we help people come to grips with how we deal with competency based assessments in a broader standards referenced environment. If you could get those four conditions in it, then your generic qualification approach could work. But in careers and enterprise that is effectively what we are trying to capture by articulating broad general education outcomes, showing teachers how the workplace learning context is part of that learning. Students can achieve these outcomes, but they have to be taught specific knowledge and skills. They do not get them through osmosis.

Mr ALBANESE—How broad do you see the participation is in a course like that?

Mrs Jeffery—At the moment we believe that will be a very popular course with students, because students engage in structured workplace learning enjoy that experience. There has been a lot of concern that there is not such a course at the moment. We have a whole-of-school assessed careers course, which means that it does not count towards tertiary entrance. This course will have broad appeal because within it people will be able to select the industry area that they are interested in. So it is not just a generic course. It is a course that has all of the generic skills made explicit, but the opportunities will be there for people to specialise in.

If they were doing another course, say in engineering studies, and through the careers course they also wanted to focus on some aspects of engineering studies, they could do complementary courses. The whole of the approach we are trying to adopt in the future is, as you have suggested, broad pathways, flexibility, meeting the needs of students but also fitting it within that general educational framework. We do not want to make it so rigid that students do not feel they are able to move off in the direction that they want to go in.

A few years ago we saw schooling as something that ended there, and then the rest of life starts. What we have been working towards over the last two years is this being an overlapping period where some students are continuing with quite formal studies, others are going much more into applied learning and already starting on their career path. It is a different approach and a different philosophy.

CHAIR—We would like to keep going but time prevents us—and your car is still over parked! Thank you very much. That has been very helpful.

[11.14 a.m.]

DELLAR, Professor Graham, Dean, Faculty of Education, Language Studies and Social Work, Curtin University of Technology

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. Would you like to make some introductory comments before we proceed to questioning?

Prof. Dellar—I will keep them brief. The submission was made by Dr Clare McBeath, who at the time was the senior lecturer in vocational education and training in the faculty. She has since retired. There has been a longstanding commitment to vocational education and training as a part of the program offerings of the Faculty of Education at Curtin. Clare McBeath, Kathryn Dixon and some other staff have been very innovative in developing a program in response to curriculum change that was occurring in the Western Australian secondary schools system, in particular, the most recent of which has been the creation of a graduate Certificate in VET, specifically for secondary school teachers. It was a carefully researched curriculum development from the university perspective. There was an awareness that generally there was a perceived lack of credibility among secondary teachers in the VET program by people in the field—workplace trainers in particular. Therefore, the focus was on trying to improve that credibility not only among the students who may participate in vocational education and training programs in secondary schools but also in the minds of colleagues who worked with students in workplace settings.

CHAIR—Graham, what is your opinion on why there has not been a greater take-up of that course?

Prof. Dellar—There are probably several reasons for it. While the education department did offer scholarships, they were scholarships for postgraduate study in general. I would imagine there were many other professional development programs at postgraduate level on offer at various universities and there was not the same promotional focus on the graduate certificate program in VET. We were supportive of the fact that they were offering scholarships for ongoing teacher professional development, but there was not the same focus or promotion of this particular program. It was a generic offer of financial support for what now has become largely fee-paying postgraduate programs right across Australia.

CHAIR—Is it your view that, speaking generally, VET teachers do need greater access to professional development and also industry experience?

Prof. Dellar—Absolutely. I think there have been a number of changes over the last decade and a half to two decades that have seen a somewhat ageing profile in secondary schools where people's initial training was in curricula areas that no longer operate under the present curriculum structure, or, if they do, sit rather uncomfortably under a general learning area called 'technology and enterprise'. This has created problems in terms of responsiveness to new curriculum change among the teachers who would see themselves as—to use the local words—'shed men', either woodwork or metal work, sometimes plastics, with the new kid on the block being ICT people. So for that cohort continual professional development would empower them,

equip them and knowledge them up to engage in new areas of vocational education and training within the secondary school, particularly at post-compulsory levels.

CHAIR—It has been put to the committee that there is a much greater need for pre-service education in careers for potential teachers, given that often secondary teachers who do not expect it end up being given a careers load or a VET load as part of the course. It depends on the contingencies of the particular school's timetable. Would you see that there is a place in all teacher training, particularly for secondary teachers, for a compulsory unit of careers education? Do you think there would be value in that? Do you think universities would generally accept that approach?

Prof. Dellar—I can see some value in it. I do not know that all universities have the capacity to respond. A lot of the specialisation in what we call pre-service preparation programs in the areas of VET really depends on the resources that universities do not have. Perhaps a solution would be in a university-TAFE partnership where access to equipment and resources would better equip teachers who are going to specialise in VET. That would be an absolute benefit for a quality preparation program. That type of partnership, to my knowledge, does not exist at the moment. For my institution, it limits the sorts of numbers that we have in VET going through secondary pre-service programs. It limits them to computing, design, and that is it, from memory.

CHAIR—The issue is not only specialist VET courses but also broad career knowledge. But, again, you would be suggesting that a partnership with TAFE would be the better way to do that?

Prof. Dellar—I would imagine so, yes. I have long thought that, but it is something that we have not explored. Universities generally are rather conservative in the structure of their programs, and in secondary education in particular the traditional discipline areas are still the key focus of the program.

Mr ALBANESE—If you took a couple of steps back from your evidence and the previous evidence, you could argue that the people who are in charge of promoting training for our young people are not interested in training themselves in terms of the fact that there has not been an uptake here. There is potentially a pretty bad message there in terms of the capacity of an acceptance of the need to do that. Is part of the problem a perception that they do not need any more? To what extent are some of the ideas, concepts and training that people would get out of your postgraduate course already incorporated in undergraduate courses when people do teaching?

Prof. Dellar—If I can pick up on one of the earlier things you said, I do not think that the issue of capacity is a major issue. I think that it is a willingness rather than a capacity issue—a willingness to engage in some professional development, which would improve capacity in the training area.

Mr ALBANESE—I think that is worse.

Prof. Dellar—So do I. It would be great if people were both willing and capable of engaging in the process for their own professional growth, for the improvement of a program and the delivery in secondary schools. That is an issue that we are constantly having to confront. To pick

up on the second point of your question, I find it extraordinary that there is not the same commitment to ongoing professional development across the profession—that you do get a relatively large percentage of people who believe that only incidental professional development is necessary post-permanency in a school system, whatever that school system is. So, once again, I think it gets back to a mind-set about what it means to be an effective trainer or educator in the schooling system. The last point has now escaped me.

Mr ALBANESE—In terms of trying to provide an excuse, essentially, for what could be a pretty sad indictment on a section at least of the teaching profession by saying: is it possible that they think, ‘I have already learned those things when doing my teaching degree, when doing my science degree,’ or whatever it is that they did along with a Dip. Ed.?

Prof. Dellar—I sort of reiterate what I just said. I suspect that that is the case for a certain percentage of the teaching population. However, you do get people who are driven to ongoing professional growth of one form or another, whether that is through credentials at a university or through their own self-study. What becomes critical is how you structure a set of secondary school opportunities using teachers whose draw into the profession had nothing to do with vocational education and training. The very reason why they decided to be secondary teachers was that they favoured a particular discipline, be it history, economics, mathematics, science or whatever. I do not think, as tertiary institutions in the west, we have done particularly well at preparing people for alternative educational experiences that could be termed training and development or VET in schools, or whatever. There has been a focus more on the traditional preparation.

Mr ALBANESE—We heard from the previous witnesses that the department actually offered scholarships. Without being an expert on this for the last hour—I am not pretending to fully understand it—it seems to me that there is a bit of a de facto case to be made that the department has done its bit, that the university has done its bit. Where is it falling down? Is it the senior teaching profession or principals of high schools not encouraging their staff to engage in proper training?

Prof. Dellar—Probably to some extent all of those things. We were very grateful that the department did offer scholarships, but, as I mentioned before, these were general scholarships that were available for all sorts of programs offered in the different tertiary institutions in the state. I suspect that it is reflective of the previous statement I made that, if you are going to avail yourself of a scholarship and you are committed to a non-VET discipline such as mathematics or science, you are more likely to go and do a masters in science and maths education than you are in a graduate certificate and a VET for secondary school teaching. I think that has been the end result of the scholarships—not that they are not welcome; it is just that I do not think they were targeted in a way that could have improved the knowledge, the capacity and the commitment of VET teachers in secondary schools.

Mr SAWFORD—Is there a VET teachers association in Western Australia?

Prof. Dellar—I cannot answer that. I am not sure.

Mr SAWFORD—This has not happened in WA, by the way, but certainly it has been reported to us in New South Wales and in Melbourne on another committee that people involved in VET

feel undervalued, overworked and under resourced. If you take examples that we were given this morning and also yesterday, in a fairly short period of time—from 2000 to 2003—VET participation has grown from about eight per cent to 40 per cent on no funding. So intrinsically someone has given a hell of a lot for that to occur without funding. In the other states a couple of other factors were mentioned, too—the undervaluing, the overworked, the underresourced, burn-out, age—that this particular group is older, has been around a long time and is tired. Is that the situation that may be the case here in Western Australia as well?

Prof. Dellar—I am pretty sure that it is. I do not know what the median age is at the moment, although I think it is certainly going up towards the mid-50s. There are a number of issues that you are probably aware of.

Mr SAWFORD—It is not very attractive in your mid-50s, is it?

Prof. Dellar—No, it is not, and I think that that is probably true of teaching generally. There have been so many changes to the curriculum, there have been so many changes in terms of expectations of the role of educators, particularly secondary, that people in their early to mid-50s find that pretty overwhelming. When you are overwhelmed, you are less likely to embrace new ideas or engage in different ways of doing things in the schools. I think that is common across a number of professions.

Mr SAWFORD—One VET teacher said to me, ‘I am 57. People call me middle-aged in terms of going on for professional development.’ He made a very valid point. He said, ‘How many 114-year-olds do you know if I am middle-aged?’ But then that also foresees or gives notice to a very serious problem down the track. Who replaces these 50-year-old people?

Prof. Dellar—That is right.

CHAIR—One of the aims of VET in Schools is to open up variable pathways for students and greater flexibility. It was put to us yesterday at the Peel campus that they are really trying to encourage alternative routes into university—to say to students, ‘You don’t have to just focus on TEE subjects in order to get into university. You can do VET in School courses and there are alternative pathways via TAFE, accreditation and then into university.’ However, one of the frustrations there, one of the obstacles seems to be that a lot of universities still do not recognise for tertiary entrance TAFE qualifications. The view was put that they will give credit to particular TAFE courses, but that is not much good if the student actually cannot get into university because they have not done the requisite number of TEE courses, even though they might have completed certificate IV at TAFE in a particular course. Is that a widespread problem from your understanding of what is happening in the tertiary sector and what can we do to address that?

Prof. Dellar—The responsiveness to TAFE diplomas as an entry to universities varies from institution to institution. Mine will certainly recognise diploma level IV as entry. Increasingly, one of the problems is trying to evidence meeting literacy requirements from the packages. As the packages change and it is embedded, literacy becomes more of a focus. It is more problematic to identify that a potential university entrant from TAFE in fact meets the university matriculation requirements of literacy in particular. However, that is something that we are working on at the moment. There is a mapping exercise going on at the university level under

the umbrella term 'RPLing'. I think that Curtin has been very responsive for quite some time to the movement from TAFE into university and, incidentally, the movement in reverse as well, which is surprisingly higher than I ever would have imagined. So I hope that I have been able to adequately address that.

CHAIR—That reverse movement is certainly substantial and growing, but from the point of view of options for post-compulsory schooling and the view for students that they can access university in another way and therefore in that capacity raising the esteem of VET in Schools as a bona fide alternative pathway, it is that route that really is the issue. To elaborate a little, you mentioned the need for universities to have confidence that a certificate IV or a diploma course covers the matriculation requirements that would have been achieved through another course. Is that not the dilemma, though? There still seems to be, in your comment, an assumption that that matriculation requirement via a TEE is still the benchmark even if someone has certificate IV?

Prof. Dellar—Yes and no. There is equal discussion and disquiet about whether TEE English, senior English or English literature adequately demonstrates functional literacy. That has been ongoing for quite some time. There is a reasonably broad acceptance that English as a field of study in the Western Australian system is evidence of meeting the literacy requirements for universities. What is disputed between institutions is whether English literature does the same or whether senior English does. Senior English, you might be aware, is the non-TEE—non-tertiary entrance—exam version of English. Some institutions, including my own, are moving to accept that as evidence of literacy for entrance into universities.

What was clearer before was that, in modules of TAFE diploma courses, you could evidence English competency that was the equivalent of the TEE English that people could take. It is less evident. You have to search for it now. So people are beginning to re-examine ways in which we can comfortably and credibly accept people into the program—not that I believe that too many people have been rejected.

CHAIR—So there is partially a responsibility on TAFEs as well. If they made the literacy competency more obvious in their diploma or certificate IV course, that would assist the process as well?

Prof. Dellar—Absolutely.

CHAIR—Any other questions? Thank you very much, that has been very helpful, and thank you for your submission.

[11.37 a.m.]

CARNEY, Mr David, President, Career Education Association of Western Australia

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee this morning. Would you like to make some introductory comments before we proceed to questioning?

Mr Carney—To give you a bit of a background, the Career Education Association of Western Australia is a not-for-profit education association here in Western Australia which looks after the professional development needs and supporting needs of teachers who are involved in career education. Predominantly our members come from secondary schools. We have a few members from the TAFE system, from the university system and from the primary school system. We have had limited, I suppose, impact on professional development in relation to VET. There is another professional association in Western Australia which looks after that professional development.

From a career education point of view, we believe that one of the things which has been missing in the whole VET agenda is quality career education for students entering these types of programs. What we mean by ‘quality career education’ is structured programs in schools and professional career practitioners in schools to be able to help and guide these students.

CHAIR—Would it be your view, then, that in many schools students are not given sufficient awareness of career opportunities broadly and the various paths that they would need to take to access those careers?

Mr Carney—That would be a fair comment here in Western Australia. The level of career education in schools has predominantly been left up to the principal of the school, as to what sort of emphasis the principal has decided to place on the benefit of a program such as career education in schools. Some government schools do it very well, some government schools do not do it terribly well, and the same in the non-government system as well. So it has been left, I think, up to the administration of the school to decide upon whether they believe that it is important or not.

CHAIR—How then do you respond to the proposal that there is a compulsory career education unit in pre-service training, particularly for all secondary teachers, perhaps also for primary teachers?

Mr Carney—As an association we are a strong supporter of that. We have worked fairly closely with Edith Cowan University here in Western Australia, who have offered, obviously, career education units as part of their Bachelor of Education program.

CHAIR—Is that compulsory?

Mr Carney—It is not compulsory. They do offer an elective stream. We have been working with them over the last six months. They are looking at redesigning their Bachelor of Education program and putting a compulsory unit into their Bachelor of Education program for their secondary teachers.

CHAIR—What has been the level of take-up for the non-compulsory course?

Mr Carney—Fairly limited.

CHAIR—So there is a problem.

Mr Carney—It is an elective, and I think if you speak to those people who run those courses at ECU they would say that students elect to do it because they may be looking for a unit to finish their graduation and it sounds like it might be a good unit to pick up. Some of them see some benefit in some of the counselling units attached to the elective. They think that they might be interesting.

CHAIR—It would seem to me that there are two problems with it not being compulsory. One is that a lot of teachers do not anticipate that they will end up being career counsellors in schools but often do end up in that role because of the vagaries of school timetabling and so on. Often the job is given to someone who has three periods left to fill up—or 10 periods, or whatever it is. Secondly, the informal careers advice that is given by many teachers to their students often is relied on more by students than the official appointment with their careers officer/counsellor. That would really necessitate a good working knowledge of career possibilities for all teachers who would be giving that informal advice; would you agree with that?

Mr Carney—I suppose as a practising career counsellor myself, one of the difficulties that I face in a school is that advice is given quite regularly. I say to the teachers in the school where I work, ‘By all means, offer that advice, but if you are not 100 per cent sure on the advice, please come and check before you give that advice.’ That is also a bit of a problem. You do have teachers who are trying to do the right thing—and we would obviously encourage that—but if they are not up to date with current knowledge and they are providing knowledge that they had when they perhaps went through tertiary education or when they first started to enter the work force, that is well and truly out of date.

CHAIR—What about as an alternative the greater use of community organisations coming into the school, for example group training companies or, in regions where there is a cluster industry workplace liaison coordinator, having that person come into the school on a contractual basis to provide careers advice to students? Is that workable?

Mr Carney—That is a model that is worth investigating. If you look at schools today, schools have been asked to engage with industry and with outside organisations. So it is an extension of that. From a school point of view you would want to be fairly assured that the organisation that you were going to enter into some sort of contractual arrangement with was going to provide the types of services that were satisfactory to your students. In the past here in Western Australia with those few organisations that perhaps schools may have contracted—or they may in the future through the department’s new employment directions network—there would need to be some fairly close monitoring of the types of people who are employed within those organisations who are then coming into a school to do that counselling work.

The term ‘counselling’ also is not a good term to use in schools. Students tend not to go to the career counsellor because ‘counsellor’ has a medical term attached to it. I do not call myself a counsellor, but lots of schools do. The profession has been through so many different name

changes. We were officers at one stage and that seemed to be very harsh, so we were no longer officers; we became counsellors. Then ‘counsellors’ had a problem. So finding that correct terminology—adviser or career development facilitator or something of that nature—is fairly important as well. Although I think that that model that you suggested would work, it is fairly important in a school setting that the students, if they are going to go and see somebody for some career advice, can in some way relate to that person who is a permanent member of staff.

CHAIR—So that would be your preference—a better equipping and training of school—

Mr Carney—It would be my preference and it would be the preference, obviously, of the association that we would look at providing greater support and professional development for those educators who perhaps wanted to move into this field.

Mr SAWFORD—Who funds your organisation?

Mr Carney—We do not receive any funding from government. We are funded fully by members’ fees. We obviously engage in a number of activities in order to secure a greater level of funding. We have received grants in the past from DEST. Through the school to work funding program we produced a curriculum package for teachers which is aimed at years 9 to 10, which is called Making Choices, and we run conferences.

Mr SAWFORD—In previous educational inquiries careers advice has been severely criticised by witnesses who have come forward. It seems that it is reported a lot that people are selected in schools by what is called the short straw method. In other words, people are just nominated without the background. Is that a problem here in Western Australia?

Mr Carney—I believe it is, yes.

Mr SAWFORD—The same short straw method, or similar?

Mr Carney—A similar method. Underloaded on the timetable—‘Yes, we had better do a bit of careers. Subject selection for year 10 is coming up. Who is going to do it?’ So-and-so is underloaded: ‘Guess what? You’ve got the job.’

Mr SAWFORD—I know in some ways it is semantics, but does this confusion about whether you should be officers, counsellors, facilitators or whatever also reflect an attitude towards that sort of position in schools that is negative?

Mr Carney—I do not think that the perception is negative. I think there is a lack of understanding by perhaps other educators as to what their role is. I think there is a perception that, because you are not in the classroom for 25 periods in a week, what are you doing in that office? I think there is that perception, and yet, if you look at quality career advisers, they are probably one of the hardest working people in a school because they are having to undertake that role and they have also taken on the VET agenda as well. So they are juggling basically two fairly heavy loads at the moment.

Mr SAWFORD—Isn’t that the better term, ‘careers adviser’, that you used just then?

Mr Carney—I would think that the term ‘adviser’ is possibly the better term to use. But once again, it comes down to the school and, I think, the individual as to what they decide to call themselves. But if you are looking at any of those terms, ‘adviser’ is probably the better of the terms rather than ‘counsellor’. However, if you look at those people who belong to, for example, the Australian Association of Career Counsellors, which is the peak body in Australia for counselling, they would not like to call themselves advisers. They believe that they have earned the right to call themselves a counsellor, because they are dealing with a broader range. They are dealing not just with school students; they are perhaps dealing with the unemployed, outplaced workers and so forth. So there is ongoing conjecture as to what the title should actually be.

Mr SAWFORD—Is there a general perception about the advice or a differentiation between the advice given to, say, year 10 students in Western Australian schools vis-a-vis higher education, vis-a-vis vocational education?

Mr Carney—It comes down to the individual and it depends on the type of advice that that particular individual as an adviser is actually giving.

Mr SAWFORD—Is there a problem in that sort of context anyway—having the one person?

Mr Carney—I do not tend to think so. I would not think that is a problem. I think that that person has a responsibility to ensure that they are au fait with the three different avenues that students are looking to.

Mrs MAY—Just touching on the growth of VET in schools, certainly we have heard throughout the inquiry that that is growing. So I would see the careers adviser’s role within schools as changing. Certainly, in a number of my schools in my electorate, a lot of the workload for that careers adviser, or the direction that the careers adviser takes, comes from the principal and with the support of the principal, because very obviously you are going to have to forge links with industry now, with the growth of VET, but the perception of other staff is that you are not doing very much. You sit in a room and you have these lovely posters around you and handouts. But the role has certainly grown. Would that come back to professional development being needed on a continuing basis and a more regular basis for the careers adviser? To me, it would seem that it is becoming far more specialised with the opening of new career paths and making sure that that careers adviser is on top of all of those pathways, and, with emerging industries, so many new pathways. Would you just like to comment on that and the change, I suppose, from your point of view?

Mr Carney—I would agree with everything that you have said. I think it is very important that careers advisers are provided with ongoing professional development. I think you would find that, perhaps unlike specialist subject educators in professional development, the professional development that is provided for career educators is perhaps the most important for exactly that reason—that the labour market continually changes, that where shortages are occurring in industry is constantly changing. So if a career adviser is not up to date with that information, then the advice that they are providing to students is not going to be the most accurate advice. When a student comes to see a career adviser, they are expecting that the advice that comes out of that adviser’s mouth is going to be accurate. I think that it is the responsibility of the person who is the career adviser to make sure that they are up to date with that type of information.

In the past, careers advisers or educators in Western Australia have relied solely on the professional development provided by the Career Education Association of Western Australia, because in this state there are no mandated career education programs in government schools. The careers advisers in government schools have disappeared and have been replaced by VET coordinators. The VET coordinators are so busy coordinating work placements and following up students that they do not have time. If they do decide that they are going to offer some career advice, they have not had time to be attending professional development sessions or anything else.

As you were saying about the administration or the principal, I think probably what happened was that with the advent of VET there were large amounts of money around for its implementation and for its growth. Principals are only human beings; they will go where the money is. I think that is why lots of career advisers all of a sudden realised that they were no longer a career adviser full time, they were now having to deal with a whole lot of VET issues; and the VET issues continue to grow and they are enormous. Having to engage with industry and deal with TAFE colleges and private providers and put students through school based traineeships and apprenticeships is an enormous task to do—a valuable task, but it is an enormous task. Probably the ideal in an ideal world is for schools to have a full-time VET coordinator and a full-time career adviser and for those two to work fairly closely together.

Mrs MAY—And delivering to the students. With regard to your conferences, do you have themed conferences? Is it your membership that is driving those conferences and the needs of your members?

Mr Carney—We had an international conference here in the year 2000 which was driven purely by a group of like-minded career professionals who got together and decided that it was time to do something, and we received some government funding for that. We had people from international career organisations attend and we brought to Perth those people at the time who were seen as international experts in the area of career development. Obviously, there was a VET component from that. The theme of the current one that we are running is Thriving in the Trenches. We thought, ‘How do we thrive in an environment where it is a bit trench-like?’ You have got so much to do. What are the practical things that we as an association can provide through a conference that are going to make the lives of these educators, advisers or coordinators a bit easier in the coming educational year?

Mrs MAY—Are the conferences well supported by your membership?

Mr Carney—The international conference we ran in the year 2000 was. This is actually the first conference that we have run as an association by ourselves. The interest that we have had to date would suggest that, yes, it will be fairly well supported. The only drawback may be where the funding may come from for these people to be able to attend such a conference. It occurs at the end of the year, the reason being that in relation to getting teachers out of schools—mainly government schools—during the school year the teacher relief rates are so high at the moment that if they are working in a careers area with a fairly limited budget they just cannot afford to get out of schools.

Mrs MAY—Would you see the conferences as being part of professional development and that they should be recognised in that way?

Mr Carney—I would see it totally as professional development. Obviously, DEST is the platinum sponsor for that, but what is disappointing is that the state education and training department will not get on board.

Mrs MAY—They do not recognise that and so there is no release time in school hours?

Mr Carney—They say they will release and their sponsorship is through providing the money for registration to the conference. They will not put up any money up front.

Mr SAWFORD—How do you reconcile that with the Gallop government's commitment to developing a comprehensive career guidance framework in schools? That is a bit at odds, isn't it?

Mr Carney—It is completely at odds. That is probably a question that you need to direct to the people working in the department in this area.

CHAIR—Could you outline for us how The Real Game works as a career and life skills education program?

Mr Carney—I suppose that leads on from your question. It is not normal, if you look around the country, to have a non-profit education association delivering the training in this game. This game was obviously funded by DEST and has been rolled out throughout the country. The department here in WA chose at the time that the pilots were occurring not to get involved in this and they continued not to get involved in training. In terms of what actually happened and how the Career Ed Association came to be delivering this training—it has had an enormous take-up in Western Australia; we are the third highest take-up of the game per head of population around the country—I made contact with DEST and said this game was available, and at the time you could not actually have the game operating in your school unless you had been trained in the game. It was some arrangement that they had with the Canadians. That is no longer the case, although training is still highly recommended. That is how we came to be delivering the game.

The game is a life skills program aimed at ages 12 to 14 years, so it fits in that ideal year 9 to year 10 age group in schools. It is more than a careers game. As I say when I deliver training, I think it is a life skills game. It allows students to simulate real life in a very safe environment, that is, the classroom, and it looks at real life situations. Students are given a role—whether it be a new apprenticeship, a role that you would pick up having completed a diploma or a certificate at TAFE or if you have been to university. So there is a very broad mix of roles available. It is fairly important within a class setting that when you distribute those roles there is a good cross-section; that you do not stack the deck, so to speak, at one end or the other, that there is a good mix.

The students then assume that role for the duration of the game and they role play through the game. They undertake budgeting exercises in terms of what it is going to cost you to live based on the salary that you are actually going to receive for this particular occupation. They go through that. They talk about job change, what actually occurs if you are made unemployed or if you are made redundant, where you go to access the types of services that may help you in that situation. They work in groups as well. It is fairly group oriented. The role of the educator is very much as a facilitator, not as a chalk and talk type mentality. Once you have given the

students guidance, your role in the classroom is more as a facilitator. There is lots of learning that occurs within those groups. That is The Real Game. There is also The Make it Real Game for primary school and the Be Real Game for older students.

CHAIR—How long does it take for the game to be played? Is it over a week?

Mr Carney—It really depends on the school environment how they choose to run it. In Western Australia some schools are running it in blocks. They have decided, ‘Okay, we are going to set aside a week and we are going to forgo running our general studies throughout that week,’ because it is a cross-curriculum game. It does not have to be run by the careers person in the school; it can very easily be team taught through English, maths and science. The country schools have tended to do that. The city schools have tended, if they have a block, to run it, say, during term 4 of a year, or some of them might decide they are going to run it one period a week for the duration of the year. It depends on the actual school and the timetable as to how they decide they are going to structure it.

CHAIR—How many hours does it take?

Mr Carney—About 30 hours.

CHAIR—Have you had any evaluation or any anecdotal evidence as to its effectiveness in alerting students to career options and the implications of those?

Mr Carney—Only anecdotal evidence at this stage. It is still more or less in its infant stages. But we have trained nearly 400 people here in WA. These are not all career people, these are obviously people working in other teaching and learning areas as well. You get only positive feedback when they walk away from the training session. They are blown away by the game. They wonder how something so simple can have such a big impact in that sort of setting. That may be because in Western Australia we have not had specific career education programs in schools. This is something fairly new. It is fairly innovative and fun, and the students really enjoy it. The teachers really have fun as well. So they see it as a win-win situation. The teachers probably have more fun during the training than the kids. They just love it.

CHAIR—Why has there not been a greater take-up of it? Is it just a matter of time?

Mr Carney—There has been fairly good take-up in Western Australia. We are being held back, I think, here in Western Australia. I am not employed full time by the Career Education Association, so every time I have to run professional development I have to seek release from my school to be able to do that. Unlike other states, where somebody in the department has been put in charge of the rollout—

Mr SAWFORD—You are a full-time teacher?

Mr Carney—I am a full-time teacher. Obviously, in terms of the rollout of this game, they have the time to do that. We are fairly limited in getting into country areas. I have been fairly successful in negotiating with some of the school clusters up north. They have provided some funding to take me to the Pilbara and to Geraldton, so we have managed to reach into those

schools up north. Schools that are operating down south have obviously heard about it now and they are making the effort to get to Perth to get training in the game.

Mrs MAY—We have a copy of a press release of yours from 2001. You were fairly critical of a change to curriculum for years 11 and 12 as far as work readiness went. Work readiness is certainly something we have heard about from industry representatives throughout the inquiry. Were your concerns addressed? Did those changes go through?

Mr Carney—My concern at that time was when we were undertaking a major review of curriculum in years 11 and 12. You probably would have got some information this morning, I think, on the new career and enterprise course of study. There was an enormous fight by career teachers in this state to get that on the agenda—a massive fight. If you have a look at the curriculum framework in Western Australia, the K-12 curriculum framework was the death of career education in this state. That is my personal belief. In career education now you have got to really look hard to find some elements in that framework where you can deliver. That is obviously one of the big problems in WA. Teachers say, ‘Look, it is not in the framework. How can we deliver this? It is not in the framework. we have to teach to the framework and it’s not there.’ It is in the overarching learning statements. Obviously, some of the principles are fairly generic.

Mr SAWFORD—While you are on that, do you have a comment about the national goals of schooling?

Mr Carney—In what sense?

Mr SAWFORD—Maybe in a similar vein to what you have just described. I share your view of the Adelaide declaration of national goals for schooling. I cannot think of a more incoherent statement. But I take the point you have made.

Mr Carney—But even if you have a look at those national goals, one of them is quite specific in relation to providing quality. Where is it?

CHAIR—Thank you, David. That has been very helpful.

Mr SAWFORD—Good luck. You are doing a good job.

CHAIR—You are. You bring a great passion and enthusiasm to your role.

Mr Carney—Thank you for the opportunity.

[12.03 p.m.]

NELSON, Mr John Edward, Post-Compulsory Education Consultant, Catholic Education Office of Western Australia

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

Mr Nelson—One way of approaching this might be to give a thumbnail sketch of our submission and some of the issues we see. The four areas I look at include where VET is juxtaposed in education. That is one area we feel very strongly about. The second is perhaps the move into new industry areas and some of the recognition arrangements. Thirdly, I would like to make some comments about the provision of VET to rural and remote and Indigenous students. Probably the fourth theme, which underpins all of that, is funding and those sorts of issues.

In terms of the first one, our system has about 25 per cent of years 11 and 12 in the state. We service 36 schools. Obviously, VET is very good and it services some students very well. Our view is that it needs to be juxtaposed against a broad general education. Sometimes we have been criticised in our system for failure to get as many school based trainees as other systems. While I would not be suspicious of it, we would certainly be making a plea that funding should not be tied to this. We have seen some very bad examples of encouragement of trainees into programs when it is quite inappropriate for them at too young an age. We have a very strong belief that a wider general education, employability skills, work readiness and a range of things are just as important to have sitting alongside quality VET. That is one set of issues we see. As I said, we encourage all students into it, but we do see the value of those other imperatives as well.

The second set of issues that we would look at is the movement into new areas. I think all school systems face serious challenges with trying to look at new areas. I think we have overflowed hospitality and tourism, office and administration, and metals and engineering and the like. It is a constant challenge to try and move into new areas such as some of the electronics, mechatronics, and especially the high-level credentials. It is a challenge we face to get students beyond the certificate I and certificate II into some of the higher credentials like the certificate III, certificate IV and diploma credentials. That is a real issue that has serious funding implications.

I was interested to hear my colleague David, too. I think that we also need to look at a forgotten group, and that is the university bound students who are really not engaging in this VET agenda as much as they should. I think they are a group that is increasingly being somewhat marginalised in terms of their opportunities for that work experience, work readiness. Increasingly, we are seeing, of course, a much greater movement between the VET sector and the tertiary sector in terms of transferability of degrees and so on. That is another set of issues we see.

An issue that I think is in all of the education systems but especially in Western Australia is the service to rural and remote areas. Like Queensland, we share a number of schools that are in very isolated areas. It is very difficult to provide VET to them. It is very difficult to get work

placements. It is very difficult to fund them. It is very costly to provide that. That is a real challenge we face as well in terms of trying to service our rural and remote and especially Indigenous students. We have Indigenous schools in the rural areas as well as in Perth to service as well. That is a thumbnail sketch of some of the issues we see. You may want to ask some questions or further those details.

CHAIR—Thank you, John. You have mentioned the challenge of getting VET into new areas and emerging industries. What about the more traditional areas, though? We are getting some comments that students, as you say, are keen to do IT, tourism and hospitality. What about the more traditional trades, the dirty your hands, hands-on trades, if you like—the mechanics, the builders and the plumbers? Are there problems there?

Mr Nelson—There are a number of problems in getting into those areas. There are industrial issues. It is often difficult to sign people up and get them in those areas, certainly with traineeships. A view of a lot of our schools would be that students might be better to stay at school for years 11 and 12 and get a full, rounded education, get the quality aspects of it, and then perhaps explore those traineeships and apprenticeships after year 12. But it is an issue. Even getting work placements on building and trade type sites is difficult. There is a whole range of safety and industrial issues in getting those students out there.

CHAIR—Is there also a difficulty in terms of the demand side: that students are less and less interested in those occupations because they are seen as dirty, hazardous or not as well paid? Some of the feedback we get from industry is that it is hard to get apprentices; that there are skill shortages in some of those areas. Is that your understanding or not?

Mr Nelson—It is. It varies with our schools. Some of our schools have a very low socioeconomic base. A lot of those students would aspire to that, and some of our colleges. I suppose one of the problems also is how you convince a 14-year-old student—David was talking about career counselling—who is aspiring to the best they can that this is the road for them and to make a decision in year 10 as a fairly immature 14-year-old to put up their hand and say, ‘My life journey is going to be a traineeship in trades or metals’? It can be difficult. Most of them will try to finish year 11 and widen their horizons and keep their options open. I think you will probably find that that is a fairly big factor. In some of the government schools here where they service very low socioeconomic base students there would be a much greater emphasis on that. But in most of our schools our retention rate is very high. It would be something in the order of 90 per cent, whereas the state average is probably mid-60s. Most of our students and their parents aspire often for them to stay on till the end of year 12, which we would encourage.

Mrs MAY—Could I pick up on that, John? Your view is that they should be kept at school till the end of year 12 and then sent out into the work force. Would you not see—certainly we have heard this—that exposure to different pathways or different vocations earlier than that would perhaps give them some idea of where they want to go? You are saying: how can a year 10 decide? Shouldn’t we be exposing them to career opportunities or pathways so that they are aware of the sorts of pathways that are there?

Mr Nelson—If I gave the impression that we would tell them to stay at school at all costs, that is not what I meant to give. We would encourage students to stay as long at school as is appropriate for those students. But certainly we have huge activity in VET. We have students

involved in the capital VET, where our system has put emphasis on a model where we are forming partnerships. None of our schools other than one agricultural college have become training providers. All of our schools have sought the partnership model, where we work with a group training company or, in most cases, TAFE colleges. We have got students out there completing parts of certificate IIs, certificate IIIs or whatever. We have certainly got that.

In terms of the small VEET, we have huge activity, well over 1,500 students, in structured workplace learning. This state has the highest number of hours of any state in Australia. It is a nominal 110, but the average is 185 hours of work placement per year. We have a lot of students doing that. That is an effective taster. But I think it would be fair to say that responsible career counselling is not just aligning students to jobs that they can take but keeping as many options open as they can so that they can actually look at those options.

CHAIR—Is that structured workplace learning across a range of occupations and industry experiences?

Mr Nelson—Yes, there are 22 skills lists. It is actually a formal subject in the state called SWL. It has a code number. There is one structured workplace learning: health and community service, a structured workplace learning: trade, a structured workplace learning: hospitality, or whatever. There are specific skills they work to. The skills are aligned to the key competencies and to some of the units of competency in the training packages. Students would go out there typically a day a week for the duration of the year. Sometimes they do block training—

CHAIR—And that is generally in year 11?

Mr Nelson—Both year 11 and year 12.

CHAIR—And up to certificate I, is it, or certificate II?

Mr Nelson—It can be used to deliver units of competency. So students could do a certificate I or certificate II by using that.

Mr SAWFORD—What percentage of your total year 11 and 12 enrolment are those 1,500 students?

Mr Nelson—It would be about 20 per cent. We have got about 6,500 students combined in years 11 and 12.

Mrs MAY—Do you have careers advisers or VET coordinators on each campus? How do you work that position within your high schools?

Mr Nelson—It is a very tricky one. There are dedicated career advisers such as David, who has just testified. It is a very specialised role. In some of our schools that role falls to year 11 and year 12 coordinators. Our schools have VET coordinators. It is a very complex role. Most of our schools would have somebody or some bodies specifically with time allocation for it. It is an area that we need to work harder at. Elements of it are career counselling. There is subject advising. It is very complex. In this state, the way you get to TAFE or uni is far more complicated than in other states. It is an unfortunate system. It is fortunate in some ways, but it

almost forces a choice of being university bound or TAFE bound certainly at the end of year 11 and often at the beginning of year 11.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you track your students in Catholic Education in WA as to where they go after year 12?

Mr Nelson—Not systematically, but most of our schools usually have some kind of informal or reasonably formal process where they ring them up and find out. We get the destination data from TAFE in terms of how many get in there and what courses they are doing. We get the destination data from universities to find out how many are going there and what courses they are doing.

Mr SAWFORD—Have you got a rough idea of how many go to uni, how many go on to employment and how many go to TAFE?

Mr Nelson—In this state about 40 per cent of the state cohort go to university and about 38 per cent go to TAFE. That is in the state system. In the Catholic system, about 60 per cent go to university, about 35 per cent were tracked to TAFE, and about five per cent, which is about a third of the state average, would seek employment or other training.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you see Catholic Education doubling its current participation in accredited VET? You said it is 20 per cent. Basically, with those percentages, you have got 40 per cent who do not go to TAFE or whatever. Do you see growth in your system?

Mr Nelson—Yes, absolutely.

Mr SAWFORD—What sort of growth—doubling?

Mr Nelson—Doubling? I do not know how long it would take to double. Most of our schools are very actively involved. We have probably on average about 70 per cent of students who aspire to university, and probably about 60 per cent get there. That varies from school to school. Some of our schools, such as Aquinas College, would have reasonably high proportions university bound and others would have much lower. What we are trying to work on at the moment is getting a lot more students looking at units of competency within school.

But I think there is an issue here. We can double the numbers and get more bottoms on seats and have them doing one or two units of competency, if we want to play a numbers game. I think one of the issues is trying to actually deliver quality VET and look at the depth of it. There were some submissions earlier that funding should be almost a bottoms on seats prospect, which the Catholic system and the independent system have opposed. We would see much more value in getting the right program for the right student and putting them through a much more intense course. For example, one of our schools has got students doing mechatronics and robotics up to a certificate III level. For those kids, who might be fewer in number and doing huge hours, that might be a better outcome than spreading VET to doing one or two units of competency in, say, communication or whatever just to get the ball rolling. I think a lot of our schools are seeing the relevance of the particular specific area for the child as much more important than just spreading VET over a number of kids and having a bit of a taster.

Mr ALBANESE—You have spoken a lot about offering students quality. One of the issues that has come up today but which has come up as a bit of a theme reflects the teaching profession and the fact that it is ageing, and that VET is relatively new in terms of growth. Today we heard, for example, evidence about a postgraduate course in which no-one is enrolled in spite of the fact that the department has offered scholarships. To what extent are you training the teachers within the Catholic Education system training so that they can deliver quality service? How much of a challenge is that, and what are you doing to try to address those issues?

Mr Nelson—It is a huge challenge for all systems nationally. We are directing a lot of funding, supported largely by the Commonwealth Quality Teacher Program funding. We have actually earmarked a substantial amount of that money to put our teachers through the certificate for workplace assessment and training, which is mandatory if they want to assess and/or deliver in the workplace. We have put through about 100 last year and have plans to provide support, on the basis of our funding and what we are providing, for about 150 more, and schools would pay some. It is an issue—

Mr SAWFORD—Do these people then get roles as, say, coordinators or brokers of work placements? What would those 100 staff you put through be doing the following year?

Mr Nelson—Most of those people will be using that qualification to deliver units of competency within the school in partnership with a TAFE. One school might put four or five people through. We are also paying for a number of them to get RPLed with, say, a TAFE college to recognise their credentials. If they have been teaching, for example, hospitality for four years, normally a teacher would be able to RPL and get recognition to a certificate II or III level for that, which then qualifies them to teach and assess. But we are doing that in partnership with TAFE colleges and the TAFE colleges are signing those students off—or the RTO. It is a big issue. It is an increasing issue if we want to push the boundary beyond certificate I and certificate II. IT is a classic example. Many of our students are at certificate IV level in many schools—perhaps in all schools around Australia. Some of them are almost at diploma level. Some of them are much more qualified than their teachers. One of the challenges is how we keep pushing VET, not just increasing numbers, vertically up to try and engage these kids in the qualification that suits them.

That then raises issues of how you then train teachers to be able to deliver at a certificate IV or diploma level. Invariably at the moment we are outsourcing the training to other providers and paying a fee for service. Sometimes that can be more economical than offering the class in your school. You would round up 20 kids in a school and set up a class for whatever you want to call it. For example, we have one school delivering the Microsoft systems end user credential. If you can get that accredited as a subject, you are better off sending those kids out to a provider and paying \$75 an hour for 100 hours than to put a teacher in front of them, which is almost double that cost, for a year.

CHAIR—Just on that, the view that was put to us by SWISlink yesterday at Mandurah was that there are some problems with purchasing those courses, particularly from TAFE. Their view was that it was better value for money purchasing them from private RTOs rather than TAFE. Would that apply generally? Is that your experience?

Mr Nelson—The Catholic and independent schools in this state are significantly disadvantaged in purchasing training. An arrangement has been struck where the Department of Education schools are able to access some TAFE places as part of the TAFE profile for free. We have to purchase all of our arrangements. That is one factor. It varies. I am aware of problems in Busselton and Bunbury, where the SWISlink operates. Sometimes you can get cheaper prices from private providers. It is usually no more than about \$10 or \$15 an hour. One of the challenges they have, like all rural areas, is to get a high enough threshold of students to form a class. When you are getting three kids from one school and four from another and five from here, it can be very costly. It is a factor that we look at. It is very expensive.

Most of our schools which are outsourcing and purchasing now would do it to replace a class. So instead of offering, for example, a high order hospitality class, paying a teacher to stand in front of it and paying for all the consumables, if you can replace that and send them out to a provider it is economical. I think we will see a lot more of that, especially if we want to push into new industry areas. Take mechatronics as an example. We do not have to buy the equipment. It would be about \$1 million to set up the equipment for that. We send the kids to the Advanced Manufacturing Technologies Centre, AMTC, and that replaces a subject. It costs us about \$8,000 to offer the 110 hours—a small consumable charge. That school, Trinity College, could not afford to replace it or do it itself. So that is a model that we have been looking at to try to move into new areas. We are trying to form strategic partnerships and purchase the training.

There is no way in the world schools can afford to set up the equipment and the facilities and train the teachers, for a number of reasons: (a) it is expensive; (b) it is hard to find the teachers; (c) the teachers move on and you are stuck, you have to find a new teacher; and (d) kids move in and out of industry areas according to what they might have heard or what is popular. A number of our schools have been caught, especially on areas such as hospitality. You can spend half a million dollars to set up a facility and you may have 20 kids one year and five the year after.

CHAIR—Just pursuing that a little further, what other obstacles are there in terms of outsourcing? I think one of the submissions mentioned issues of transport costs and so on. How feasible is it that for most school districts you could outsource?

Mr Nelson—It is feasible in the metropolitan area. It is feasible when you have a TAFE college close at hand. There are issues. Cost is an issue. If you can negotiate with a provider to get a block of time, like four or five hours straight or a day, it works quite well. Transport is an issue. Sometimes you may need a teacher to accompany the students. That is not always the case. But it is very difficult for country areas. SWISlink, for example, has experienced those problems. It is a collection of schools which is bussing kids all over the place and paying anything up to \$24 a day to try to get those kids for training. It is a very expensive model, at the moment being sustained by an allocation through the ANTA funding. That is helping to keep areas like that going.

It is the same sort of problem in rural and remote areas. There is a very limited amount of training you can deliver for that. We were lucky in Broome, where we have a Catholic school, in that we secured some skills centre funding—ANTA skills centre funding—and set up a major skills centre. That has been very useful, because we have industry people coming in and the Indigenous students train there as chefs and hospitality workers. However, we have to hire a chef

to come in and we are paying that person an hourly rate. So it is expensive to deliver that training.

CHAIR—What is your view of how that ought to be funded, given that public schools, government schools, can access TAFE without paying any extra, it is done through their overall budget? Do you have an opinion on how nongovernment schools ought to be funded to access TAFE courses? For instance, could it work as part of the SES system that if a school had 50 per cent of the funding of a government school it could be subsidised to the level of 50 per cent to access TAFE? Has that approach been considered in the nongovernment sector?

Mr Nelson—It has. Our director is probably going to start some negotiations. Some of the TAFE colleges have large amounts of unfilled profile hours. They have huge profile hours in training, and for whatever reason they are not taken up. They are sitting there with these huge numbers of hours. Certainly government schools should access them, but it is our belief that we should have some access to them. We would not expect to have it for free because we are already funded on state per capita grants. We had a situation until recently where some TAFE colleges were charging us with all the on-costs, and one close to this location was wanting to charge us \$130 an hour, which it felt reflected all its on-costs and all manner of things. With others we were getting deals for as little as \$60 an hour. The arrangement that has now been set up is that the standard is \$75 an hour, which is probably not that unreasonable. It is sometimes a lot higher than private providers. There are also a lot of unfilled classes in TAFE after hours. If we were able to access that it would be an advantage—enrolling the kids as TAFE students. At the moment there is a block there and all of our dealings with TAFE have been on a fee for service, and at a \$75 fee for service.

CHAIR—You mentioned the obstacles to university bound students accessing TAFE, and you made the comment that the Western Australian system is probably more complicated than others. I am not sure that I would agree with that part of it. I think there are problems right across the country with the dichotomy developing of students not knowing which way to go. In Western Australia I think you have to do four TEE courses to get into university, but that still leaves the option for students to do a VET course or even two VET courses and still do the four units to access university. Is that right?

Mr Nelson—It is not quite that simple. You are basically right. You need to count a minimum of four. Most students will therefore do five.

CHAIR—So they have one up their sleeve.

Mr Nelson—Yes. Engineering students have to do six—double maths, double science, English and another. So they are locked in to virtually six. The ones who are university bound and who do five, they would see, for example, a day out a week on work placement leading to missing some lessons in that day. So they would see it as totally undesirable to be away from school, say, every Wednesday to access that. They reject that. VET subjects are non-university counting subjects in this state. The only ones that count are a core of 32. The other 400 or so do not. University students would see accessing any VET as a potential threat to their placement. It is virtually impossible to engage university students in VET training.

CHAIR—What is your recommendation as to how that should be addressed? For instance, in New South Wales there is a number of curriculum framework courses where students can do a two-unit VET course, be it in hospitality, business or whatever, and that can count for two units towards their TER, or here your TEE. Is that a workable model?

Mr Nelson—Possibly, but we are going to be doing a major review of our post-compulsory systems in this state which will not commence until 2007. Under that system, we will have 50 courses of study and they will all count for university. It will really depend not on which one you are doing but on how high you climb up the scale of achievement. So hopefully we will redress that problem.

Our dual system, if you can call it that, works well in terms of getting kids to focus on university or VET but it works against them in terms of that interchangeability. At the moment there is a problem in this state and it commences in year 11. Year 11 is the preparation, where kids virtually have to put their hand up at the end of year 10 and say, 'I am a university bound student' or 'I am a TAFE bound student.' If you become a TAFE bound student and take the non-TE subjects, you have no chance of doing university. If you do the university bound subjects in year 11, you could backtrack in year 12 but it does make it very difficult.

The bigger problem is that anecdotal feedback we are receiving suggests these uni kids are finding it hard to get part-time jobs because most of them have never had one. They are not being exposed to employability skills or workplace readiness; they are studying flat out. Already a number of states have changed their entry into medicine. We have just negotiated a very exciting program in registered nursing. We have managed to convince one of the universities to accept a pilot of 25 people. These people do not have to sit for the tertiary entrance exam, they do not have to get a tertiary entrance rank and they will be accepted on the basis of their school based grades, which allows those students to do hospital placements and hospital training. So we have broken some ground there. But, alas, that is a small pilot of 25 and it is a very isolated incident.

Mr ALBANESE—And the shortage is much bigger.

Mr Nelson—It is. We are hoping that those 25—unfortunately, they all happen to be girls; there are no boys—will be in it for the right reasons. The nursing program here is reporting a reasonable fallout rate in first- and second-year nursing.

Mrs MAY—Are those placements happening in year 12 for those 25 students?

Mr Nelson—No, we have just started it. The local Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been involved as well as Curtin University, and we have 25 young girls in year 11 now doing essentially their normal TE subjects but adding to it structural workplace learning, senior first aid and a unit in infectious disease control from Curtin University. They will do some units of competency from the training package over the two years. At the end of it, they have been guaranteed entry to Curtin University as long as they can sustain a B grade in their best four subjects. So they say, 'I can take the risk of doing the rest because I do not have to sit the exam.' So that was a major breakthrough.

Mrs MAY—Are all those 25 from one school?

Mr Nelson—No, it is a cross-sectoral thing. We have about eight from Catholic schools, about eight from independent schools and about seven from the government sector.

Mrs MAY—How are the courses being delivered if they are coming from all over? Are they all coming together to do their studies?

Mr Nelson—Their work placement in hospitals will be organised by their individual school, and we have that occurring in about three hospitals and three or four aged care facilities. Their placement will be whenever they want to organise it. So they will be working towards a skills list on that. In terms of the training lots on senior first aid, we will declare a three-day period and they will come out of school. We will try to organise some after-hours and a block time. For a unit such as infectious disease control, which will be delivered by Curtin, I think that one will involve 25 hours. That will occur when the students are in year 12. We will probably take them out in a block of time at the end of a term or it may be a day a week. We will just see what is the best way to set it up. So they will come out of their schools, join up as a group and do it that way. It is an interesting pilot model.

Mrs MAY—Very interesting.

Mr Nelson—It was launched by our local minister, and I think it is one of the first in Australia that has been set up to do that.

Mrs MAY—That is certainly identifying an industry that is in need of people to put their hands up when going into this career. We could probably do more of that, I suggest.

Mr Nelson—I think we need to. That is pushing the boundary beyond the normal VET—which might be the EN, or enrolled nursing, level—and taking it to the registered nursing level, which is of course a tertiary degree. That boundary pushing is where we need to move, I think. Nursing is an acute shortage. It is a national issue. This will not solve the shortage but it might get the right kids into nursing, raise the profile of nursing and try to convince the universities that there are lots of other entry means than a tertiary entrance score and tertiary entrance rank process that might deliver better students who are more interested.

There are lots of other examples where that could occur. Teaching is a classic example. Teaching still at this stage does not have interviews or psychological tests or anything, and there are lots of people in this state going into teaching because it is the lowest scoring rank. That is an example where it could occur, too. The health field in general is an area where we would like to push the boundaries in that tertiary aspect of VET.

CHAIR—To come back to the general issue, you would argue strongly, then, that there needs to be greater capacity for the inclusion of VET courses in schools as part of tertiary entrance score somehow?

Mr Nelson—Absolutely, and not just at certificate II level. Certificate II level is almost useless for a university student. They are looking at your cert IV diploma/advanced diploma level. They are not going to engage in a Certificate II of IT when they are going to do a degree in information training. They are more likely to want to do the higher level units. That is an issue. How do we deliver those? Also, with our VET students one of the challenges we are facing is

how do we keep pushing the boundary upwards on the level? It is very easy to deliver certificate I training, but in IT industry is telling us, 'Unless you have a certificate IV, your employment prospects are far less than students who do have that.' A certificate II is your absolute entry level training credential.

CHAIR—Is there also a need for uniformity across the country in terms of university entrance? There are a lot of different systems between the states in terms of how much VET allows access to university, to a tertiary entrance ranking. Do you see that as a problem, or do you think it is satisfactory for all states to continue doing different things?

Mr Nelson—It is a huge problem. It varies from state to state. As you are probably aware, in this state there is a fairly limited number of university places. The lowest cut-off scores at our lowest ranking university, which is Edith Cowan in terms of cut-off, are higher than the scores at the University of Melbourne, and it is all a supply and demand thing. I guess if there were more places and the scores were lower, they would look at that wider range.

At some of our universities it is extremely difficult to use any kind of articulation to them. It would be fairly well known that the University of Western Australia would have very few students moving from TAFE having done their diploma. VET training plays very little role. In saying that, there is some loosening up. Some of the universities are now looking at bridging courses and foundation courses. The University of Notre Dame would look at other forms of entrance, such as TAFE credentials, but at the moment it is pretty well founded in the TER, which is founded in university subjects, and TAFE training or VET training plays no role whatsoever. The only way it can be used is when the student actually gets their diploma and seeks to articulate across, and then there is some prospect for that to occur.

Mr SAWFORD—Sorry to throw this to you at the end. Should TAFE do degrees?

Mr Nelson—University degrees? I do not think so. Some of TAFE's two-year courses are very good. They provide a niche market and very useful diplomas and advanced diplomas. There has been a lot more mixing in this state than probably other states. For example, Curtin University uses a TAFE college to deliver the last two years of its mechatronics degree for the oil and gas industry and so on. There is that toing-and-froing starting to occur, but at the moment universities are footing that role. The two-year diploma credential at TAFE is a very attractive alternative. It can get students trained, allow them to enter the job market as they see fit and then decide if they want to continue to work or move back into training.

Mr SAWFORD—You made the point about going vertically in regards to VET in schools. That is a bit at odds, isn't it? Some people are now seriously thinking that an upgraded TAFE would be a good bulwark against the powers, influence and sometimes doggedness in terms of new ideas of universities, particularly our sandstone universities. It may be better in the long term for education and would make it much more competitive if you were to build up the strength of TAFE and make it a stronger body.

Mr Nelson—That is one line of thought. One of the issues with that would be replication/duplication of courses. Already in this state we have four public universities and four schools of teaching. At three of them we have engineering being offered. There is already a lot of

duplication in universities. That may well be a good thing, but it certainly leads to potential lack of economies of scale and funding issues.

I suppose one of the advantages of TAFE is that more students are moving now from university to TAFE than from TAFE to university and it is a national trend. One of the appealing features of TAFE is that you can get a two-year diploma. There are plenty of jobs out there in certain areas, and it gives the flexibility to students to make a decision whether they want full-time work or whether they want to continue with part-time work and study or whether they want to move to another credential. One of the big issues with universities, as we say to students, is that it is an investment in four to five years of removal from the marketplace. By front-ending your credentials and getting four years up front, the danger of being out of the marketplace in some areas for four years is a very real one. A lot of students now are seeing two years of training at TAFE as the starting point in their training, not the end of it, and continuing that way. TAFE in this state is actually increasing its profile quite well.

CHAIR—Can I ask you a question on a different issue? You mentioned the resourcing problem, that there needs to be more resources. If we were to recommend that the federal government increase resourcing for VET in schools, where would you think that could be best directed? Would it be to employing cluster workplace coordinators to work with schools to make the links with industry? Would it be for full-time appointment of a careers adviser in a school? Would it be to enable schools to purchase VET courses from outside providers? Would it be to reduce face-to-face teaching time for VET in schools teachers? Where would you think it ought to be directed? I know that you want to say ‘all of the above’, but you are not allowed to say that.

Mr Nelson—It is a big issue. We recognise that the ANTA funding is only funding a proportion of activity.

CHAIR—Sure, but where could we best target resources?

Mr Nelson—There is negotiation as to the new model for ANTA funding at the moment. Our understanding is that model 4 is probably the one they are looking at, where the ANTA funding specifically will be used for special purpose funding or targeted funding. I think certainly some of it needs to be maintained for delivery. If we are going to actually access new areas, schools simply cannot deliver training in new industry areas or to higher credentials. Some of the funding could be appropriately used to try to buy some of that training or up-skill the teachers. I think coordination is pretty well managed. The ECEF-DEST money has been funding that. Most schools, I think, have set up coordination models that work very well.

CHAIR—There are a lot of areas where none of that coordination is happening, aren't there? Or do you think that is happening generally across the state?

Mr Nelson—Coordination of VET?

CHAIR—Of workplace linkages with schools. Is that what you are talking about?

Mr Nelson—I think the Catholic and independent systems in this state have set up a very good model. We have five clusters in the metro area, for example, where we employ an office

which usually consists of a coordinator and two or three support staff. Schools fund that, and that person manages work placements for usually up to about 10 schools—a mixture of Catholic and independent schools. They maintain the databases, visit the employers and run industry training sessions. They do it all on a basis. Then the schools simply pay their share of it. It means that you have dedicated, well-skilled people able to meet industry needs.

Only about two Catholic schools in Perth have opted to run the work placements themselves, where they have a teacher. That model is less desirable in some cases because unless you have the teacher full time you do not have someone out there to manage a crisis or put the time into it. With the coordination, we would believe we have a very sustainable model working very well. That SWISlink model—I do not know whether you had a submission from them—is a similar model but faced with the different challenges of a country town. So coordination, I think, is reasonably well covered.

I listened to David's point, and I think career counselling in schools is better done in our independent sector and Catholic schools than perhaps in the government schools. That is not a criticism of our government colleagues, but I think they have dedicated their people to other areas rather than to career counselling. It is interesting to see that TAFE has virtually stripped all career counselling from its system. That is another black hole that we are trying to deal with in terms of getting quality information from the TAFE sector about that.

Another issue is that we need to make sure that we have people in our schools who know not just about careers but also about the intricacies of the training system—subject selections—and who try to match all of those to the students' needs. That is probably going to be picked up more in recurrent funding.

To answer your question, I would see any increase in or continuation of the ANTA funding very much funding professional development, funding the formation and continuation of the partnerships with TAFE colleges and private providers, continuing to look at some of the development and other set-up costs and especially, I would think, in our system, like in others, trying to direct some of that towards the country and remote areas where there are particular problems in training.

Mr ALBANESE—You mentioned ECEF. It is finishing up, basically, and those responsibilities are being transferred to the department. How is that working out on the ground—the planning for that transition? Is it having an impact, do you think?

Mr Nelson—The ECEF funding has been very useful. One of the issues we have faced is that the decision with the ECEF funding is very centralised with ECEF. The systems and sectors are the ones that know best where that funding should be directed. We have had on the agenda for three years with ECEF the attempt to set up a business plan and a better allocative mechanism of the funds. For whatever reason that has not occurred. It is unfortunate. The ECEF funding has been directed and, unfortunately, has been rolled over now for a number of years. This has now happened for five years.

On the one hand the ECEF funding is very useful. I think it would be better used if a process were fast tracked where it could actually be directed where the systems and sectors see the need. I know it is an isolated example, but we did have a case four years ago where ECEF was funding

a government high school that had closed down—a program that had closed down. Had they actually spoken to their colleagues in the education department, they would have realised that that high school was no longer going to exist. The ECEF funding is certainly very useful and has been extremely useful in setting up industry partnerships, but from a systems perspective we would say that there needs to be continuing dialogue to make sure it is hitting the priorities that we would see, as well as the priorities that they would see.

CHAIR—So the key issue is the funding, and that could come through just as effectively directly from the department, I take it?

Mr Nelson—From the department—

CHAIR—From DEST.

Mr Nelson—I understand, yes.

CHAIR—But so long as the funding is still going through to local programs, that can work just as effectively directly from the Department of Education, Science and Training, rather than through—

Mr Nelson—Obviously there are a number of elements to ECEF's operation. Part of it is the funding to schools and programs. In answer to your question, yes, I believe it could easily be allocated, as long as there was a reasonable allocative mechanism that targeted priorities and looked at what the systems were saying. We are not saying that there should not be accountability—obviously that is very important—but I am not sure where the other part of ECEF's role will finish up. As you would be aware, a lot of their money has been directed to industry partnerships, to training and a number of those aspects, too.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, John. That has been very helpful.

Proceedings suspended from 12.50 p.m. to 2.04 p.m.

MOORE, Mr Eamon, Executive Officer, Education, Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia Inc.

CHAIR—Thank you for your time this afternoon and for your submission. Could I ask you to make some introductory comments, if you would like to do so, and then we will proceed to questioning.

Mr Moore—Certainly. I would like to start by giving an overview of the education program that we run in Western Australia. It is a comprehensive program which involves K-12, that is, kindergarten to year 12. We have a range of curriculum materials which are quite popular within schools. As part of our service we have an excursion venue in St George's Terrace for students to come in and take part in lessons about the minerals and energy industry. We also provide an incursion service into schools, which is also free of charge. Our VET component is the Adopt a School/Adopt a Mine program, which I will give some details about shortly. We also do some work on careers education, specifically aimed at year 11 and year 12 for post-compulsory and year 9 and year 10 for preparatory work.

The whole program we have is facilitated through the Department of Education and Training here in Western Australia. We have a memorandum of understanding with them. It involves our service with the provision of the curriculum materials and with the professional development of educators in our curriculum materials and also in the minerals and energy industry and issues. There is a financial component. The department pays us \$20,000 to facilitate those based upon the number of students and the number of teachers we can reach during the year. We also, in exchange, sponsor a student teacher rural experience program, which enables trainee teachers to undertake an extended practice in a rural area in Western Australia. So we facilitate that with the \$20,000 sponsorship. In a nutshell, that is the program we run.

The VET component, which is our Adopt a School/Adopt a Mine program, began in 1999 with a partnership between Kanowna Belle Gold Mines, which is now part of Placer Dome Asia Pacific, and Churchland Senior High School, which is quite a large northern suburbs high school in Perth. It is based around the structured workplace learning module. It started with a vocational mining module. It undertakes 120 hours of work. Students undertake that in a block placement, where they are out of school for two weeks and working on site for a period of two weeks to undertake the 120 hours. They participate in a 12-hour shift and the shift patterns that exist on site. Of course, there are restrictions according to safety, age and some of the more, I suppose, important things to do with the facilitation of mine safety that must be undertaken for them to continue with the placement.

Further to that we have developed partnerships between an eastern suburbs senior high school—Lesmurdie Senior High School—and Goldfields Australia; between the Swan Education District Office and Black Swan nickel, which is also in the goldfields; and most recently between Perth Education District Office and Sons of Gwalia. So we have four partnerships which are working at the moment. In each of those partnerships we have probably up to 10 students participating per year. It also has provision for teachers to participate, if they wish to take part in the teacher-in-industry placement. It is all done under the two-week block.

We have a contributory fund for the facilitation of those partnerships. The Chamber of Minerals and Energy contributes up to \$5,000 to help facilitate those partnerships. The companies themselves cover the balance of costs in accommodation and travel to and from the site. Because our partnerships are actually Perth based—the schools are Perth based—it is an expensive proposition to get them to sites. Companies generally cover those costs. They also cover the costs of meals and transport to and from the base where they are accommodated to the actual mine site. Some of the schools have actually asked students to contribute financially as well—perhaps \$100 or \$120 per student.

Some of the issues we face within these partnerships come down to practicalities to do with the distance, the expense, the site locations themselves and the limited number of participants that are actually able to engage in the program because of all of those issues. Most recently we have identified one or two points that need to be addressed. We are working with the department of education on those issues of duty of care, responsibility and insurance.

CHAIR—What is your view of the general understanding of school students as to career opportunities in the mining industry? Do you think there is adequate understanding of what opportunities are there? How effective do you think your programs are in raising awareness and interest?

Mr Moore—In response to your first question, I think there is not a great recognition of the different opportunities that are available within the industry itself. Most students, I think, tend to view it as really just an operational vocation where they could be involved in the use of machinery, rather than recognising the complete span of careers that are actually available in the industry. We are actually developing more strategies to address that perception within schools. We are starting with some new brochures that we are going to be publishing and distributing to schools, more information on our web site and certainly new audiovisual multimedia.

CHAIR—Does your career information program extend to all schools?

Mr Moore—Yes. It is across all schools and across all sectors.

CHAIR—And presumably that is helping to address that shortage of knowledge?

Mr Moore—Yes.

CHAIR—What about the structured workplace learning programs you have? How effective are they in terms of actually developing a serious interest in career opportunities? Have you done any tracking? Do you find that many of those students end up—

Mr Moore—Yes, we have found that a number of students have taken considerable interest in the industry itself. Certainly those students who are tertiary entrance bound have found a new interest in engineering and things like metallurgy whereas perhaps previously it had not been raised for them. Some of the students who are perhaps more vocational have also found that it is a real option for them to consider in their career development.

CHAIR—Finally, what are the key areas of skill shortage that you are finding it very difficult to attract students to?

Mr Moore—It is across the board within the industry—from vocational and trade all the way through to the professional qualifications. There is an anticipated and an existing skill shortage in those areas.

Mr ALBANESE—Where do the students physically go?

Mr Moore—Regionally we have the goldfields in Western Australia, which are centrally located in WA with Kalgoorlie as effectively the hub. There are two or three sites which are within perhaps 20 or 30 kilometres of the township of Kalgoorlie. We also have partnerships that work with Sons of Gwalia through one site of theirs in Wodgina, which is in the north-west of the state—perhaps about an hour and a half outside Port Hedland, which is the hub up there. Also in the south-west there is the Sons of Gwalia mine in Boddington.

Mr ALBANESE—Is distance a big issue in terms of young people going—

Mr Moore—Certainly in their perception of the industry itself, the concept of being away from Perth for an extended period of time, perhaps devoting five or so years of their early career development to a site outside a metropolitan area, is not often seen as an attractive proposition for young people. With the actual program itself, I think it is an adventure for students to undertake a placement, which is quite exciting for them, and it opens up the possibilities of developing a lifestyle in those particular areas.

Mr ALBANESE—I guess this is a bit of an industrial issue, but from what we have heard and from what I know, wearing my shadow minister for training cap, is that one of the difficulties we have in attracting people to apprenticeships in the traditional trades is the perception of young people that for four years they are going to be paid not very much relative to if they go out and do something else. They are deferring their income, if you like. In terms of attracting people to go to places like Karratha and the Pilbara, part of the way that people are attracted is income. Are young people's wages for apprenticeships et cetera structured as well so they get a top-up compared with an apprentice, say, working in Perth?

Mr Moore—To be honest, I am unaware of a situation that might redress that balance. I am not sure if that is something that happens, certainly within the apprenticeship years.

Mrs MAY—Just to follow that through, they live on site. Accommodation would be supplied. They live on site at the mines, so I guess there would have to be some sort of attractiveness to go and live out there, wouldn't there? I want to explore the occupational health and safety issues of how you have managed to have students out there. You are talking about two-week blocks. How have you managed to overcome those sorts of hurdles that you may have had to jump over—that is, liability and that sort of area? Could you expand on how you have got over that?

Mr Moore—The program is undertaken under the structured workplace learning agreements and therefore public liability is covered within that scope. But there have been a couple of questions recently about duty of care, because if we have four or five students on a site at a time and they are accompanied by only one teacher then the duty of care has to be assumed by an adult. More recently, the policies within the Department of Education and Training have changed to allow for a person who is not a teacher to assume duty of care of a person in this situation. It then comes down to collaboration between the person who is going to be assuming duty of care

and the teacher, and the teacher will make some kind of judgment as to whether or not all reasonable measures have been taken to allow that student to be placed in the duty of care of that adult.

Mrs MAY—Thank you.

Mr SAWFORD—What is the chamber's view of VET that is occurring in the school system? What is your view about VET occurring in TAFE? Does the chamber have a view or any bias towards higher education in schools?

Mr Moore—Firstly, the chamber is very supportive of VET within schools and at TAFE level—certainly at all levels—and is also very supportive of higher education and encouraging students to take on higher education past their post-compulsory years.

Mr SAWFORD—In Western Australia we have basically heard reports from the Department of Education and Training this morning that over recent years, probably only during the last three or four, participation in VET in schools has grown from eight per cent to 40 per cent. It is strange, isn't it, that that has been a recent phenomenon when in fact 70 per cent of kids do not go on to higher education? Basically, we are looking at a very small proportion who are doing it. In the state budget there were no additional funds for growing TAFE. We spoke to Catholic Education today. Independent schools have 20 per cent of their students in VET. They probably anticipate that doubling to 40. Without funding, how is that growth going to occur? Does your chamber have a view on that?

Mr Moore—We would be looking at developing further industry partnerships to facilitate as much as we can in that way and even looking at industry contributing to such things as perhaps integrated campus arrangements in regional centres and also metropolitan centres to help facilitate those numbers and growth within those areas.

Mr SAWFORD—We visited Mandurah yesterday and I think all of us were pretty impressed with what had occurred there on almost a greenfield site. Are you aware of the Mandurah situation?

Mr Moore—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—What is your view of that?

Mr Moore—I think it is an excellent set-up.

Mr SAWFORD—Is that a model that ought to be replicated?

Mr Moore—Yes. I think it is very successful.

Mr SAWFORD—Where would you replicate it?

Mr Moore—Regional areas which are perhaps under-represented in higher education, for a start, would be one area or one series of areas which would need to be addressed.

Mr SAWFORD—Perhaps the other one. How significant is the issue of teacher competence in delivering VET courses in schools? Do you get any reports coming back to you about the levels of teacher competence?

Mr Moore—No, I do not.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I ask at one other level about what is going on. We hear—perhaps this has happened more in other states, but we acknowledge the same problems here—that a lot of people involved in VET in schools, in particular growing it from, say, eight per cent to 40 per cent with no significant extra funding, have done that with a lot of altruism and a lot of extra energy which they have self-generated, but there is a burnout factor for people involved in VET and there is an age factor. A lot of these people are in their 50s. Does your chamber see the future of VET teachers being that you just will not have the numbers? Is there a problem coming up in Western Australia in four or five years time in having enough VET teachers to carry out even the status quo at the moment, let alone any growth?

Mr Moore—I think that would certainly be a real problem. Recently it has been highlighted that the average age of teachers in Western Australia is about 47 years. I think in all aspects of education here in Western Australia the increasing age of teachers is going to be a problem—so not specifically just for vocational education and training in schools but for a number of other areas as well.

Mr SAWFORD—Does your chamber have regular meetings with the Department of Education and Training?

Mr Moore—I have an education committee with a representative from the Department of Education and Training on that committee.

Mr SAWFORD—So you meet regularly?

Mr Moore—Yes, we do.

Mr SAWFORD—Like a management board?

Mr Moore—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Just talking about the teachers and their competency, what about the students themselves that you see that come out on their block time in terms of the quality of the training they are receiving in the schools? Has the chamber been able to gauge or have an opinion on the quality of the training the students are receiving with regard to your industry?

Mr Moore—We have not been involved at that level, but I suppose a generic program or a generic package such as the metalliferous mining package for training is more or less an on-site delivery. So it is a delivery which happens on the job. The students who partake in this particular program are not part of the metalliferous mining training package; they would probably continue with a generic certificate I type of package.

Mrs MAY—Would you see a need then for something more specific being delivered in schools to those students who may be interested in the mining industry as a career choice?

Mr Moore—It would be a wonderful thing for that to be able to happen, yes.

Mrs MAY—And how could that happen? With the chamber working hand in hand with VET themselves?

Mr Moore—Yes, and also with the development of new courses of study for the Western Australia post-compulsory education review which has been undergoing some change over the past few years and will be implemented by about 2006 or 2007. There is scope there in a new course of study which is being designed based on engineering for the chamber to have input into that course of study and students will be able to exit school at certain different levels of competency and each of those courses of study will have some element of vocational education within them.

CHAIR—Just rephrasing that, what is your industry's preference in terms of the preparation of school students for employment in your industry? Is it generic skills based training with a good understanding of how industry works or specific metal and mining industry modules?

Mr Moore—It would be the generic package which would be preferable. Because of the complexities and intricacies of mine sites, the specifics would need to be undertaken on site.

CHAIR—Again pursuing another angle of what Mrs May asked, in terms of students who have left school—perhaps have not had anything to do with the mining industry but have left school—and then have sought employment in your industry, have you noticed any difference in terms of work readiness, say, between those students who have done a VET course in school versus a VET course in TAFE?

Mr Moore—I would not be able to answer that question since I am not involved in that area.

CHAIR—I have one other question. You mentioned a teacher industry placement scheme. Is that part of the student placement scheme or is that a particular program aimed at teaching teachers aspects of the mining industry so they can better teach their VET courses back in school?

Mr Moore—The industry placement scheme has been perhaps rested for a little while within the Department of Education and Training and there is some interest in resurrecting it and reviving it in some way. So the teachers who would become involved in our placement program would therefore be able to undertake two weeks worth of industry placement.

CHAIR—Is that important?

Mr Moore—I think it is very important for the teachers' professional development and also to be able to take those observations back into schools and to use that as part of their education package in delivering to students.

CHAIR—Are there shortcomings there at the moment? Do you think that there are teachers teaching VET courses in schools related to metallurgy and the mining industry who have not had sufficient industry or workplace experience?

Mr Moore—I do not think that there are actually particular courses which are available in schools that would be dealing with those particular areas. The science curriculum at perhaps year 11 and 12 would be more looking at specific areas of metallurgy within the generic science background rather than anything that is particular to the industry itself.

CHAIR—What about general careers advice? Would it be your view that teachers who are giving careers advice to their students are not adequately aware of the opportunities within your industry? If the answer to that is yes, would this teacher industry placement scheme help overcome that problem?

Mr Moore—I think the career advisers in schools are overwhelmed with the information that they have to provide to students at any particular time and for them to have perhaps a shallow view of a wide cross-section is really all we can ask for in terms of their time. So I think the teacher placement scheme would be one way of addressing that but also our career education package that we are developing and some of our strategies are certainly going to address that.

Mrs MAY—I was going to raise career advisers and working with them. We have certainly heard today that they do have a big job to do. In some schools it may be that we need careers advisers as well as VET coordinators. Considering the number of jobs in your industry that are available out there, where do you think you may be falling down as a chamber maybe or in marketing what is available, whether you are doing it through careers advisers or through the school programs? Is there a marketing tool that you can use maybe more effectively? Have you been able to gauge from those students who have had placements? How many of them have come into the industry? Are you doing any tracking, even just talking to those students on placement? How can that all be better marketed, I guess, to open the doors up?

Mr Moore—The first round of students to have participated in that Adopt a School/Adopt a Mine program are probably at the stage of graduation from a tertiary course now or getting close to it. We have heard through one or two of the schools that a number of those students have selected pathways which will take them into the industry. So tracking at the moment is in its infancy. We would like to see more students participating in the program. Industry itself is very keen to have more of the partnerships being developed. Certainly, any marketing of our programs at a school or an individual level we investigate as much as we can to be able to get those things out to students to raise the awareness of the industry within their scope of career goals.

Mrs MAY—How many schools are involved in the Adopt a Mine program?

Mr Moore—At the moment we have two specific schools and two education districts within the metropolitan area. Each of those districts can cover up to 10 or 12 senior high schools. Students are selected from those schools themselves.

Mrs MAY—Do you see that program expanding at all?

Mr Moore—I would like to see the program expand, yes, very much so.

Mrs MAY—To other parts of the state? Regional areas?

Mr Moore—Yes.

CHAIR—Are many of your member companies involved in offering school based apprenticeships or traineeships?

Mr Moore—Not that I am aware of.

CHAIR—Is there any reason for that? Is it too difficult administratively? Are location and geography a problem? Are there cost barriers?

Mr Moore—In terms of school based, I think there is an age issue there. Generally, certainly in an underground mine, no-one under the age of 18 can work in an underground mine. So that is a bit of a stumbling block there. There is the geographical issue as well. There are not too many schools which are within close vicinity of mine sites, and a number of things like that are significant obstacles that need to be addressed, plus generic skills perhaps are not quite enough to service a school based apprenticeship or traineeship.

CHAIR—Just one final question: what would you say would be the thing that needs more than anything to be addressed to enable vocational education and training in schools to better suit the needs of the mining industry?

Mr Moore—Apart from funding?

CHAIR—Where should the funding most effectively be addressed?

Mr Moore—To come from or to go to?

CHAIR—Sorry?

Mr Moore—Are you asking where the funding should come from or where it should be directed?

CHAIR—No, where it should go to.

Mr Moore—Directed into schools and directed into vocational education and training coordinators—the professional development of these people—and targeting younger teachers as well. VET and the components of VET should have a raised profile among trainee teachers and undergraduates so that they are skilled and more aware of these things when they graduate themselves. It would certainly be an enhancement for their career paths.

CHAIR—Any others?

Mr Moore—I am sure there probably would be.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. That has been very helpful.

Mr Moore—Thank you.

[2.38 p.m.]

ARNOLD, Mr Andrew, Head of Department, Design and Technology, St Stephen's School, Duncraig Campus

DEAN-BULL, Mrs Sue-Ellen, Head of Department, Home Economics, St Stephen's School

DAVEY, Mrs Kathleen, Executive Officer, CareerLink, Catholic and Independent Schools Cluster

MOORE, Ms Cathy, Careers Counsellor, Head of Enterprise and IT, Mater Dei College

CHAIR—We welcome representatives of CareerLink to the inquiry today. Thank you for joining us. Thank you for your submission. Could we invite you to make some introductory comments and then we will proceed to questions and discussion.

Mrs Davey—Perhaps I should outline the schools involved in the CareerLink cluster. They are Hale School, John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School, Kingsway Christian College, Lake Joondalup Baptist College, Mater Dei College, Peter Moyes Anglican Community School, Sacred Heart College, St Mark's Anglican Community School, St Mary's Anglican Girls School and St Stephen's School at Carramar campus and Duncraig campus.

I will outline the strengths of the cluster arrangement. It is a central coordination of structured workplace learning which enables students to access a comprehensive database of industry learning experiences. Therefore, students from the member colleges liaise very closely with the CareerLink secretariat and students are custom matched to work placements. Therefore, they apply formally to join the program. There is a selection interview conducted with an industry representative, a school representative and a CareerLink placement coordinator. They interview that student and the student nominates the type of industry placement they would like to be placed in. They also nominate their VET course.

Issues relating to the workplace are managed by that assigned placement coordinator for that particular school. That means that the issues that are raised within the work placement are managed by that one placement coordinator. The liaison with the school and the parent is also managed through that placement coordinator.

Students are prepared for working safely. That is done through the application package, where students do the WorkSafe certificate, both generic and industry specific. Students who are placed in industrial worksites are required to get the Master Builders Association or other association green card. That is some more practical training in that aspect.

A main feature of the cluster system is that the CareerLink secretariat works very closely with the schools. We have two planning days per year and subsequent meetings. We also network with other clusters—government, Catholic and independent—through the network. Of course, much support is given by the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools of WA.

The CareerLink secretariat is managed by four people within that secretariat. We have dedicated time to developing and managing VET and structured workplace learning. That certainly is a feature, because we are able to flexibly deal with issues on an as-needs basis. Another benefit is that a placement coordinator is able to visit students within the same area at any one time. So the pooling of resources enables that economy of scale, I suppose, because of the set-up.

Within that network we also have a knowledge centre, which provides a sounding board for mentoring, guidance and support. That is throughout the schools, with colleagues within other clusters and then of course with the consultants from AISWA and NCEO. From that network, students are also able to access competitions such as WorldSkills, which is a competition that happened last week. That was certainly a wonderful experience for the students. We also have guidance from the management committee. We have industry and community representation on that committee.

Through the coordinated approach, we have consistency of quality standards and good practice. The courses of students who undergo VET, which is generally outsourced to training providers, such as TAFE and other private training providers, are matched to students' work placements. Thus, students are able to put into practice the theory and general knowledge that they gain within that VET course.

In clustering with the schools, we are able to offer within each of those schools 17 different industry areas of training. Therefore, students from this particular school have that range of opportunities. So, again, there are economies of scale where schools are not required to set up specific facilities or infrastructure. For any one year across the 11 campuses we are able to offer those offerings where you will not have in one particular year two or three students from one school and next year from that school you might have 20. You are able to offer a broad range. Therefore, the infrastructure is flexible to meet the changing needs and interest levels of students.

CHAIR—Thank you. Are there any other comments?

Mrs Dean-Bull—I would like to comment on some of the challenges that we have faced and the fantastic model which CareerLink has provided us with in the school situation. One of the difficulties for us is that, because of the nature of timetabling and the nature of the way in which schools operate, often TE students are excluded from the CareerLink program because they are withdrawn from school for a period of time. Unless there is support from leadership or policy support from other departmental agencies, it then becomes difficult, and policies are established in schools which exclude TE students who could be gaining a great deal of benefit from the same sorts of programs.

One of the valuable things that CareerLink does is that it frees up the classroom teacher, who is running vocational education and training programs and embedding national competencies in their own courses, and allows them to get on with that aspect of their job which they are best trained at. It allows people who are expert in a certain area and who have the connections to run that range of industry areas.

However, there are some challenges in terms of convincing staff that it is worth while to withdraw students from their normal classroom arrangements. For some students it does create challenges with managing their workloads. They come back to a class situation after regularly missing classes. So they have an increased workload compared to their peers, and catching up is often difficult in an educational climate where curriculum is process driven rather than content driven. In the old days it was easy to catch up content, but if students are working on group projects or tasks it is very difficult for them to manage that transition unless they have skilled teachers committed to the CareerLink program.

Ms Moore—I think one of the other challenges that faces CareerLink is that very often we do not realise that vocational education and training is a subset of the overall career development of our students. It offers one input. It offers that vocational skills training, it offers that experience in the workplace, but there is so much more that needs to be done with students, as we know from all the MCEETYA reports and the research that has been done into the employability skills and enterprising capabilities and attributes that we would like to see in our students and in our workplaces.

We know from those reports and that research that there is more to it than just skilling through TAFE and through workplaces. There is more to it than just skilling for the present; there is the skilling of learning how to be flexible and adaptable to change. The CareerLink cluster does not have any input into or influence over what happens in schools for those children. We are responsible for the teaching part and the cluster is responsible for the placement, the coordinating, the managing and the looking after the kids out there. As far as support and backup from the school are concerned, it is very ad hoc. It is potluck as to what happens. They do not control any of that.

That, I think, is a challenge for schools. It is something that our politicians could do something about. Essentially what happens in schools, certainly here in WA, is that the careers counsellor and the careers program are not formal curriculum areas. For example, I became the careers counsellor simply by going to the principal and saying, 'I would like to do it.' I said I would like to do it because my eldest child was coming into year 10 and was going to have to choose subjects, and I wanted to have a reason—I wanted to be informed and I wanted that to be part of my job. So I went into it for personal reasons. Nobody asked me whether I knew anything about it, whether I was qualified or not, what I was going to do as a careers counsellor, what was going to be in my program or how I was going to help these kids with their career development. There was none of that.

Obviously I went to a lot of trouble because it was for my own children. So I did all the things that mothers do and made sure that I knew about it. But very often the careers counsellor in a school will be somebody who that particular year does not have a social studies class or whatever. So you are the careers counsellor. I think that is an area which we could do something about by raising the profile.

Mrs MAY—What sort of teaching load do you still have?

Ms Moore—It varies from year to year and it is renegotiated every time. I am the head of enterprise and IT in the school, and usually I teach the tertiary entrance accounting subjects. This

year I have not because I was on long service leave. I am teaching three subjects this year. So that would be just over a half load.

Mrs MAY—And then the careers adviser on top?

Ms Moore—And I am the careers counsellor of the school. When I was away in term 1 somebody was brought in to do my teaching.

Mrs MAY—But nobody was brought in to do the careers advising?

Ms Moore—No.

CHAIR—We might come back to this in a minute in a bit more detail.

Mr Arnold—I would like teachers to be able to have more time to be able to implement these programs in their everyday courses that are set up with the Curriculum Council. I can go to some network meetings with my colleagues and see that some schools are doing it and some schools are not. I can see the benefits that these students have by being involved in structured workplace learning because it gives them a focus, it gives them a direction and it gives a lot of them a purpose for being in school. I think a lot of schools do not take it on because it is an extra workload which is extra on extra. As has been alluded to, if you have a full program and you do not want to do it, it does not happen in your school. It is really up to the individual teacher to get involved and to have that passion to run with it, otherwise it just does not happen.

CHAIR—Thank you. I have just a couple of questions of clarification to begin with. Kathleen, did you say there are four people involved in the secretariat?

Mrs Davey—That is right, yes.

CHAIR—Are they full time?

Mrs Davey—All but one who works four days a week.

CHAIR—So they are paid?

Mrs Davey—Yes.

CHAIR—Who funds it, then?

Mrs Davey—The secretariat is funded by the schools. We also have some seed funding or annual funding through ECEF, which was \$50,000 this year, from memory. Also the schools are funded through the Catholic Education and AISWA system through New Apprenticeships funding, but there is a considerable shortfall in that.

CHAIR—Are the work placements for a regular number of hours per week, or are they block placements for two or four weeks?

Mrs Davey—They are managed one day per week, 15 days in total. They are a minimum of 120 hours for year 11 and 110 for year 12, and they are subject equivalents. So they are under the generic skills list for year 11s and industry specific skills list for year 12s.

CHAIR—What about the supply of work placements? Are there enough employers willing to take on the increasing number of students wanting to do vocational education courses, or is it a constant battle to find the number of work placements you need?

Mrs Davey—It is certainly a relationship with the host employers that you need to maintain and hold, but we have been in a position to be able to fulfil the request from students and also their particular industry area that they request. So we do that through a number of networking sessions. We have an annual breakfast with the host employers. We also have other tokens of appreciation that we provide for the host employers, but more than that it is the constant communication and that customer service that they respect.

CHAIR—Is there any competition between your member schools or non-government schools and the government schools in your areas for work placements, or do the two sectors coordinate fairly well?

Mrs Davey—It seems to work very well, actually. We work in unison with the department schools. Host employers have the choice when they are approached from TAFE, university and schools, and that is not uncommon in any area. They also have the Job Network agencies in the region looking for work experience placements. They have the employment direction groups. There is a variety of agencies out there looking for work placements, but it is definitely that relationship that we have built over the years and are steadily building on as well.

Mrs Dean-Bull—There is a tension with the types of employers that are attracted and willing to give up their time in that often those employers are small business oriented. So, while they are very generous in giving their time and capacity to our students, often they are not the people who are in a position to offer employment opportunities as a result of their experiences there. My understanding is that it is quite difficult to attract large organisations which offer ongoing employment to those students who might be looking at that as an option of their CareerLink experience.

CHAIR—How are the four coordinators or permanent staff that you have working on those job placements chosen? What qualifications did they have? What industry experience did they have?

Mrs Davey—They have, including myself and a couple of others, industry experience. My experience is working on Jobskills, which is a labour market program, and the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme. So my experience is in managing labour market programs which were for long-term unemployed people several years ago. Another person has come from the English model, which was like a job agency as well, but was placed within a school and they also offered advice. So when we say 'industry experience', that is what we mean.

Ms Moore—I think one of the strengths of CareerLink is the fact that however many years ago when we first set it up—I was the vocational education coordinator at that time in Mater Dei College and we were trying to offer the very beginnings of vocational education programs 10

years ago—we realised we could not offer the range and met with a number of other schools and decided to set up the cluster.

What we identified was that the skills that teachers have are not necessarily the skills that are required to run this sort of program, and we really needed people who are good at managing, organising and liaising. It is quite surprising to others that many of the other clusters have teachers involved in them and they have moved from teaching to running a cluster. I think it is the strength of the cluster. It is important for us to look at the skills that each person can offer and to make sure that we capitalise on those. I think it would be a waste for teachers to be using so much of their time trying to do something like that. Equally, I do not think that the cluster coordinators should be asked to be teaching the children.

CHAIR—It certainly seems to make sense to have a cluster of a number of schools so you have a coordinated approach to work placement. Do you think there is a capacity for the government school sector to be part of the same cluster, or do you think it works better being separate? Presumably the government schools in your region have some sort of a cluster arrangement as well; is that right?

Mrs Davey—They do, and we network and liaise with the government schools. I think the way that the funding models work makes it very difficult. I think that is the crux of it all.

CHAIR—I have one other question before I pass over to my colleagues. Are there many areas that you are aware of within the state where there is no effective cluster arrangement for work placement? Is this a need across the state, or do you think it is pretty well covered?

Mrs Dean-Bull—I have worked with a school over the other side of the river whose model was not part of a cluster. When we had students out of the workplace, she spent half her time racing right across Perth meeting employers that she had no historical connection with and having to generate those relationships time and time again as part of that placement process. It was very inefficient in its operation.

I moved to the school I am at now three years ago, and the efficiencies achieved through CareerLink really are quite amazing, particularly in terms of those long-term relationships but also in terms of the use of staff time. The placement visits were farmed out to people who happened to be free on certain lines within the school setting. Often people are late for whatever reason because schools are dynamic workplaces and other needs crop up. I really did not feel the students were getting the best quality deal that they could out of that arrangement.

CHAIR—In terms of our recommendations to the government, if we were to recommend that funding were used to ensure that all areas had a workplace coordinator, CareerLink type organisation with permanent staff fully funded to coordinate the work placement for the schools, do you think that would be a good use of money?

Mrs Dean-Bull—I think that would be a good use of money. I also think there needs to be some money put into the overarching coordination of those groups so that we get good cross-pollination of the leadership within those groups across the state, which at the moment funding just does not allow. Every cent is used to further their own area on the ground. To have a big

impact in terms of improvement for our students and the overall coordination, I think there needs to be some overarching coordination between those groups which currently does not exist.

Mrs MAY—Just going back to the start of the cluster, in 1997, obviously the cluster has grown having regard to the number of students you are assisting. You have touched already on the fact that each student has a placement coordinator working with them. In that period of time since 1997 the number of students has grown. We understand there are now over 500 students being assisted.

Mrs Davey—It varies. It is 400 to 450, not as many as 500 yet.

Mrs MAY—It seems to me there is an enormous load if every student has a placement coordinator working with them. I wonder if you could comment on that and the growth of CareerLink in itself. I do not know where you started from as far as staffing levels are concerned. How has that grown? How have you managed that? Is funding an issue, or is your funding increase through the cluster system each year to support yourselves? Could you comment on that—the success of the program and how it has grown?

Mrs Davey—Certainly. When we started there were two staff, and very quickly as the schools came on board and joined the cluster we increased the staffing. However, the school has, I suppose, borne the brunt of that growth by providing the funds to support the extra staffing. In some cases schools have also, on top of their school fees, implemented subject fees. So, whereas that might not have been an event previously, the schools have brought in subject fees on top of private school fees.

Mrs MAY—So CareerLink would get a subsidy through the school fees?

Mrs Dean-Bull—Sort of like a user pays system. Those kids who are involved in CareerLink pay a subsidy in their existing fees to allow them to participate in that program, and that is shared across the school system with all those students participating in CareerLink for that year.

Ms Moore—In fact, we have just increased ours. We used to charge them \$100 per semester and we have just increased it to \$150 for next year because it is costing us an enormous amount, obviously. But we do see value in it. I think it is very unfortunate that those students who wish to participate in this particular mode of learning are having to pay over and above what is being paid by kids doing physics, chemistry, calculus and all that sort of thing. In fact, they are participating in that program but not getting any support from the school in terms of the teaching that is offered to them. So we do not teach them how to do all of those employability things at school.

Mrs MAY—Are there any students who cannot participate because they cannot pay the fee? Are there kids prevented—

Ms Moore—Our school would fund them. I do not know about other schools, but we would.

Mrs Dean-Bull—We would find a way.

Mrs MAY—I would just like to explore your industry links. You have mentioned this afternoon that you have 17 industry areas. Over a period of time, has that changed—when you see the demands out there and the emerging industries? You may need to change the training or the sorts of industries you have links with. Has that changed over a period of time? Are you flexible regarding that change?

Mrs Davey—I talked about how we have managed that growth and development. In doing that we also restructured, so in that growth we looked at the way we did things. Rather than having a dedicated office admin person, we then allocated three placement coordinators and myself. In my role as executive officer I do not particularly have a caseload of students per se. However, issues and problems are very closely discussed within our small two-room office. That was the restructure. So everybody actually does their own administration. We use a software package and notes are maintained by that placement coordinator. That is how we manage that.

In terms of offering courses, in the first year we were fortunate enough to have five and now we have 17. Each year that is changing and developing and being modified. We virtually put out to tender. We invite organisations to tender for the training. We are obviously a client that is out there looking for quality training for our students. Each year, at either our planning or our meeting days, if not before, schools comment on the quality of the training. We have surveys that we ask the students to complete. We certainly have parents ring up and voice their opinion about whether the training is good or not.

One of the exciting things this year—I suppose we have come of age now—is that we are holding a graduation and awards evening. Each of these training providers will be handing out certificates of attainment—certificate I in automotive and so on. There will also be a CareerLink student of the year in a particular category—one of the 17—and an endeavour award. So that training provider is making an award to a student both for achievement and for endeavour.

Mrs MAY—What levels of certificate are being offered through the cluster?

Mrs Davey—Certificate I or certificate II. It really depends on the industry area. If you would like me to list them—

Mrs MAY—Do you get feedback from industry on those certificate levels? Is that enough or do you need to go further?

Mrs Dean-Bull—Some areas are limited, too, by student age in terms of which certificates they can undertake; for example, Certificate III in Hospitality. You have to be a certain age before you can engage in some of those areas which are age linked.

Mrs MAY—What age is the cluster actually targeting, then? What age group at high school are you targeting?

Mrs Davey—Year 11 and year 12. So it is the year they turn 16 and 17. Very much the registered training organisations would be the guide as to what is possible within a 15-day period of training, in a 15-day period of work placement. One of the things we may look forward to in the future, if it were to pass, is actually having a two-year program. At the moment we have a

one-year program. If a student were involved in year 11 and year 12 they would choose a different industry area in year 12, if they had completed their first preference in year 11.

Mrs MAY—What about tracking the success of the program as far as opening up those pathways into employment or further education are concerned? The cluster has been together since 1997. Have you done any tracking to see where some of those students have ended up?

Mrs Davey—We certainly do our surveys, which are through the ECEF organisation. We send out those surveys. However, my concerns are about the reliability of that feedback. That is certainly an issue that would require some sort of extra funding. You would really have to have somebody who could call people in the evening or on weekends. I know of individual cases where a survey has been sent and former students are currently working. I do not know. I think sometimes students leave school, they are enjoying themselves, they are working and they do not see the point in responding to a written questionnaire.

Ms Moore—We sometimes get better feedback from the parents than from the students themselves. One of the parents sort of invaded our parent information evening last week at Mater Dei College to talk about how wonderful CareerLink had been for her child, what a change it had made in his life, that there were opportunities and what he was doing now. He was participating in WorldSkills and all that sort of thing.

Mrs MAY—Do you have information nights? Do you participate in information nights at the different schools?

Mrs Davey—Yes. Each of the schools holds a year 10 information evening. In some cases they will also convene a specific meeting for parents and students who are interested in enrolling. For instance, on 20 August the CareerLink cluster will hold a combined information evening. We title it the CareerLink Expo. So each of the training providers would be within a hall and they would be promoting their training courses. I have also requested them to do a flowchart of the types of training that they could move into and also employment opportunities in that particular industry.

Only one registered training organisation from each of those industry areas would be represented. Parents and students can ask for information on that evening. Then they would make their selection for their interview based on that information. Within that application package they also do a career exploration exercise with their careers educator at the school. That is part of the interview process as well.

Mrs MAY—It is like screening them? The advice is there for students but if you thought they were really unsuitable for what they had chosen you would work with them through a choice?

Ms Moore—It is trying to make sure that the people who are on the program have chosen appropriately and are ready to do that. Particularly in the case of Mater Dei College, and I think most of the other schools, you need to also make sure that they are able to catch up on missed work, that their academic side is strong enough to cope with that, that their organisational skills and their goal setting and time management are able to carry them through, because it does take a fair bit of self-discipline and organisation. I quite often recommend to them that they do not try it until year 12 because they need year 11 to just get their feet on the ground and get into it.

Mrs Dean-Bull—There are some real benefits for students at educational risk, who are really at risk of leaving school and not ending up with any sort of employment or career path. We have a couple of students who are in year 12 this year who are on individual education programs. So they are not going to achieve Curriculum Council secondary graduation, but they are still in the school system for appropriate maturation and socialisation. They are still completing vocational competencies while they are at school and are part of CareerLink. We have had several cases with those students who have gone on, through their relationships with those employers, to be successful and gainfully employed. They would have represented a severe risk of either being unemployed or having no post-compulsory destination. So we get students from both ends of the spectrum involved in the program.

Mr SAWFORD—The most effective VET training I have seen in the schools has come from schools that basically see it as their core business—in other words, if you put a performance benchmark against it and have at least 70 per cent of their students doing accredited VET and sometimes a multiplicity of VET. We still have academic high schools that teeter with less than 10 per cent or less than 20 per cent of VET in their schools. Some of those do their students justice by outsourcing it all. Then you get another set of schools that seem to be confused. They do not know whether they want to be VET or academic—the old comprehensive high school thing we have been stuck with for 30 years which the United Kingdom is trying to get rid of. Is there a possibility that those schools would consider something like a Mandurah sort of thing where they had a specialist technical training secondary school? Is that part of the agenda of Catholic and independent ed? Should they be thinking that way in the future?

Mrs Davey—I am afraid I cannot comment. Excuse me, but I am not familiar with the Mandurah model.

Mr SAWFORD—I am sorry. It is where there is a senior secondary college on the same campus as TAFE and Murdoch University. So there is access to seamless transition between the three. There are 1,000 students there, so they can offer the choice of VET. Even though they have perhaps 20 per cent of their students also doing the TE concentration with VET as an add-on, in the main they are doing VET with the TE as an add-on. It is a different sort of format. Do private schools need some sort of option for that and could you do it?

Mrs Dean-Bull—I see there are benefits from both sorts of kids actually working in the same environments together. We have approximately half TEE students and half non-TEE students pursuing our VET courses. The value for those students who are at that point in their lives thinking that they will pursue a TEE future or a university career is that their exposure to VET actually opens their eyes to other possibilities and other avenues that are more closely or more directly related to their talents and their future potential. To segregate those students I do not think would necessarily benefit the whole cohort of students.

Mr SAWFORD—It is interesting that the best technical training institutions, if you look back over the last 40 or 50 years, have allowed both. The school that had the technical training as its core business seems to adapt better to allowing courses for university entrants to create the balance whereas schools that are academic high schools never seem to do the VET properly. It is just an add-on. Is that true in your system?

Ms Moore—It is farmed out. Certainly for us it is farmed out, because we did not see it as core business in the sense that we did not see that we had skills in being able to place students in workplaces and organise TAFE training and stuff for them. I think that one of the problems with a model like that can be that it is just as confining and narrowing for student choices as the other one is.

Mr SAWFORD—But it is different.

Ms Moore—It is different and it certainly gives them skills. Before you came in we were referring to the fact that vocational education and training is really only a very small subset of the whole career development and career education and that, yes, they do need skills and they need skills in the here and now. I am in the IT area and certainly my kids need to know how to operate the latest Microsoft programs. But far beyond that they need to know how to learn them, because next year their skills are going to be redundant or the year after those skills are going to be redundant.

I think one of the most important things that we can focus on for the next generation of kids is a career development program as a priority in schools that teaches kids all of those things we were talking about. They need to learn how to learn and we need to teach them how to learn. They need to learn all of those employability skills—time management, goal setting, communicating, problem solving, collaborative practice. They are not just going to catch those. Some people do and some do not, and until now our school systems have relied on people catching it as they go through the system.

If you want to teach someone how to use good collaborative practice, you get them to work in a group. That does not necessarily mean that they are going to learn how to do it just because they are working in a group. They might accidentally stumble upon the right way to do it. We have so much knowledge about how we can help people, what the stages are, how we can teach them all of those things and we do not teach them that.

Mr SAWFORD—Some private providers have said to me that we have deskilled VET to the point of almost a nonsense.

Ms Moore—Because they are focusing on transferable generic skills rather than—

Mr SAWFORD—Because they are focusing on that and they are not balancing it up with quantitative skills that can be measured. In other words, they would say that they do not wipe off the qualitative skills. They do not do that at all. They are not saying that at all. What they see is totally in balance. I would always be fearful in your system where you are buying all those programs and the coordinator in your system has to know all of those variances and whether in fact there is a balance between quantitative and qualitative. There are qualitative skills, but is there too much emphasis, as some of the private providers have said, on the qualitative skills? People say, ‘We need team work, problem solving, communication and being able to work effectively and take directions and do this,’ whereas there are some other measurements that are quantitative such as they can type at 80 words a minute. That tells a big story; it tells a very big story, and it is sometimes a better story than what the others tell. There has to be a balance. Is the balance wrong in VET?

Ms Moore—It depends on who you are targeting it at, I think. I think that certainly that strong balance comes back to what employers are looking for from kids when they first leave school. Apart from very progressive organisations, the majority of employers initially are looking for somebody who knows how to do and not how to think. They are getting you in at the ground level and they want you to be able to do all of those things. They are not looking for managers. They are not looking for thinkers. They are not looking for innovators. They are not looking for enterprise. Necessarily, it is not the first call. Yes, it would be a great bonus, but it is not the first thing. My concern is that if that is what we are targeting for our students, they are not going to be able to progress past that. Unless we also give them some skills in the other things, we are limiting their options.

Mrs Dean-Bull—There is a bonus, too, in allowing schools to select who delivers what components of their vocational education and training programs, because if someone from industry who is delivering those services is not up to scratch it is an easy process to move to somebody else and it generates the competition amongst that side of industry delivering those sorts of vocational education and training skills as competencies to perform at a higher level. You can terminate those relationships, but if you are in a dedicated system you get that rigidity. That internal system does not generate that competition and you are stuck with what you have got. As society moves on and as the quality of people's capacity to deliver moves on, you cannot necessarily easily move with that. But with our current system that is possible.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I just come back to what Cathy was saying, which I was very interested in. Sometimes the measurement of how people think or work in teamwork or whatever depends on an approach. It seems to me that in education today there is a lot of synthesis in the way in which curriculum is framed. There is very little analysis.

Ms Moore—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—You agree?

Ms Moore—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—There is a lot of emphasis on collaboration but not on healthy competition. There is a lot of emphasis on description but not on comprehension—in other words, the balance. So what these private providers are saying is that it is not just that it is quantitative or qualitative. Qualitative is in the narrow sense. In other words, that is not an overarching view. I think competition to collaboration is a line. Analysis to synthesis is a line. Description to comprehension is a line. Our good education system has all of those things. I think that what they are saying is that too much of education at both a private and public level is synthesised.

Let us take some of the concerns with mathematics and engineering and science in this country. The falling away from participation in high-level maths and high-level science is a real worry in terms of 20 years down the track. Is that what the private providers are also saying? Sometimes their views are being dismissed. People say, 'Oh, it's important to teach kids to think.' Of course it is. But then you do not go the next step. Thinking is not just synthesis, which is about 90 per cent of the current secondary curriculum in Australia. There is very little analysis. What they are saying is, 'Yes, but where's the analysis gone? Where's the competition gone where it's a healthy competition, not where you were putting a kid with an IQ of 100 against

someone with 200.' The inputs are equal; the outputs may be different. Is there a problem there? This is a very frustrating inquiry. Eight months into it and we are getting contradictory information.

CHAIR—So what is your question?

Mr SAWFORD—My question is this: when you answered a while ago by sort of saying that it is important to have qualitative measurements as well as quantitative, is the qualitative too narrow?

Mrs Dean-Bull—I think there are some unrealised opportunities and the conduit between those providing the quality of level of service to enable VET to remain in schools to augment that process is difficult. It comes back to the structural system in which we operate and the lack of funding and resources for that to actually occur. I think part of the reason that process is not done well in schools is simply because, as my colleague was saying, there is no time for those sorts of relationships to be formed. I think if there are policy directions that initiate funding to drive people in that direction, you will get the change that you want. But currently if that does not occur, those opportunities are unrealised.

If we look at partnerships with providers such as TAFE, both from their end and from our end, we see that both systems are chronically stretched. There is a huge unrealised potential there between the sharing of resources and skills on both areas. There are students who are too immature to embark on a model where they are out in a separate community undertaking those skills and who are still benefiting from the maturation process they are going through in a wider school setting. I think we have to look at the way those sorts of things are funded for those sorts of collaborative opportunities to really move beyond what we currently have and what has been proposed in the Mandurah model to realise the opportunities that are actually there.

Mr SAWFORD—There are attitudinal problems that are involved in it as well?

Mrs Dean-Bull—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Some private providers were making the point that there was almost an aversion to teaching in TAFE and in private organisations and that it is quite different to—

Mrs Dean-Bull—I think some TAFE organisations have not necessarily wanted VET in schools to be conducted or to be that successful. So while they have embarked on the relationships and they have taken the money which comes from schools for those students to be involved in those relationships, they have not delivered on the quality of the service provided.

I know that a number of schools have dissociated themselves from RTOs who are not performing. Really, they are just not giving the quality of service. To blame schools and the current model we have for that lack of provision of service I think denies the political relationship between the two bodies and the way they are both funded. I think there has to be a strategic look at how that occurs to make sure those relationships are functional and do provide good quality service. That is why we now see a burgeoning of private providers, of RTOs: because those people have seen the opportunity to provide that in a private marketplace and link

themselves with schools. The market is there. The way both organisations are currently funded does not encourage and foster good relationships.

CHAIR—Do you think that eventually will sort itself out, that the competition between those providers will—

Mrs Dean-Bull—Yes. Previously we would have had to make an approach to an RTO to get service in terms of requirements, delivery strategies and potential partnerships to deliver parts of our course, whereas within the last 12 months we are now being rung by our RTOs. They are offering us a range of services. Previously it would have been up to us to identify our need and then contact them, but they would have been quite happy to take the money and do their once-a-year visit to sign off our students, which was completely a waste of time for most of us aiming to offer industry standard skills.

Mr SAWFORD—Is there any growth in the range of private training providers in WA?

Mrs Dean-Bull—I do not know that there is a huge growth in the range, but there is certainly a growth in the way in which those companies are now marketing themselves, and they are strategically orienting and aligning themselves with professional organisations and conferences and—

Mr SAWFORD—Is there growth in the number of groups?

Mrs Dean-Bull—I could not tell you. They are very available, but I could not tell you the actual numbers for those.

Mrs Davey—Just as an indicator, of the 17 courses we are running this year, 11 are private training providers as opposed to TAFE.

CHAIR—Can I return to two issues? Sue-Ellen, did you say that 50 per cent of your students in work placement are also students who are doing a TEE?

Mrs Dean-Bull—I will clarify that point. Half of the students who are involved in our hospitality program are TEE students. The non-TE component of the students doing vocational education and training competencies would then be part of CareerLink. Currently, because of our school structure and the fact that there is no time allowance for VET within our school system and there is no funding of the human resources to run that, of classroom teachers to administer it, the school has chosen to only offer CareerLink to our non-TE students unless there is an exceptional circumstance, because it just cannot be sustained.

The other half of my vocational education and training students who have competencies embedded in their program over the course of two years, while they still complete their Curriculum Council subjects, will achieve their Certificate I in Kitchen Operations as well. So we have students who are looking at, potentially, university careers but utilising their hospitality training to gain immediate part-time employment and employment to sustain their further education. That is the value they see in it, and that is why they do it.

CHAIR—And is the hospitality course done just in year 11 or in year 12?

Mrs Dean-Bull—It is done in years 11 and 12. The VET competencies are split over two years, and that allows us then to embed those competencies in the current Curriculum Council courses that are on offer. We envisage that with the post-compulsory review and the new courses that are being offered that will become easier, because there is more of a direct requirement for VET to be included in those related subjects.

CHAIR—It was suggested this morning, I think by John Nelson from the Catholic Education Office, that students doing VET courses are disadvantaged in terms of TEE and competition for a high score. Would you agree with that or not?

Mrs Dean-Bull—It is an additional burden on those students because they are taking extra, but I actually see that those students who are doing TE and who are also doing VET training have found that quite motivating. So they are more certain about what their careers are going to be. They are more certain about their goals because they have to manage their time more efficiently. I do not see evidence of a negative impact on TE.

CHAIR—In terms of the actual measured results, either? You haven't seen any great indicator that they are at a disadvantage?

Mrs Dean-Bull—No.

CHAIR—Cathy, I will direct one last question to you. You mentioned earlier that you took up careers advising in your school, that it was totally new to you and so on. Is there a role here for CareerLink to be involved in career counselling and career advice within schools, rather than have someone such as yourself in your school giving careers advice to your students, acting as careers adviser? Is there a capacity for an outside adviser to be coming in and teaching within your schools lessons on careers or, more broadly, just alerting students as to career possibilities and the sorts of pathways they need to be pursuing? Could you be making more of that?

Ms Moore—I think it depends on what you see as the role of the careers adviser or the careers counsellor in the school. I see that role as being broader than simply being a source of information and offering advice. I think a lot of careers counselling is to do with a holistic approach to that student and making the most of all of their strengths—helping them to get to know themselves and then helping them to get to know what their strengths and weaknesses are and how they would like to use those and teaching them how to investigate things. It is an ongoing process that really starts in year 8 and goes all the way through.

Certainly CareerLink is a very valuable source of information. It liaises closely with industry. It liaises with regional bodies. It is able to tell us about work opportunities and training opportunities in our local area, which is valuable and difficult to find on the Internet. It is great from that point of view. Again, it is horses for courses. They are good managers, they are good organisers and they are good at liaising. They are good at all of those sorts of relationship things. I do not think they are necessarily trained careers counsellors. I think there are very few people in schools that are trained careers counsellors. I would come back to the fact that I think that is the major issue. You would not get principals appointing a physics or a calculus teacher with no training.

CHAIR—So how do we resolve it, then? We have to have specialist training for—

Ms Moore—I think the way we resolve it first-up is to say to schools that this is an important area. The way we say that it is important is to fund it like any other curriculum area. I do not blame my principal for wanting to put me into the classroom more and more. That is what he gets his money for. He does not get any money for me sitting there talking to parents and kids or putting in programs about learning to learn or running study skills evenings or having kids in there and teaching them how to do concept mapping. So I think that is a very important thing. Until principals are expected to be accountable for their career education program, just as they are accountable for physics and English and calculus, there will be no prioritising. It will be potluck.

CHAIR—What percentage of a teaching load are you on?

Ms Moore—Just over half.

CHAIR—And the other half is for careers?

Ms Moore—Yes.

CHAIR—What is the size of your school? How many students?

Ms Moore—960.

CHAIR—So you really need to be full time in careers? Is that what you are saying?

Ms Moore—I would like to be full time in careers. More than that, I would actually like to see it as a curriculum area where the kids are allowed to spend more time in it. I think that is the focus. They do not have a subject called ‘career education’. The children have to fit in their career development and their attempts at educating themselves about a career and how to develop it. They have to fit that in on the fringes, around the side. It has a lower priority than beliefs and values and phys ed and anything else. It is just an ad hoc thing that happens to happen. Some parents take it seriously and go to a lot of trouble. Some kids take it seriously. Others do not. I think we need to have schools accountable for the career education that they are offering to their students.

Mr SAWFORD—How would you measure that? Is it one period a week? How would you do that?

Ms Moore—Why would it not be the same as—

Mr SAWFORD—I want you to put it on the record. I did not want to answer the question.

Ms Moore—The time spent on career education should be at least the same as the time spent on any other curriculum area. It is going to have benefits far beyond what they might have learned in the IT classroom that particular year because it will have ongoing benefits for the rest of their lives.

CHAIR—So that would presumably include a lot more than just information about careers. That would include development of generic skills et cetera.

Ms Moore—Yes, absolutely. Teaching those kids all of those employability skills, you could see it as an employability or enterprising skills course. You go through the list of employability skills and we are talking about the need to be adaptable and the ability to make decisions. My year 12 students in management and marketing last term did not have any decision making tools at their disposal. When I said to them, ‘We’re going to set up interviews and you’re going to have to decide which person out of these 12 applicants you’re going to interview. What decision making tools do you have at your disposal?’ they went blank. I said, ‘You’ve got to year 12 and you have not even been exposed. You don’t even know how to do pluses and minuses and interesting things on the various people. You don’t know how to rate them. You have no tools.’

They had no tools at all. I asked them what they do when they study, when they learn and investigate careers. I asked them what they did. They said, ‘I read.’ They have no further skilling than that. That is a very basic level. The Australian Association of Careers Counsellors has been driving this. I am sure you are all aware of the Australian blueprint, and that is a national move now. If we have the Australian blueprint and some of those levels and some of those things modelled we can say to schools, ‘Somehow this blueprint needs to be a part of your curriculum.’

CHAIR—Thank you. I am afraid our time is up. We have a plane to catch.

Mrs Davey—In the Joondalup region we are fortunate to have, if parents and students choose to, the Mindarie Community College and also Edith Cowan and West Coast College of TAFE. So we have actually got that precinct. I am not sure whether or not it replicates the model at Mandurah, but certainly the facilities and choices are there.

Mrs Dean-Bull—One thing we have not mentioned is the role of parent perception in the student’s engagement with VET. We still run up against parents who see, from their historical perspective, there is no way they would send their child to a VET separate college—there is just no way in the world—but they might allow them to do a VET subject as part of their studies and then, by virtue of seeing the value that that brings to their child’s life, there are greater avenues for that child to overcome their parent’s objections or attitudinal barriers to realise their potential. I think that is something that more and more we are going to have to explore as to how we assist parents to change their attitudes about that.

Mr Arnold—I think a lot of students do VET, particularly in year 11, because they are not mature enough to make a decision as to what career they are going to have. Therefore, they go into the program to experiment, taste it and see what it is like and make their decision from there.

CHAIR—Thank you. That has been very helpful indeed. Keep up the good work you are doing.

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

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

Committee adjourned at 3.37 p.m.

