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Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Vocational education in schools

WEDNESDAY, 6 AUGUST 2003

WILLUNGA AND HINDMARSH

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Wednesday, 6 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 Bartlett, Mrs May, Mr Sawford and Mr Sidebottom

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

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

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

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Committee met at 10.13 a.m.

DALLIMORE, Andrew

LEDGARD, Scott

MURRAY, Gemma

SIMON, Hayley

STANBURY, Matt

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into vocational education in schools. I thank the principal of Willunga High School, Mr Paul Billows, and his staff and students for their hospitality. I thank the students for showing us around. Before we start the proceedings, I will fill you in on what is happening. We are trying to get an understanding of how vocational education works across the country. We are visiting a number of schools and we are talking to students, teachers and education department employees so that we can get an understanding in order to make recommendations to the government about how to improve the way VET works. The sorts of things you tell us this morning will help us get a better understanding of how VET works and how we can improve it. What you say this morning will be recorded. That is probably a good thing. You do not need to be too anxious about that. It will be fairly relaxed and informal.

To begin with, you might tell us a little bit about the course of study that you are doing, what VET course you are doing and perhaps where you think that might lead you in terms of interest and career and so on.

Matt Stanbury—I am in the VET for technology in woodwork, and it is good.

CHAIR—That is good.

Matt Stanbury—It keeps me wanting to come to school because it is fun and it will get me somewhere.

CHAIR—Would you not have come back to school?

Matt Stanbury—Probably not—more just surf and that is it, mainly. But now I am really looking forward to getting somewhere with furnishings and that.

Mrs MAY—So you can see a pathway for the future?

Matt Stanbury—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you do anything other than woodwork or furnishings?

Matt Stanbury—No.

Mr SAWFORD—That is it?

Matt Stanbury—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—So how many hours a week do you do that for?

Matt Stanbury—I am not sure.

Mr SAWFORD—We might come back to you on that.

Matt Stanbury—Yes.

Scott Ledgard—I am doing the viticulture certificate. It will probably lead to a career option for me.

CHAIR—We will come back and ask you questions in a minute. Thanks, Scott.

Hayley Simon—I am doing hospitality and kitchen operations. It is going to help me a lot. It has probably helped me get a part-time job more than a full-time job, but it is certainly keeping me at school.

Gemma Murray—I am doing the business studies certificate. It makes me want to come to school. It will also help me in my career choice, which is a legal secretary.

Andrew Dallimore—I am currently doing certificate II in information technology. When I leave school, I actually want to do computing and possibly become an information technology administrator. It is pretty much keeping me in school at the moment because I would not mind leaving and actually getting a job.

CHAIR—You are all in year 11?

Gemma Murray—Year 11.

CHAIR—So you all seem to be saying that it is the vocational course that is keeping you at school. How many of you would have left at the end of year 10 if it was not for this? Most of you would have. You would have still been here, Scott?

Scott Ledgard—I would still be here.

CHAIR—Matt, you said you were doing furnishings and wood tech. That is the only VET subject you are doing?

Matt Stanbury—I do other subjects. It is the only VET subject I am doing, yes. I am doing English, sports coaching, Australian studies and design as well. They are my other subjects.

CHAIR—So it seems like you all chose a particular VET subject, such as wood or viticulture, because that is the way you thought it would lead to a job for you. What made you choose them?

Did you have a careers adviser in the school who sat down with you, say, in year 9 or 10 and said, 'Look, this is the way we think you should go?' Did you just have a strong idea yourself already? Did your parents give you some direction?

Andrew Dallimore—We have career counselling days where we have a meeting with teachers who help us work out our subjects and advise us what we should do in the future. We did that last year. It is basically when we decided what we wanted to do.

Mr SAWFORD—When did you make up your mind that you wanted to be involved in information technology?

Andrew Dallimore—I actually made up my mind in year 9 because I was doing information processing, which is mainly desktop publishing and things like that. I wanted to know what is actually inside a computer. Instead of just working with software, I can work with hardware and things like that.

Mr SAWFORD—So the careers guidance did not really influence you? You had already made up your mind?

Andrew Dallimore—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—What about the others? Gemma?

Gemma Murray—Mrs Milne actually helped me a lot. I wanted to be a secretary originally, but Mrs Milne helped me choose to be a legal secretary. She said that I would be very good at it, and I actually liked the sound of the business certificate course and how you get out and do work placements at schools or at hospitals. So it was very interesting. She put me into the courses that she thought would be best for me.

Mr SAWFORD—So careers guidance decided where you go?

Gemma Murray—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Hayley?

Hayley Simon—In the middle of year 10, I was thinking about leaving. Ms Milne helped me with that. I decided to go part time. I come to school 2½ days a week now. I am also doing another certificate, the school based traineeship. At the end of this month, I will be getting the certificate III in business office administration, which is also through the school. In year 9 I think it was, I found out about the hospitality course. I had always been interested in it and did catering all through with Ms Megaw and that kind of stuff. I decided that I wanted to do that.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you enjoy it?

Hayley Simon—Yes. I have learnt heaps.

CHAIR—Did you say you are doing certificate III in business?

Hayley Simon—Yes.

CHAIR—When did you start doing that?

Hayley Simon—In about July last year.

CHAIR—Are any others doing certificate III courses?

Hayley Simon—At school in VET, I am doing a second one in hospitality. But it is called a school based traineeship. I am doing it with the Port Adelaide Training and Development Centre, which also helps me out. They come down once a month. But the school also helps me out with giving me days off and that kind of stuff, giving me support.

CHAIR—I will come back to that.

Mr SAWFORD—How did you decide on viticulture? Is it a family thing?

Scott Ledgard—Yes. Pretty much all my family has been involved in vineyards. I decided it would be the way I would like to go, too. I have always enjoyed that kind of stuff.

Mr SAWFORD—What about Matt?

Matt Stanbury—I just like woodwork.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Some of you did say that you would have continued on at school. Those that said they would not, why wouldn't you and why didn't you want to continue on at school? I would be interested to know why.

Hayley Simon—Mainly boredom. There wasn't any relevance.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You couldn't see relevance in what you were doing?

Hayley Simon—Yes, basically.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Someone else?

Andrew Dallimore—Well, I was not really a high achiever in grades. That is the main reason why I wanted to leave school and go to TAFE—to see whether I could get a course going or something. But I can do it here.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Are you achieving highly now?

Andrew Dallimore—Yes, in some subjects.

Gemma Murray—I actually did not know there were certificate courses at the school until Ms Milne told me, so I was actually going to go to TAFE and do the same course at TAFE. So I stayed here to do the course as well as doing legal studies and English to help me.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You found out in grade 10?

Gemma Murray—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That there were certificate courses here?

Gemma Murray—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Before then, you did not know?

Gemma Murray—No.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is interesting.

Matt Stanbury—I suppose I am not a very good student work-wise. I would have ended up just disliking school. But now it gives me something to look forward to coming to. I come to school thinking, 'I've got woodwork class. I'll zip through this subject and I'll be there.' That is basically it.

CHAIR—Do you have days that you don't have woodwork?

Matt Stanbury—Yes. They are the days I struggle.

CHAIR—Do you still come on those days?

Matt Stanbury—Yes, I still come, unfortunately.

CHAIR—It is just a bit harder?

Matt Stanbury—Yes, a bit harder.

Mrs MAY—Could we run through with each of you your work placements. What sort of assistance did you get at the school with your work placements? Did you have to find them yourselves? Were they sourced through the school? Would each of you like to run through that. Who is doing work placement here?

Matt Stanbury—No, I am not. I am not working.

Mrs MAY—You are not working?

Matt Stanbury—No.

Scott Ledgard—The school could have found one for us, but we could go out and find one if we wanted to. So I went out and found my own.

Mrs MAY—And the school is happy to work in with you and give you the flexibility you need for your work placement?

Scott Ledgard—I have a work placement on Friday afternoons, which is when I have a viticulture lesson anyway.

Mrs MAY—So you are not missing any of your other subjects through that?

Scott Ledgard—No.

Hayley Simon—I am not doing any at the moment.

Gemma Murray—I told my teacher where I was interested in doing the work placement. He arranged an interview. I went in and did the interview myself. That is about it.

Andrew Dallimore—I am not doing any work.

Mrs MAY—You are not doing any work placement. For the future, do any of you see yourselves staying here or moving away? What is the aim for each of you as far as your careers are concerned? You have each identified an area that you want to specialise in now as a career. Do you see yourselves moving away from the area or staying and working here?

Matt Stanbury—I think I will work here.

Mrs MAY—So there are opportunities for you to do that?

Matt Stanbury—Yes.

Mrs MAY—You are staying here, are you, Scott?

Scott Ledgard—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Hayley?

Hayley Simon—I will probably be working at Victor Harbour. There are a lot more chances down there.

Mrs MAY—With the hospitality industry here, there would be a lot of opportunities, I imagine.

Hayley Simon—Yes. We are going to be moving down there, which helps as well. We will be moving at the end of this year. I think it will certainly help me.

Mrs MAY—Gemma?

Gemma Murray—I will be staying here because my course goes over two years. Then I will be moving on to TAFE to do the certificate III and IV in business studies.

Andrew Dallimore—I will be staying here next year to finish school, because it goes over two years, and hopefully I will try to get into university and finish the rest of the courses in IT.

Mrs MAY—So there is a path there for you to continue on to university?

Andrew Dallimore—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Anyone else thinking about university? No.

Mr SAWFORD—How many of you have a part-time job? You have. What do you do?

Matt Stanbury—I clean for the video store.

Hayley Simon—I work at a nursery.

Mr SAWFORD—At a nursery?

Hayley Simon—Yes. At Murphy's Spuds.

CHAIR—Andrew, you said you were hoping to go on to university. How will that work? You will do a TAFE course and then you will get entry to university from work, or do you go straight from school to university?

Andrew Dallimore—I think that I can actually go straight from school to university straight from a certificate III course.

CHAIR—Using the certificate III course. So that will count towards your university entrance, will it?

Andrew Dallimore—I can actually get the certificate III course in university.

CHAIR—So you are doing enough other academic subjects besides your VET course to get university entrance?

Andrew Dallimore—Yes.

CHAIR—I want to return to the careers advice you had. Most of you said that in year 10 and in a couple of cases in year 9 you sat down with Ms Milne and you talked about career options and so on. Was that early enough, do you think? Do you think it would have been helpful in, say, years 7 and 8 for you to start thinking a lot more about what career possibilities there were and how to prepare for them?

Hayley Simon—Probably not.

CHAIR—No?

Andrew Dallimore—No, I do not think so, because you do not really know what you want.

Hayley Simon—I think it should be at the start of year 9 or in the middle of year 9, but not in year 7. That is too early, I think.

CHAIR—And year 10 is a bit late, do you think?

Hayley Simon—Probably, yes.

CHAIR—What sort of things at the start of year 9—let's assume that was the way to go—did you need to be made aware of that could have improved your thinking about career options and courses of study and so on?

Gemma Murray—Careers counselling, like a day where you can find out information that you want, like about the VET courses or things that you would like to do in the future, and a lot more information.

Mrs MAY—We also heard in a couple of schools that it may have been useful if you had a careers program run over a period of time, where there was a certain period of time set aside for careers counselling, opening up options for you, and some skills to be given to you. Would you see something like that being useful?

Gemma Murray—Yes.

Hayley Simon—We do have skills week at this school, which is at the end of the year, where you do a lot of different career type things, which is basically what you are talking about. We did it last year. I believe we are doing it again this year.

Matt Stanbury—I think it is on this week. We are doing it this week.

Gemma Murray—For year 10 it is this week, yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Who is that available to?

Hayley Simon—Different year levels have it in different weeks. For the whole week they have a set program where they go through the different classes, so their classes are not the same. They have very different things. They have guest speakers—we had that last year—and different people come in.

Andrew Dallimore—The school also tells us about career expos and things like that and other places like universities and the South Adelaide Football Club and things like that.

CHAIR—Have you been to any of them?

Andrew Dallimore—Yes. It is basically just a heap of tables and things from different universities and TAFEs. They just give you pamphlets and tell you about all the different things you can do.

CHAIR—Did they open up new ideas and new horizons for you, or was it really that you went there with a bit of an idea of what you wanted to do anyway and it was just a bit more information about how to achieve what you wanted to do?

Andrew Dallimore—It was just a bit more information for me.

CHAIR—Did any of you go to those career expos and find something new that you had not thought of and decided it was a career that you might actually really want to be involved in?

Hayley Simon—I found a couple of new things that I thought about, so I was able to think about other things. But I stuck with what I was thinking.

CHAIR—So you would say the careers advice from Ms Milne is better than what you get from careers expo in terms of helping you sort out what direction you want to go in?

Gemma Murray—It was for me.

Mr SAWFORD—I want to follow up on something Margaret was saying before. What people were suggesting to us in Perth is that even during the latter years of primary school you have a unit of study possibly called careers. During that unit of study you would be made aware of a whole lot of different jobs over a long period of time. It just seems that a lot of young people get to years 10, 11 and 12 and have no idea what they want to do and often have little experience of what is sometimes out there. For example, there are positions in road and rail building. There is a group of people who live in my electorate. Their average age is about 57 or 58, so they are in retirement mode. It takes them four or five years to learn to use the machines that actually do all this sort of work and yet there are no replacements for them. These people want to retire. The salaries are incredible. They earn \$140,000 or \$150,000 a year but no-one knows about them. There are jobs in mining areas where people fly out every Sunday afternoon or Monday to Kalgoorlie up in the mining areas of South Australia. They fly back. They earn very big incomes but no-one knows about them.

Hayley Simon—Isn't it up to the employer to advertise it and let schools know in their area?

Mr SAWFORD—But they don't. In Western Australia, they are importing labour from South Australia because they do not have the skilled employees in Western Australia. So they have to fly them over each week. It is very expensive. They get good money for it, but no-one seems to know about it.

The idea put to us yesterday was that maybe if there was a continuing course of study not only would you be made aware of viticulture and the industries around here but also a whole range of industries that may take you overseas and all sorts of places. However, you are just not made aware of it and you cannot be through one person like Ms Milne as one career adviser. It is just impossible for someone to do that. Is there any worth in us pursuing that sort of idea if we made a recommendation to the federal government, or do you think that is a bit wishy-washy and a bit dreamy?

Matt Stanbury—No. I think it is a good idea. There are kids that would like to travel and work and get good money at the same time. It would help, as we do not hear about it. It is something that I would not mind doing further down the track—something like that.

Mr SAWFORD—Anyone else have any view of that?

Gemma Murray—I reckon a lot more kids would be interested. They would not think about dropping out of school if they thought they could travel and earn more money. They might be interested to learn more about the course.

Andrew Dallimore—I reckon they should actually give us the awareness that they are available. How are we supposed to get a job like that if we do not know about it? If you know about it, you probably have a lot more employment options as well.

Mrs MAY—What sort of access do you have to your careers adviser here? Do you have to make an appointment? Is she full-time careers advising, or does Ms Milne have an office where you have to go to and make an appointment to see her?

Hayley Simon—She has an office and you make an appointment. She also has other classes which she teaches, so you have to work around our classes and her classes. But she does have set times which she has free and does help us out.

Andrew Dallimore—I think we actually have another career adviser, and I think it is Mr Disley.

Gemma Murray—Yes, Mr Disley. He is a career adviser as well. He has classes as well and volleyball.

CHAIR—So they both do the same sort of thing?

Andrew Dallimore—Yes.

Hayley Simon—Yes.

Gemma Murray—They work with one another.

Andrew Dallimore—You can also seek advice from school counsellors like Mr Schmidt and people like that. They will actually really help you by ringing up people, getting information for you and things like that.

Mrs MAY—So you would see those people as a valuable link to the business community or the work community for yourselves?

Andrew Dallimore—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Do you all feel you have been given enough time with those people and you have had access to them when you have needed it, or have you had to wait your turn?

Hayley Simon—Most of the time I have, yes. I think I jumped in a bit early in year 10, but I found that she has always been there for me.

Gemma Murray—The same with me.

Mrs MAY—That is good.

Mr SAWFORD—Have any of you changed direction—made a decision to go into an area, found out you did not like it so you just got rid of that and moved into some other area?

Andrew Dallimore—Yes. I was really, really keen on becoming a Japanese interpreter. I actually went to Japan for about a month. I just lost all interest and have gone into computing. I was hoping that option was there for me. Otherwise I would just have no idea what I wanted to do with myself.

Mr SAWFORD—Anyone else changed direction?

Gemma Murray—No.

CHAIR—Hayley, you said you are doing a school based traineeship in business.

Hayley Simon—Business and office administration.

CHAIR—Can you explain for us how that works—how much time it takes and all of that?

Hayley Simon—There are a lot of different units. Once a month I get a unit and an assessor comes down from Port Adelaide and she ticks it off through our school. On the end of Mondays, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I do not come to school. I go to work at the Fern Forest Nursery.

CHAIR—That is a nursery?

Hayley Simon—Yes. I then get a lot of practical information from my boss. She helps me out with all of the different modules that I have to work from. I also get a lot of hands-on experience. Within that certificate there are also about three modules of retail, so I am getting half a certificate in retail.

CHAIR—Where do you do the study for those certificate courses? Do you do them at TAFE?

Hayley Simon—No, I do them on the job.

CHAIR—You do them on the job?

Hayley Simon—Yes.

CHAIR—As well as working?

Hayley Simon—It is all on the job, yes.

CHAIR—Do you do exams at the end of each unit?

Hayley Simon—Basically what happens is that I receive a booklet. I have to work through that booklet. There is a heap of different scenarios where I have to say what I would do if this happens. It is a lot to do with computers and accounting and all of that kind of stuff.

Mr SAWFORD—So it is about competencies?

Hayley Simon—Yes. So then she comes down and makes sure that I have been able to do it all. She asks me a heap of questions to make sure that I am able to do it. I then show her. If it is a computer thing, I get on the computer and show her what I have done with the accounts or with filing or setting up different displays. She mainly spends about three hours once a month. I can always ring her and clarify different things.

CHAIR—And where is she from?

Hayley Simon—Port Adelaide Training and Development Centre.

CHAIR—So they are a registered training organisation?

Hayley Simon—Yes. They are an RTO.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—But you are on a traineeship, aren't you?

Hayley Simon—Yes.

CHAIR—So you get paid by the nursery for doing that as well?

Hayley Simon—Yes.

CHAIR—How much an hour do you get for that?

Hayley Simon—It is \$6.09.

CHAIR—So when you leave school, how much longer after school do you need to do there to complete the traineeship?

Hayley Simon—I will be completing it on 21 August.

CHAIR—This year?

Hayley Simon—Yes.

CHAIR—Up to certificate III?

Hayley Simon—Yes. And then I am able to go on and do a diploma. I think there are a couple of other certificates that I am able to do.

CHAIR—Do you think you will do the diploma?

Hayley Simon—Probably, yes. I have not quite decided yet. I am probably going to have a bit of a break beforehand.

CHAIR—You have done well to get to certificate III that early. That is very good. Hayley, what about after you leave school? Will you still work at the nursery? Will they give you a full-time job?

Hayley Simon—Probably, yes.

CHAIR—They have suggested that, have they?

Hayley Simon—In the accounting and business side. Then I am also probably going to have a part-time job in the hospitality side.

CHAIR—Has doing the traineeship and the study with it affected your other studies, your time away from school, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and so on?

Hayley Simon—No. I have the three subjects. I do maths, English and the certificate course in hospitality. But I am still able to keep up with them.

CHAIR—Maths, English, hospitality and your traineeship?

Hayley Simon—Yes.

CHAIR—Those subjects are enough for you to get the SACE?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Would you consider—I know this is left-of-field—accounting?

Hayley Simon—Yes, accounting within the business.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Business accounting?

Hayley Simon—Yes. That is what I am probably going to do.

Mr SAWFORD—In between part-time work and school, have you got time for your own leisure activities in terms of sport or arts?

Hayley Simon—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—What do you do, Matt?

Matt Stanbury—I surf and play football and volleyball and cricket.

Mr SAWFORD—You do a lot. What do you do, Scott?

Scott Ledgard—I do not have a part-time job, so I have plenty of time outside school.

Mr SAWFORD—Sport?

Scott Ledgard—Yes. I play football and whatever else I want to do.

Mr SAWFORD—Hayley?

Hayley Simon—Netball and going to footy games and all sorts of stuff. I am able to do it all.

Mr SAWFORD—Gemma?

Gemma Murray—I do a lot of swimming and go out shopping with friends.

Andrew Dallimore—I do judo and go bike riding with my mates.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you find it difficult to balance leisure and school and career aspirations?

Andrew Dallimore—No.

Gemma Murray—Not really.

Matt Stanbury—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Port Adelaide people are always honest, aren't we, Matt?

Matt Stanbury—Yes. That is in school.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—And you do not play music outside school?

Matt Stanbury—Well, I take my sax home and do some homework.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I thought you might have played in a band.

Mrs MAY—Matt, where do you hope your woodwork will take you? We heard from the principal this morning that there is a lot of development going to happen around here or is happening. Do you see yourself going into an apprenticeship with carpentry? Is that where you would like to go?

Matt Stanbury—Yes. I would eventually like to own my own business and just settle down.

Mrs MAY—So being able to do the program here at school has opened up that door for you and given you a pathway. Where would you see yourself doing your carpentry? You would need to be doing an apprenticeship. Have you explored that option?

Matt Stanbury—No, I have not. It has just been in my own head that I want to own my own business.

Mrs MAY—So you have not set the building blocks there yet as to how to get there?

Matt Stanbury—No.

Mrs MAY—But you will stick with the woodwork?

Matt Stanbury—Yes.

Mrs MAY—That is what you would like to do?

Matt Stanbury—Yes.

Mrs MAY—And you see it leading into something like carpentry or building maybe?

Matt Stanbury—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Or furnishings?

Matt Stanbury—Yes. I have got other choices just through family for concreting for houses.

Mrs MAY—Concrete slabs for houses?

Matt Stanbury—Yes, and golf course work.

Mrs MAY—So you have a few options there?

Matt Stanbury—Yes.

Mrs MAY—But you are enjoying the woodwork at the moment?

Matt Stanbury—Yes. I like woodwork most.

CHAIR—So to wrap it up, then, if you could make some changes to the system to make it work better, can you suggest anything that you would want to do? How could we improve the way VET works for you in terms of giving you options for getting into careers after school and in terms of making you more employable and in terms of making you more aware of what is available?

Hayley Simon—I think it has worked pretty well for me. Maybe there could be a bit more discussion about it with more programs to lead us into different areas instead of just the normal areas, such as vocational areas and hospitality and vineyards and that kind of stuff. It could be other stuff like you suggested—mining and different areas.

CHAIR—Any others?

Mr SAWFORD—Would you like to double the amount of time in woodwork that you are allowed here, Matt?

Matt Stanbury—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you do that?

Matt Stanbury—No.

Mr SAWFORD—You can't? It won't fit in?

Matt Stanbury—No.

Mr SAWFORD—Would you like it to fit in?

Matt Stanbury—Yes. I would like to do more woodwork.

CHAIR—You do very well. Your work down there in the workshop was excellent. It is outstanding, very good. There being no further questions, thank you very much. That has been very interesting and very helpful. Good luck. I am sure you will all do well in viticulture, furniture making, computers, business or whatever.

Gemma Murray—Thank you.

Hayley Simon—Thanks.

Proceedings suspended from 10.46 a.m. to 11.09 a.m.

BILLOWS, Mr Paul, School Principal, Willunga High School

BRAY, Mr Trevor, VET Teacher, Viticulture, Willunga High School

GRANT, Mr Rodney Philip, VET Coordinator, Willunga High School

McLEAN, Mr James (Jim), ICT Coordinator, Teacher of Certificate II in IT and Assessor, Willunga High School

MEGAW, Ms Louise, Teacher, Willunga High School

MURRAY, Mr Graham Andrew, Teacher of Certificate II in Business, Willunga High School

TRUEMAN, Mr Grant, Teacher, Willunga High School

CHAIR—I welcome to this inquiry Mr Paul Billows, principal, and members of staff from Willunga High. Thank you again for your hospitality this morning, for the informative tour and for your time. Paul, would you like to make some introductory comments before we proceed to questions?

Mr Billows—Setting the context of the school, I guess, is probably important. We are a moderate sized government co-educational high school. We have around 800 students. It fluctuates year by year by probably around 50. We have 60 teaching staff full-time equivalent. We are in a semirural type setting. A lot of people have a view of Willunga High School as a rural high school, but that is not the case. We have what I believe to be the largest bus fleet in the state. We bus kids in from all over the place, primarily from the coastal strip of southern Adelaide, which extends from Seaford further south to Sellicks, which is our largest catchment, in particular the Aldinga Beach area. That area is very diverse in relation to socioeconomic status, but there is a lot of cheaper housing along the strip and not a lot of services for families because the development occurred so quickly. That manifests itself in relation to socioeconomic disadvantage and a range of other issues within the school that we are addressing. We also have students come in from McLaren Vale, Willunga, McLaren Flat, and rural towns across our district.

In order to cater for the needs of that diversity, we are approaching it in a variety of ways. We do offer traditional academic type pathways for students. In order to sustain that, we have links with other schools such as Seaford, where we share classes such as PES physics and chemistry in order to sustain those classes. So we are very keen on sustaining academic pathways for students. We have programs for students at risk of leaving school early. These are identified students that fit a particular profile. It is early days with this, but we are developing packages of offerings for these students. For example, one of them is for a boys group. It is designed to improve their employment skills, re-engage them with school and improve their retention and prospects post school. We are having some success in that area.

We have been running pilot projects for students who are showing high intellectual potential. I have actually come from a five-day international conference in Adelaide that relates to that. These pilot projects we are looking at expanding into broader programs in the school over the next couple of years. We then have our vocational pathways, which the school is renowned for. We have looked at some of them this morning. We have a wide variety of them, including viticulture, horticulture, hospitality, both front-of-house and back-of-house operations, tourism, furniture construction, business studies, office administration and child studies, all of which offer students relevant units of study, usually because they have a definite interest in that area, as most of the students you spoke with this morning do, and see a career pathway in that area. We have lots of students who dabble in those areas just to get a taste of what those particular careers are like, especially with regard to the work experience component of it and so on. They might not necessarily see it as a pathway but see the skills as useful and the experiences that are involved as useful. A lot of students dabble in different aspects of that as a result of that. Others see it as a direct career pathway. But they certainly maintain motivation and relevance to school and offer a good balance between some of the more academic pathways and the vocational education offerings. So they are a very positive and important part of our operations as a school.

I guess one of the issues that comes out of that for us is the sustainability of those courses for a range of factors, some of which I am sure you are going to ask me about. It is about sustaining and even expanding our offerings. We have plans to introduce multimedia certificate I and II, I believe, next year. We are currently working through some processes to allow that to happen. We are also looking at a pilot project in construction technology through the Doorways 2 Construction program for next year, which ties into some industry needs in the area.

Of those VET offerings, there is a bit of a mixture. There are certificate I and II courses. Some of them are stand-alone pure VET. Students also get accreditation under the 50 hours equals one unit of the South Australian Certificate of Education. Some of them are embedded within existing SACE units.

We also have some purchasing arrangements that we offer students with local TAFEs in areas such as hair and beauty. In years gone by, we have managed to heavily subsidise or even fully fund an arrangement with TAFE. But through state and federal funding constraints we have now gone to more of a user pays system, where we set those courses up. Some students choose to do that as part of their secondary school experience, but there is a cost, which we try to subsidise and work out a good deal for them. But we see it as another way of expanding offerings for our students in the school. The school is an RTO. I have mentioned to a couple of you how we are looking into that and the implications of that for us. But we balance the RTO status with some auspicing arrangements with the local TAFEs.

CHAIR—Thank you, Paul. One of the issues that we are striking everywhere is the tension between the academic stream and the VET stream in a number of ways. One is a perception that it leads to two tiers of education. You have the brighter students and then the also-rans almost. Another related problem is that, because of the university entrance requirements, a lot of students who have aspirations towards university are discouraged from doing VET courses because it hinders their marks. The VET courses are not counted towards their tertiary entrance ranking. Every state has a different system. We are finding it a bit hard to get a handle on what is going on in each state. Could you just outline for us how the system works in South Australia and how it impacts on your students here? How many of your students are university aspirants

who are not doing VET because it affects their potential TER score but who would like to do VET? What sort of tensions are there in the school and how are you trying to address those questions?

Mr Billows—That is a good question. Last year, we had 28 per cent of year 12 or stage 2 students move on to one of the universities. A larger percentage of that number move on to TAFEs. Often they expand on some of the certificate courses they have completed here. I think it is not uncommon around the state. Around 60 per cent or more of students have no aspirations for university study and are looking at either further training leading into TAFE and trades oriented careers or vocational oriented careers. That is certainly the case here. We maintain that academic pathway as a result of that.

What we find is that at stage 1 a lot of academically oriented students will dabble in some of the certificate courses because it does not impact on their university entrance at all. But those students that have clear academic pathways and career aspirations come to year 12. They then opt into pretty much a straight academically oriented curriculum because they need to in order to meet the entrance requirements of a majority of the universities. But even with that, depending on the courses they want to go into and the institution they are looking at—the University of South Australia, for example, does allow, for quite a few courses, some of the school assessed stage 2 units—some of them can have VET embedded in those units. So there is some scope for some VET to count towards their tertiary entrance rank, depending on the course they want to move into.

There are also moves being put into place through SSABSA, which is the body that oversees SACE and the entrance into university. They are introducing particular VET units; I do not know all the details but they are offering them. I believe very soon, either next year or the year after, they are offerings stages 1 and 2 in particular areas. I am guessing, but I think one of them is, for example, laboratory operations. There are one or two others. They are going to put them as offerings for students that would be put up as a PAS unit, which would count towards entrance into all of the universities, depending on the course.

CHAIR—All of these acronyms are quite a challenge, let me tell you. I want to clarify a couple of points there. The academic students who dabble in some VET courses do that in stage 1, which is year 11, I take it. So for their SACE qualification, they only do their academic courses in year 12. Is that right?

Mr Billows—Some of the people around me might be able to give you some more specific detail. Some of the students do. Some of the subjects, such as hospitality, can be taken to year 12 and they can use them as an entrance rank into university.

Ms Megaw—With the certificate courses, they are basically doing the first six months of TAFE. At stage 1, the students get the skills there. In year 12, there is food and hospitality, PAS and the publicly examined subjects, which are acceptable for a TER score. To students who are really good in stage 1, we say, 'If you're going to go on to uni, do food and hospitality because that counts as one. Because you've already done equivalent to six months of TAFE, the requirement for the practical is year 12 standard. What you've done this year exceeds that. You can do really well in your practical.' The work enhances the year 12 work. They can do really well in year 12 in that subject and get a TER score.

CHAIR—They get a TER. How good a TER is it? How good is the score? Do the VET subjects such as hospitality tend to be fairly low rating compared to other subjects?

Ms Megaw—The VET course in year 12 does not count for a TER. But through food and hospitality PAS, which is a SSABSA subject, they could do really well. It just goes with all the others.

CHAIR—So they transfer over from the VET to the SSABSA?

Ms Megaw—They transfer over. The skills they have learnt in year 11 doing the VET course make it easier for them in year 12, in my subject anyway.

CHAIR—Are there any other subjects where that is possible, where they can do a VET component in year 11 and then transfer?

Mr Murray—The ones we run are probably the only ones where they could transfer the skills across to, if you like, a regular year 12 subject. But these new courses that SSABSA is looking at bringing out should give them the potential to use their VET work in year 11 and pick up a stage 2 subject. I know they are looking at doing business studies, for example, and IT, aren't they?

Mr McLean—Yes, they are.

Mr Murray—They are looking at doing a VET IT option for stage 2.

Mr McLean—There has been in place for some time now a number of variants of VET courses at year 12 level made up by SSABSA. They are approved SACE subjects. We run here the certificate II. Most of the courses that SSABSA have devised are parts of certificate III. We do not offer it in this school, but in other schools that do offer it, students will pick up various units of competency from the certificate II in IT. They might choose to specialise, for example, in network management or software design or one of the three variants and thus get SACE units.

I am not sure, but I do not think that that contributes to the TER score. But at the same time the VET offerings are there to cater for the needs of students who most probably are not going to choose an academic course at university anyway. It is training for the work force. They will most probably go on to TAFE. But the VET offerings cater for the needs of certain students.

CHAIR—I return to my original question. Are there students who definitely want a TER but would also like to do VET courses who are discouraged from doing so?

Mr Murray—I have had a couple in my business course who have had to drop out of going to stage 2 because they need a TER to get to university. We run the business course over two years, generally year 11 and year 12. You either have to choose one or the other or you can do some in stage 1 and get some units during year 11 and then you do not continue with it. I was hoping what SSABSA was going to be offering in terms of a business course with a VET orientation would allow those students to carry on. We will see if that happens; I do not know.

CHAIR—Would it be that we need to provide greater interaction between the two strands?

Mr Murray—I think so. I would be concerned that we reinforce this concept that you are either academic for university or you are vocational. For part of my uni studies, I am reading a book called the *New Work Order* by Colin Lankshear and James Gee. It has very much this focus on schools being a production factory for people going into the workplace. Workplaces having a core of highly skilled people would remain and then there would be the hiring and firing, if you like, of contract labourers as the seasons require. I would be concerned if vocational orientation in schooling directed kids into that area as opposed to keeping their options open for going on to tertiary study at a higher level.

CHAIR—There is an obvious lack of uniformity across the country in relation to this. Every state is doing something different. Do you think that is a problem or do you think there is a strong case for bringing them all into alignment at the expense of requiring every state to give up a degree of autonomy, at least in that respect?

Mr McLean—There is an argument for strength in diversity. I think it is an advantage to have some sort of control over what you are offering. I guess the particular disadvantage is when students move interstate and there is an adjustment that has to be made and it might be disruptive.

Mr Billows—I guess it is a national training framework, so some aspects of it need to be controlled to some degree. But it is interesting; you do learn from what is happening in other states. A lot of the stuff that comes by my desk you sort of look at, be it from Western Australia or New South Wales, and you get ideas in terms of different paths they have taken. You might look at that in terms of whether there is anything in it for us. I have actually phoned schools in the Sydney area, for example, exploring some arrangements that they have made that we did not really give a lot of consideration to.

CHAIR—I still have not come to a conclusion—I am not sure about my colleagues—about which system is best. Most states are doing different things. The direction you say that South Australia is starting to go in with these special curriculum courses is similar to what is happening in New South Wales. I think they offer about eight of those curriculum framework courses.

Mr Billows—For the record, SSABSA is the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia.

Ms Megaw—Even with the training in hospitality, it is directed that we have to have a chef or somebody with five years industry experience to deliver it. We have colleagues from Sydney. Home economics teachers are allowed to teach certificate I there. Here we are not. That is probably one area. If we could get the training, we could do some of that with some industry experience rather than having a chef come in to teach them all the time. It makes it more applicable to other schools who cannot afford to have a chef come in. Most of the stuff in the course I have been doing for 20 years. I have made a white sauce for 20 years, so I do not need a chef to come in and tell me how to do a white sauce and things like that. So home economics teachers do have some skills. In some states, they are allowed to teach but in others they are not. So having some uniformity about that would be really good and would make it easier and more accessible.

We can teach the core units. We go to Regency TAFE and do a week. We have to do updates. We have to show industry experience or that we have been here, there and everywhere so that we get updated. They are our skills. But that is all we are allowed to teach officially from that. That is the written work—the boring stuff, the kids tell you. But we do not make it quite as boring as TAFEs do. So especially at certificate I, it gives the students the opportunity to find out whether they really want to go to TAFE or not and whether they want to be a chef. That is part of the role here. Some of the students say, ‘It is nice to have some skills, but no’ and they have not wasted their money going to TAFE and finding out three weeks down the track that, ‘No, this isn’t for me.’

Mr SAWFORD—Technical training in South Australia prior to the Karmel report tended to be probably the strongest in Australia. The old technical schools still had a university pathway for children. In fact, all those mathematics and physics and chemistry prizes in the late 1960s were won by kids who came from technical schools, not the academic high schools. In terms of Willunga, in the background we were given, it says there was a change of direction in the 1990s, when student numbers fell. Students dropped off and there was a lack of interest in courses and so on. So there must have been a change. Were you here when that change occurred?

Mr Billows—I was not. Some of these people were.

Mr SAWFORD—Who caused the change? Who changed direction?

Mr Grant—What year was that?

Mr SAWFORD—It says here in the background on Willunga High that in the 1990s student numbers were falling because of a lack of interest in courses on offer and Willunga knew it had to offer programs which had greater relevance to students.

Mr Murray—None of the administrative team are here any more. I do not think there is anyone.

Mr Grant—I have been here for six years. We have had a change in principal and deputy principal. We have had the RTO for about nine years.

Mr Murray—The viticulture and the other ones came in in about 1998 or 1999 when we first got here. We won the national award in 2000, so we got RTO status just prior to that. They were introduced in the mid-1990s.

Mr SAWFORD—So this repeats almost a national pattern of where we go around Australia. Basically since the abandonment of technical training in terms of the formal technical schools there seems to have been a flat-lining in vocational education of almost 20 years, or two decades. In 1993, particularly in New South Wales, here and in Western Australia, individual schools, maybe individual principals, tried to resurrect VET training in a very positive sort of way. Now obviously you have done that.

Ms Megaw—With us, the practical subjects were expensive. So they started thinking, ‘No, we’re not going to have home economics or tech studies in schools because it is too expensive to run.’ But then it came about that that is where the kids get the skills from to actually get out into

industry to work. If we do not have that, these kids are not all going to go to university. It went about that the kids still wanted to do home economics et cetera. I think that has come about. They do not train home economics teachers any more. It is becoming more difficult to have home economics in schools because we are all getting too old. We are all retiring and there are not any young ones coming through to teach home economics. So there are some schools that are not having that. That is about the year when they stopped training home economics teachers.

Tech studies teachers are the same. They do not train them. That was all around that era where it was all too expensive and they were not going to have it. They were not going to train teachers because there would not be any jobs. In reality, they still needed to have the technical side of schools.

Mr SAWFORD—We were in Perth yesterday. The department there was actually recognising that they would have to fund VET programs at the rate of 1.25 per cent. Oddly enough, that was the rate in South Australia prior to 1973. There seems to be a bit of a repetition in history. How many students in this school have access to accredited VET? What is the percentage? Paul, you said 28 per cent were going to uni. I gathered it was around 70 per cent. Can you put that on the record? Is that the situation here?

Mr Billows—I would have to double check, but in terms of the number of senior school students—

Mr SAWFORD—Years 11 and 12?

Mr Billows—in years 11 and 12 who participate in some VET, I would say it would be around the 50 per cent mark in some VET. That would drop off a bit again in year 12.

Mr SAWFORD—What is the core business in this school? How would you describe it? What is your core business?

Mr Billows—I think the core business is teaching and learning for years 8 to 13. But underlying that is providing as many opportunities and pathways and skills and experiences as possible to give our kids the best shot at their life post school. VET serves that in offering a range of experiences. In my view, I do not care if the kids do not go on in that industry. I do not think that is the big focus. Some of them do, and that is great. That is a benefit from it. But unlike a lot of the more academic pathways, it does provide a whole range of skills that a lot of those academic kids miss out on—I am sure the universities see it too—in terms of organisation, working with others, taking on responsibilities in relation to punctuality and other things that relate to job readiness. You would have seen it in the students you spoke with this morning. I think it gives them a dimension that a lot of students that follow a purely academic stream miss out on and maybe pick up later on. But I see it here.

I was in Whyalla in a senior secondary school heavily immersed in VET through the late 1990s. I saw it there as well. A lot of those students taking on the VET left school equipped with a whole range of skills that served them well in the following years. I saw a lot of other students who pursued academic pathways who did not have those sorts of skills who floundered to some degree after secondary school.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You gave a very, very good answer about what your core business is. Is that culture shared in this school or is there a tension? I think Graham made an interesting point. What are we about? Is it to make kids job ready? That is a problem if that is what education is about. Is there a tension in the school about vocational education versus traditional mainstream stuff, or is it just a culture that says that all opportunity is equal here?

Mr Murray—Is that amongst staff or students or both?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Staff, yes.

Mr Murray—I would not have thought so amongst the staff at all. But certainly the students are a little confused at times about where VET fits in and what it can offer them. For example, I taught year 11 work studies last semester. That is preparing kids for the workplace with resumes and work experience. The students had great difficulty, most of them, doing the more academic stuff, such as writing resumes or job applications or doing some theory work into industrial relations or occupational health and safety. But when they went to work experience, they got glowing reports from the places where they did work experience.

I remember when I was at school I did it under the Wyndham scheme in New South Wales. You went to year 10 or the equivalent in South Australia. Students who were going off to do their apprenticeships went off to do their four-year apprenticeships. They did it on the job, hands-on, and they were really good in that area because they were struggling at school with the school stuff. The only ones who went on to senior school were those who were looking to do university or some sort of higher learning in that area.

The trouble is we have those students and we are now expecting most of them to go to and finish year 12 to get into some of the TAFE courses because the TAFE courses are more competitive. While they might say they will accept year 10 or year 11 competence, there are so many there that they can pick and choose. We have a bunch of kids at school who are struggling in terms of the mainstream academic area but are great in the workplace when you get them in the job. You see them in their part-time jobs or you see them when you go and see the work experience and the reports they get. They are glowing. We have to try to resolve that. That is where I think VET can provide them with a pathway. Personally, I do not think—we are not the only school—that has yet convinced the kids that it is an area they can go to at the moment. They do not see VET as something that will help them in terms of their skills in the work environment when they get out there. Many of them still see it as a schools subject.

Mr Grant—We are offering VET options to year 10 students. We are starting the pathways earlier and we are offering it to all students, not just students at risk. So we are trying to open it up to all students.

Mrs MAY—What about bringing in parents? Graham has just touched on educating the kids that this is another pathway. What about the parents? We have found during the inquiry that sometimes the parents are not happy with that pathway. They want to see little Johnny go to university. Is there an education process as far as the parents are concerned?

Mr Grant—We had a parent information evening in term 1. We invited the parents in. We had a presentation for them on that night and an education process about VET. We are trying to build

up the numbers and get more community involvement in that way and get more parent involvement.

Mr Murray—That is on show. We had 300-plus come to our open night. So certainly the parents are aware of that when they send the kids to the school.

Mr SAWFORD—After three or four months on an education inquiry you get a sense of where you are going. Speaking for most of us, we are just starting to get a direction. There is so much contradictory information. The point that Graham made about the rationale of VET in schools not being as well known or understood I think is valid. It is also true that there is some confusion in terms of trying to link them to coherent strategies happening in schools. Sometimes the outcomes are confused.

Mr Grant—This year we have regular VET coordinator meetings with the district. There are a number of high schools involved in those meetings. We share resources and we review our strategies. We get all the up-to-date information about VET from that. We run training and development sessions. We try to help each other in that way. For example, we have a student here in certificate I auto working at Seaford. I found out about that opportunity through these meetings. We liaise with each other in the district. We are trying to coordinate a strategy.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think there is a confused rationale about VET in schools?

Mr Billows—I think there is. But from my perspective I think it does serve the national training framework in terms of the agendas there. I think there have been some good spin-offs there in terms of value added training for kids, giving them a taste in different industry areas that they might not otherwise have considered. A lot of them we see move off in those areas and get a head start. I think that is a good thing. A lot of those areas are targeted areas. We spoke about construction and other areas that will be giving kids opportunities to participate in them. There are strong needs in those areas, so we liaise with industry training boards and so on. I am sure in terms of a national agenda that is all good. In terms of my view of it, I think it contributes to a broader general education.

Going back to my points earlier, it is something else we can offer the kids that develops lifelong learning type skills and gives them a taste of very relevant education. They see the relevance in it. As I said, I do not care if they do not proceed in that industry area or they do something completely different. I know, whatever they go off with, they have picked up some really good things from us. Some of those offerings, because of the quality of them, have fringe benefits in terms of part-time work and other things. It also improves student retention. We would lose a lot of the kids that we currently have if we did not have those offerings. I think it serves the national agenda in terms of raising the skills in vocational training across Australia.

The growth of VET has been phenomenal. I am sure it has contributed towards that. It has also contributed towards a better quality general education for kids. A lot of students, apart from the ones you saw today, dabbling in VET have no idea really what they want to do post school. They just see it as interesting and want to give it a go. Through our counselling services, we liaise with parents and encourage kids. Even if they do not know what it is, we will fill them in, and maybe they want to give that a go. Even if they do not have a particular interest in that area, they will pick up some valuable skills that will help them in other areas. We encourage that diversification

in terms of curriculum. I think it just complements other good things we are doing and serves to improve a really good quality general education for all of our kids.

Mr Grant—From these regular meetings, the VET coordinators see the traineeships and apprenticeships as really valuable for the students. We would like to expand further the school based apprenticeships in schools.

CHAIR—What barriers do you see standing in your way of expanding traineeships and apprenticeships, or does the system work fairly well?

Mr Grant—The system is working okay at the moment. We have really only just started in that area. We have a number of private agencies that help us place these students. So if we get students here at the school that are saying they are not quite happy at school and they would like to get out into the work force, we can set them up for meetings with these agencies, who come into the school. We have a careers coordinator. She liaises with the agencies. The students go through an interview process. They can work there and still come to school.

CHAIR—Are those agencies group training companies?

Mr Billows—They are, yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Traditionally, technical education in this country over the last 100 years has tended to oscillate between meeting the needs of industry and employability skills. It has gone from one to the other. Paul, you have given a more inclusive view in terms of saying that all of those things perhaps can be achieved rather than choosing one. That is almost the beginning of a new renaissance in VET in this country, which we are picking up around the country. One thing that seems to be a constraint to all of that is that if you looked at the last federal budget—I am not trying to make a partisan point here—you find there was no additional money for TAFE. In all the state budgets, and it is true of Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, there is no extra money. Yet in that context some of those states have grown VET in schools from very low percentages of around eight per cent to over 40 per cent. They have done that within their existing funding mechanisms or by transferring funding here and there. You want to grow.

You mentioned you want to add media studies next year. You are of the same viewpoint; you want to grow it as well. How is that going to happen if the funding is simply not put there? Does this mean that the existing funding has not been used as well as it should have been? As Louise said, people involved in VET are middle aged, and that is being kind. Many of them are much older. Who is going to replace them? We have this growth theme and a funding question. Would anyone like to comment on that?

Mr McLean—In IT, there is a lot that can be done without funding. That might not be politically a very good thing for us to say from our point of view. However, there are a lot of resources that we already have. For example, in the certificate II in multimedia that we plan to set up next year, we have had multimedia courses running at years, 9, 10, 11 and 12 for a number of years, so we have a significant amount of hardware and software to resource that at the moment. So we can get that going virtually without any extra funding.

I might give you an example from my previous school, if that is all right. This is my first year here. At Henley High School, we had some VET units embedded in the IT offerings that we had been making for students we already had in place and found that we were doing some of the things that the VET courses asked for anyway. So we negotiated an agreement with TAFE to get accreditation for certain units within our existing structures and with our existing resources. That probably helps to explain a couple of things in terms of the confusion that there may be as to how VET is implemented. There are all sorts of different ways in which it can be implemented in different sites and by different organisations. That can perhaps explain why there could well be significant growth without funding. We can do a lot with what we already have.

Mr Murray—I think the biggest problem—it may be more our problem because we are an RTO—is not so much about the delivery of the courses in the schools in terms of resources. For example, my business course does not need a heap of resources to do it. Where it comes in is having the time to get out and see the students in the workplace and do their assessment within the workplace because you still have your normal teaching load. We seem to have the requirements of the VET framework and the structure and the demands for meeting audit requirements and ensuring that it is work oriented et cetera. The school is also hamstrung with a staffing requirement that comes from a totally different headset. If I want to go out, for example, as I did in the last week of last term, to check on a couple of students in the workplace and spend the day looking at them and seeing what they are doing, if you cannot do it in a five-minute visit, they have to cover my classes to do that. That is where it can become expensive, as is the training of teachers to be assessors.

Mr SAWFORD—How much release time do you get?

Mr Murray—The problem is not with the school. The school has to pay for someone to come and take over any classes.

Mr SAWFORD—How much normal release time do you get without trying to cater for that?

Mr Murray—I get 250 minutes a week. It is one line that I get off as a teacher to do whatever I do. That is to organise the workplace, to visit them and check their appropriate places and talk to them. One thing I have found with my course is the headset is very much still in the business that these kids are doing work experience. Work experience is to give the kids a flavour of what the work life is—the routine of getting up at a certain hour and being there and spending eight hours or whatever in the workplace. It is quite different for work placement. They have certain skills you want them to do. To avoid having the students dusting shelves or shuffling paper, you have to talk to the employers and spend time in the workplace and explain to them what is needed because they do not really understand VET particularly well and the requirements for units of competence and the criteria for assessment and stuff like that. So you have to go through that. You need time to do that and see the students to see what they are doing.

Mr SAWFORD—In your current circumstances, how much would you like?

Mr Murray—For the two I looked at this last term, I took the day to see two of them. They were at two primary schools very close by. It took basically the day to do that, so I had a free lesson plus I was covered for a couple of hours.

Mr SAWFORD—You doubled your 250 minutes to 500. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Murray—Yes, depending on the size of your classes. I have small classes. For some with bigger classes, it would be full time. If you are not going to do it, you have to hire qualified assessors to do that for you. That is another cost the school has to wear.

Mrs MAY—What sort of challenges do you face with staffing levels, professional development and having staff who can deliver these programs in the school?

Mr Billows—In the short term we are doing okay. It worries me a bit a few years down the track. With regard to what was said earlier, in the late 1990s there was significant funding of VET both federally and state-wide and there was not all that much VET happening at the time. If you translate it to an amount per hour, I think it was around the \$5 per student hour mark in the late 1990s. That has now gone down to 70c per student hour of VET. As was commented on, the funding has stayed constant but the number of students involved in VET has increased exponentially.

I think schools generally did well through the enterprise vocational education initiative in South Australia from late 1999 through to 2002. That saw significant funding go into schools in several areas to introduce new VET and to establish training skill centres—this skill centre we are sitting in was partly funded through that initiative—skilling teachers, workplace assessor training, industry liaison and links. There was a fair bit of funding floating around that we could access to establish things and get things going. After that initiative ended, there was an assumption that the VET that was put in place is now sustainable and that there would still be a level of funding but certainly it would not be increasing with the number of students now involved in VET.

We did well through the strategy in that we trained our teachers up. We built a skill centre. We invested in other facilities and arrangements. We did all that. We liaised with industry. Through the committee in our district, we had funding to put people like Grant out in industry to get some industry experience as a teacher. We had funding for workplace visits. There were all sorts of things going on that made getting VET established in schools something that was not all that difficult. The money was there.

What we are seeing now is that those things are established in our school. We are managing to sustain it just through normal budgetary type considerations in terms of curriculum. Some of the funds we used for purchasing arrangements during that time. Schools had money to purchase training through TAFEs, so kids could access that training free of charge and got that accreditation as well as their stage 1 or whatever. There was lots of that going on too. I know there have been arrangements with TAFE and so on that have made all that a bit more difficult and they have to charge standard rates and so on. They have their bottom line, so there is not as much of that going on because there is not that much money. What money there is now year by year is primarily used for teacher training and maybe to find a bit of extra release time for people like Graham to visit schools.

As a school, we try to support those activities as much as we can. Maybe in the next five years we will be able to sustain most of what we do. The crunch will come as new people come into the school, people retire and leave, and you have to start training people up again. There are

maintenance and facilities management aspects of purpose-built parts of the school that do not fall under our normal asset management plan. They fall under a different area of facilities management. If you are running VET, you must have quality assurance, so if things go wrong in the kitchen or the facility, you have to maintain that standard. Maybe five years down the track, without an increase in funding or some additional support, we could end up in some level of difficulty. But at this point in time I feel we have done enough groundwork to sustain what we have currently set up.

If we were a smaller school, it would be a lot more difficult. With respect to the size of this school, we have a bit of flexibility with curriculum, with release time for teachers, with some money for training. If we budget carefully, we can pretty much cover all of those things. If we had been half the size we are, a lot of those things would be a lot more difficult. We would probably find ourselves having to rationalise some of that a little bit and maybe just focus on a couple of areas rather than on the diverse range that we are able to cover here.

Ms Megaw—My area is probably one of the most expensive areas—on the practical side, of course. It is difficult. The students can go to TAFE and do the practical side there, but per student for TAFE, for the kitchen operations it is \$890 compared with our \$600. Our students cannot afford that. They pay \$170 and \$70 respectively. That is basically for uniforms and books. It relies on the school to help pay for the food. To make it go around, that is where the catering comes in. I tell Paul, ‘Okay. That was their lesson today. That is why you’ve got the sushi and the spring rolls, because that was the lesson.’ Then I just give Paul a bill. That helps to pay for that course. We try to sell the food to help cover the costs because it is an expensive course to do.

CHAIR—If TAFE did not charge you or charged you just the same amount that it would cost you to run the course yourself, would it be easier for the school to have the students do it at TAFE?

Ms Megaw—Yes, especially if they go to Onkaparinga. When it first came out, we had students going to TAFE for one day a week. It was only about \$80 or \$90 for 12 lessons or something. That was really good. But then all of a sudden TAFE budget cuts meant it shot up to that amount.

CHAIR—So a recommendation we could be making would be for TAFE to bring the cost down?

Ms Megaw—More manageable. That would make it a lot more accessible. Victor Harbour have said, ‘What can you do?’ But we have to pay a chef in order to teach that course. So that is another constraint that comes out of my budget, plus the food. So that is where schools manage because we want the experiences for the kids. We will work out how we do it. That is how it works.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Some students this morning were talking about how they found out about some of the choices they made in terms of the curriculum for their future careers. Do you think your negotiated curriculum plan program and your careers program are adequately resourced? Do you think—this is more broadly—there is a case to be made that those people who are involved in specific career education should have a specialised position and should have

specialised training? How do you go about that? Do you think specific English and maths teachers perhaps know enough about careers related to their fields to be able to support students in particular in choices about vocational education?

Mr Billows—That is an area I think we need to get a lot better at. I think schools generally need to get a lot better at it. It has also grown in complexity so much over the last decade that it is very difficult to come across one person who has an overview of all the opportunities and so on that are available for students. There is a new initiative now that is called the Futures Connect initiative, which you may have heard about, which is a state-wide initiative here. There is a lot of VET established in schools. There is all this stuff going on. With the Futures Connect strategy, there are district teams across South Australia that help implement it. They employed people to support schools in implementing it. But the whole flavour of the Futures Connect strategy is to improve exactly what you have just mentioned, which is to develop individual plans for students, to bring outside expertise into schools in relation to careers education and counselling services and to link job providers to schools. There are coordinators; we have two people external to the school, in a way—a guy called Keith Darwin and a lady called Linda Simons, that service the Fleurieu district. They are supporting schools in improving all of those services. It is one area that we do not do as well as we should.

We have some excellent counsellors. We have some people that put in tremendous work in working with kids to do the sorts of things you are talking about. But the reality is that it is not enough. There needs to be a more district-wide or larger scale type approach to that. That is starting to happen. I think over the next couple of years some really good things will come out of that. For example, as of next year, every single student from years 8 to 12 but realistically next year from years 10 to 12 will have individual career plans and transition portfolios that they will develop in consultation with both school staff and out-of-school personnel that really explores one to one the career directions of students and informs them and their family in terms of the range of options available to them. At the moment, we really do not have the resources to do things to that depth. But there are structures in place to support that happening now.

Mr SAWFORD—We have run out of time. If there were an option in South Australia to create about 1,000 student places in years 11 and 12 for senior technical training in secondary school, what would be your quick response?

Mr Trueman—Great.

Ms Megaw—Great.

Mr Grant—Good.

Mr Billows—I am sceptical.

Mr Murray—Excellent.

Mr McLean—Not sure.

Mr SAWFORD—So that is four enthusiastic yeas, one sceptical and one not sure.

CHAIR—Too small a sample.

Mr SAWFORD—But a very intelligent sample.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. There are a lot of issues I would still like to pursue, as I am sure my colleagues would, but we are out of time. That has been very helpful. Thank you for that. Thank you again for your hospitality today.

Proceedings suspended from 12.04 p.m. to 2.53 p.m.

NADEBAUM, Mr Kym, ICT Consultant, Technology School of the Future

O'CONNOR, Mr Stephen, ICT Consultant, Technology School of the Future

TRAVERS, Mr John, Manager, Technology School of the Future

**TREADWELL, Mr Ross, Assistant Director, School and Preschool Technologies,
Department of Education and Children's Services**

CHAIR—Welcome to this public hearing of the inquiry into vocational education in schools. Thanks to Mr John Travers, manager of the Technology School of the Future, and his staff for hosting our visit this afternoon and for their time and input and what they will share with us over the next little while. John or Ross, would you like to make some introductory comments about the school, particularly focusing on our inquiry into vocational education and training?

Mr Treadwell—I guess I am very interested in this. Certainly I would like to make some comments in terms of my role in school and preschool technologies. Prior to this role, I was the principal of Seaford 6-12 School, which was responsible for involvement in cluster of schools which established the Southern Vocational College. I see ICT, information and communication technology, having significant links in terms of the world of VET because of the way that ICT is permeating through all walks of life at the moment.

In terms of our position regarding ICT, the three issues that we deal with are the same issues that are being dealt with in the national area—the notion of people and professional development, and that is certainly a big issue in terms of the world of VET; infrastructure and how we actually provide infrastructure, which is a big issue in terms of the world of VET as well. In particular, in terms of ICT, we are always looking at resources for schools, such as computers et cetera. The big issue at the moment is bandwidth, which is a national issue. There is then content. Certainly in the world of ICT the learning federation materials and the money going into the online content there will have a significant impact in schools. EdNA, or Education.au, and the materials that are being developed there in terms of content with the VET component of that—the online materials, the assessment materials et cetera and the job and course explorer materials et cetera—are very valuable. But the content that teachers utilise is significant.

South Australia has in the past under the previous government developed materials for all students to have access to a certificate I TAFE certificate in IT. There was a request that all students up to year 10 have that certificate. That has been put into place, and schools have the ability to provide that. The cost associated with gaining that accreditation is the issue at the moment. So there is an ability for students to have that level of accreditation. However, the cost of providing that is an issue. There are a whole range of programs in South Australia at the moment that students can have access to in the world of IT. There are Cisco accredited courses and Microsoft accredited Novell certificate III and certificate IV courses et cetera. There is a wealth of those but it is very much dependent upon the opportunity.

Let us look at the way that the Southern Vocational College, which was a cluster of schools, has operated and is wishing to go. The big issue for schools is being able to release students to attend courses so that teachers are able to release students to participate in a TAFE course. That would not mean the students would not have to catch up on their English or maths or whatever. There were costs associated with the release of those students. There were duty of care issues associated with releasing those students. There were issues associated with each of the schools taking responsibility in terms of tourism, hospitality, viticulture et cetera. It was about working through which particular focus a school was going to have and being able to actively manage students to be able to participate in those courses. That meant that the school day may have been extended. That then impacted on students and whether or not they could participate in netball or football training and so forth.

It is about having students being able to participate in a broad range of courses and then accrediting them accordingly between the SACE and so forth. That is the direction in which we have to go. It is the way that we actually provide that opportunity. We obviously move into the lifelong learning notion and broaden that from just students and then have other members of our community involved and so forth. So we have the beginnings of that happening, but the system and the costs associated with delivering these things are issues for all schools, as I am sure you are aware.

Mr Travers—I want to talk more specifically about the Technology School of the Future. The aspects of VET training that relate most closely to what we do or our level of expertise is in multimedia and in IT qualifications. We have a role which we are performing at the moment of supporting teacher development by way of courses. We run formal courses in animation, movie making and the like and some IT courses directly. We also engage in research, so we are investigating new software, new applications and new resources, which we promote and publicise to teachers. We run student programs which indirectly have an impact on teacher development. By engaging students in innovative and successful learning using IT, the teachers are obviously involved in that. So we are also verifying what works and showcasing it.

My colleagues will talk in a bit more detail about those aspects I have just talked about. We have been looking at the possibility of establishing ourselves as an RTO. We have not done that yet because of the very large workloads involved in getting it done. We are a relatively entrepreneurial organisation. We can do projects like this. We want to seek funding to enable us to establish ourselves as an RTO initially in multimedia and then extending that to IT and to then provide a very valuable resource for schools because they have great difficulty getting RTO support or accreditation in areas such as multimedia. We have the advantage of having the expertise and also being very much part of the school world, so we believe we could do a good job in that regard.

The other aspect of what we do that I think has potential long-term benefits is to develop early learning that has work potential. Students are engaged now in making videos from middle primary years. We have had a successful film director or producer here who has been supporting one of our student initiatives saying very forcefully that it is too late to wait until students are 16 or 17 for them to discover that they have an interest in film making. He wants to capture the enthusiasm and the passion of students at a much younger age so that those students can then, with some experience in the field, take it up as formal study in their senior secondary years. So we are interested in promoting that in relation to video.

Robotics is an area which is moving right down in the school. ICT is an extremely powerful tool to enable students to do more and more sophisticated learning in a practical, hands-on fashion, younger and younger. I will ask my colleague Steve O'Connor to talk a bit more about the specifics of the sort of support we do and can deliver in areas in which he is an expert.

Mr O'Connor—I will briefly talk about two areas that I showed you. They cover, within those areas, a wide range of things. In animation, for example, we have established an animation academy, which is for senior secondary students to access. Basically, students elect to be part of it and are accepted into the academy. They attend out-of-hours programs and work with industry mentors, so the link we have with those mentors is really important. We support them by providing a venue and by heavily sponsoring the actual activities.

So we provide the actual mentor and they charge the student. We support teachers in the sense that teachers can attend. They can become involved with the actual program. They can interact with the mentor and be involved with what the student is doing. So it is very valuable for those teachers to be able to take back that experience to schools. Quite a few of those schools have actually got students involved in some sort of VET accredited course. Those students can use those activities to support their learning on their VET courses back at school. So we offer that as an extra.

In the past, we have also had various different programs. I alluded earlier to the TACTIC project, which was set up through EVE and the South Australian Film Corporation, where we had industry links. So we had industry mentors and real projects for students to become engaged in while learning and exploring the application, I suppose, of their new media area. The comments we have had back from parents and teachers have been quite amazing in the sense that students now have seen where maybe their future career could be. A lot of those students have gone into maybe further education into certain areas. It could be a TAFE course or university.

At the lower end we offer—it is not necessarily any less important—courses for the junior curriculum as well to get students engaged in things such as robotics and engineering and animation at early primary level. We offer a whole range of things to different year levels. While the junior primary is not directly connected to VET, it certainly engages and exposes those kids to potential things which they may then pick up as a future career pathway. I might pass over to Kym.

Mr Nadebaum—Part of it is that we are a unique facility because there are not many education based facilities where their core business is teaching and learning within our government systems that have direct links to industry and direct links to universities. We can tie the three together really nicely and package it up really nicely. I think it is really important that we look at those pathways and those relationships and try to pursue them in more innovative ways. What we are trying to do is give kids opportunities to move into a whole range of vocational areas and higher education. Generally, when we are contacted by schools, it is to support their vocational education programs but also to offer advice and to bring new possibilities to the table to look at how kids can extend what they are doing within a curriculum sense and a vocational education sense in their school community or environment. It is about what new things they can bring to the table and new possibilities they can offer and whether they can put these kids in contact with these industry mentors or with these university students, who

again become mentors, or with lecturers or professors from unis or filmmakers, or whoever it may be. I think that uniqueness that we possess is very powerful.

I am looking at the area that I showed you just recently. We have what is called an iMovie Challenge, which is a video challenge. That is where 60 or 70 kids from around the state apply. They come along and are given a topic. They have to storyboard, shoot and edit a two-minute video in two days. This is judged by a range of industry people and education people. We have a celebration at the end where the movies are profiled and kids talk about them and we hand out a couple of prizes et cetera. So that is just one example of how kids can become involved in one area of media. There are many others. We have a video academy a bit similar to what Steve was talking about with the animation academy where senior secondary kids come in and use the equipment. They use our expertise. They work with industry mentors. They get a greater sense of what is available in the film and television industry and the movie making industry and make some decisions about their learning and how it might apply to them. We have notions of things like a junior film school that we might like to set up here, where, as John was saying, we have kids from a younger age come along and look at what it takes to be more involved in that whole area and how they might move forward towards a career path. So, as I said earlier, there are lots and lots of possibilities.

CHAIR—Thank you. You are certainly doing some fascinating things. It would seem to me that with the level of sophistication and the technology and the cost of it increasing movement in that direction more and more schools are going to have to be accessing centres such as this for much of their VET courses rather than providing them themselves. I guess it comes back to some of the issues you raised, Ross.

Mr Treadwell—The cost of it, whether or not they are actually going to utilise the equipment all the time and the information. One of the big issues for schools is basically maintaining the teacher expertise and maintaining the teacher accreditation. Teachers are moving. So is the school. You would put your hand in your pocket and you would train the person up. At the end of the year, all of a sudden they have gone and you have got to do it again. You can only afford to do that so many times. Then what you would choose to do would be to focus on this area and spend your money in one area and be well known for that area. So it is about branding the school. But we also cannot just stay in that area because it is about maximising students' access to a broad-ranging curriculum. So I would want to have a brand for my school which gives me the chance to maintain expertise and continue to develop expertise both within and without but then utilise the expertise from surrounding clusters of schools and utilising technology within the local community. Also, why shouldn't I gain expertise from people both in the state, outside the state or overseas—using video conferencing and some technology to bring that to my students? We are starting to see that happen. Then we would use some of the expertise in here to be able to provide a range of programs to suit a diverse number of students. I think you are right; we have to have facilities like this that support the expertise within the school but also support schools to actually brand and have a particular focus on a particular area.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I seek a clarification. Is the Southern Vocational College a virtual school?

Mr Treadwell—The Southern Vocational College is made up of a number of secondary schools in the southern area. It is a clustering arrangement. There is a facility. It is based at

Christies Beach High school, which is, if you like, the office of the Southern Vocational College. There are a number of staff down there. They coordinate with the schools involved to either deliver or generate programs and/or, if you like, negotiate for a range of programs that are offered across the cluster.

Mr SAWFORD—Both VET and general education?

Mr Treadwell—VET. The schools negotiated that the VET programs would be offered on, say, Tuesdays and Thursdays from two o'clock through. The programs were acknowledged. As I said before, the big issue in schools, if you have a range of VET programs, is how you actually deliver continuing programs and how you prevent students from being disadvantaged because they are coming out on Mondays. The schools said, 'We'll organise our VET programs to be delivered at these times.' The students then had a broad range of VET offerings that were then offered. The students made the selections. The organisations were then managed through the Southern Vocational College. In my school I would be saying, 'I am going to run these programs on Tuesday afternoons.' Some of my students would attend those programs. Some of my students would go off via a bus or public transport to go into the other schools. I would then bring kids from the other schools into mine. There were costs associated with that.

We were saying, 'I've got 20 of my students going out but there are 30 students coming in. There are extra costs to me in terms of my teaching time.' That was actually managed through the Southern Vocational College. So the aim of it was to take that clustering and that coordination and manage it through a central area. It was to have the memorandum of understanding, if you like, that was generated through all the participating schools, to add value to what the students were actually participating in and trying to do it in a managed capacity rather than having kids disappearing and trying to pay for lots of things.

Mr SAWFORD—How many students are involved?

Mr Treadwell—I think there were eight schools involved. The average enrolments in each of the schools was about 800 students per school, so there were quite a large number of students involved.

Mr SAWFORD—On Monday and Tuesday we were in Western Australia at Mandurah, which is about 80 kilometres out of Perth. It recently set up what they call a senior secondary college, but its core business is VET. It still allows tertiary entrance. Well over 70 per cent of the kids have access to accredited VET. So that is their core business. They are a modern technological high school; that is what they are. Is there a place for that here in South Australia at the year 11 and 12 level? That is a cluster system. We saw examples in Western Australia of it working among smaller schools, often in the Catholic and independent system, where they could not do it themselves and had to get together. So I am not dismissing the value of a cluster system. The Mandurah thing was very appealing to me. About 1,000 kids have the flexibility. They have the number of people to go all in different directions. They grew the VET from eight per cent to 76 per cent in three years. So there was massive growth. Is that possible in South Australia?

Mr Treadwell—I guess many people hark back to Goodwood Technical High School. It was a school which basically provided a range of programs in schools. People certainly reflect back on

the technical high schools of the past. Is there a place for that? I think education has moved on. But is there a place for targeted programs? It comes back to the branding that I mentioned before. I think there is a place for branding.

CHAIR—With the facilities you have here, do non-government schools have access to this as well? Do you charge them a fee for that?

Mr Travers—Yes. We charge the same for our standard costs but for the consultancies. We do not do consultancies in the non-government sector. We charge them slightly more for some resources. But, in short, yes, we are open to that.

CHAIR—And for standard courses, you charge them the same as government schools?

Mr Travers—Yes.

CHAIR—I want to return to a more fundamental question. On the whole issue of accreditation for VET courses, could you elaborate for us, please, on the VET qualifications and the SACE qualifications that students gain from doing what you offer here?

Mr Travers—Our only direct role in VET qualification is by supporting teacher training.

CHAIR—So you do not provide any accredited courses at all?

Mr Travers—No. And we may never do so. But there could be an opportunity like the one just talked about.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You may be an RTO?

Mr Travers—Yes. But that is the bigger demand we can see. We do not have real students. The RTO opportunity is what I think the schools would like who have the students to address the issue that Ross just mentioned about teacher qualification. There is a huge barrier. It is also about getting access for the higher certificates to industry experience. One of the opportunities we are looking into is the community TV station that has just been licensed in Adelaide. There is the potential, if we were to gain RTO status, or even without that, to work in close cooperation with that community TV station and arrange for senior students to work on real television on a low-cost basis. I think that sort of collectivisation which Rod was just referring to, with the big centre as in Western Australia—that is what that brings.

Mr SAWFORD—There was a bit of a South Australian trend in the 1950s and 1960s of really raising the bar and letting people work towards the bar. Here we are 30 years after Karmel and there has been 20 years of flat-lining going nowhere. All of a sudden there is now a renaissance in VET around the nation. The associated funding has not come there. There has been some fundamental rethinking of previous concepts that were almost a bit of a no-no. You mentioned one—early specialisation—which is what my next question is about. Would you like to expand a bit on that? That is really again the old Karmel stuff. That is a fundamental rethink of a basic principle that some people are not prepared to actually come out in public and say, but you just said it.

Mr Travers—Well, I was not necessarily saying specialisation.

Mr SAWFORD—You were. You said early specialisation.

Mr Travers—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—From a formal electives point of view.

Mr Travers—You have given me a good idea. What I was saying—I will expand on that and incorporate that notion—is that there could be early specialisation in a school like movie making. We take it as routine that everybody in year 5 specialises in writing and spelling and so on. So the context in which I was using it was to say that we think video making is an oddity as a specialisation. I guess it is a specialisation to that extent. But to take that further, I would see some attractiveness in students or schools, just branding the issue again, putting it into focus.

Schools cannot do everything. They are killing themselves trying to spread themselves into every area. There are some schools that do focus on or specialise in, if you like, video. We can think, for example, of Grange Primary School and Glenunga High. They develop an expertise and put resources into it. They can produce students with much higher levels of skill. While focusing on video, they are really achieving for the most part outcomes under the heading of English, like communication expression and also society and environment and everything else—so specialisation in technology, maybe, or in a skill. But a major feature of IT is that it tends to force you into integration. If you have a lot of skill in making video, it is absurd to only focus that within, say, the genre of English. It lends itself to saying, ‘If you’ve got these skills and abilities, well, why not use it in relation to science to communicate? Why not use it in relation to social studies issues?’ The integration of subjects is a major outcome or by-product of the good use of ICT.

Mrs MAY—You have touched on the idea of the RTO. It was one of the things I wanted to ask about. Have you decided whether or not to go down that path and become an RTO?

Mr Travers—We had a great deal of enthusiasm at the beginning of this year about the notion. We heard from SSABSA, the secondary assessment board, that they are very keen to develop us or similar bodies into RTOs because there is a gap. But when we looked at the difficulty and the complexity and the details required, we were quite confident we had the expertise to achieve the status but there was a great deal of very detailed, specific work in preparing courses and satisfying the accrediting agency that we could do the job. So we put it on hold but we are now planning to pursue some funding to enable us to do that. I think we did not have the staff resources previously. If we can achieve funding to assist us through the set-up stage, we would then be able to make it break even. We would charge fees for schools for the RTO status and therefore make it pay for itself. So it is the set-up that we need support in.

Mrs MAY—The professional development of teachers is another issue that has come up constantly through the inquiry. The professional development you offer here, is it on a regular basis, course basis, sporadically throughout the year, during holidays? How has that worked for the teachers themselves?

Mr O'Connor—We offer courses here in a whole range of things. We have current teachers who are out there, good practitioners, who come and run courses. So we put on a lot of different presenters to run courses for teachers. As well as that, we do consultancies in schools, where we might have a school come in here. They might, similar to what you did today, look at a whole range of different areas. We might talk about the learning and the curriculum and how we can support them. They will actually come back to us with a plan. For example, they might want to do some video, iMovie and have support there. If the school is metropolitan or country, we can still go to that particular school and run in-house training for them on their site as to what they want. It might be done with students as well.

For example, last term I would have spent about five days at Port Broughton, where they were looking at robotics. Another colleague, Jim Edson, looked at claymation and audio as well. So that is one example of going to their site and involving their teachers. It is a very heavily subsidised program for state schools. They actually mould the consultancy into what they want. That is the most important thing for them. They can choose what they want and how they use the hours. It is very flexible and very heavily subsidised.

Mr Nadebaum—I think that ownership of their own training and development and professional learning is really important. In the early part of the consultancy, certainly what we focus on is their needs. We look at the sorts of equipment they have and the sorts of learning programs and tailor a program around that school community. We then have them drive the professional learning.

Mr Travers—So courses that we run on 3D animation will be held periodically. We do not know whether the people doing the course are doing it because they are going to teach VET or whether they are using it for some other course or program. It is not a systematic, structured VET support range of courses generally. Rather they are of a general nature, and the teachers are doing the course for a variety of reasons and for a variety of levels of teaching.

Mr Nadebaum—We certainly focus on integration and good teaching and learning around the use of ICT. That is our main focus. On the other side of the ledger, we do run pure skilling sessions, where people will come in and just learn how to use a piece of software. So there is that aspect.

Mrs MAY—One to the other?

Mr Nadebaum—Yes, from one to the other.

Mrs MAY—I am interested in your animation academy. To me, an academy, I suppose, is like a school where we go and learn to be animators, but that is not quite what your animation academy is, I suspect. I will broaden why I am interested in that. We have a fledgling film industry on the Gold Coast. We have been doing quite well. *Scooby Doo* has been filmed there. We have had a few things. We have the big Warner Bros film studios. Animators themselves are one part of the industry. They cannot get people. They are really looking to upskill. In fact, the federal minister is coming on Friday to my electorate to look at our film industry and where the gaps are. Animators are one of the big gaps, apparently, in the film industry.

Mr O'Connor—Basically, the aim of the animation academy is to give students an opportunity to come and explore that area. We try and involve industry as much as possible in our presentations. We have various different industry people. Quite often there are pockets of excellence in Adelaide which you do not expect to pop up. They will come along and speak to the students. The actual mentors that we have will often form a relationship with students in their group, where students will be emailing or corresponding with that mentor outside the academy as well to get extra tuition and help and advice. So as you said, it is a very complex area. We have students who come along. Some may just want to explore the software whereas others come along with that whole creative bent of being good animators. What it takes to be a good animator is a very interesting thing to explore.

Mrs MAY—Once they have been exposed here, do you keep track of them or have you had any feedback on whether they follow pathways in that area?

Mr O'Connor—In the animation area, we have run a couple of programs. The first program was run in conjunction with the South Australian School of Art, the City West campus. We ran a program where we had university students working with secondary students to create an animation that was funded through the Independent Arts Foundation in Adelaide. That was quite successful. I think about three of those students have gone on to TAFE. They were considering going on to TAFE then. A few of the students go on and do other things at university. For example, they might go on and do maths and then become involved in the animation industry after that. So we have not formally kept any tabs on who is going where, but I do get a feeling through informal contacts that there is a percentage that go on to that area.

Mr Treadwell—Quite a notable person actually came along last year as a speaker for one of the academies. Didier Elzinga, from memory, actually spoke at the gathering. He said he was a student 10 years ago in one of the audiences here. He got excited about animation. Now he actually owns a company operating from Adelaide with offices in Sydney and in Hollywood. He does all the animations on many of the big budget films. You only had to look around at the kids in the audience to see their eyes were lighting up. I think that was tremendous.

But your point about professional development is absolutely crucial. There are sporadic professional development programs. There are targeted programs. Getting teachers to commit to targeted programs, be it through the School of the Future and/or through the university, is the issue. With the baby boomers, I suppose, nearing retirement age, we are certainly well aware of the issues associated with a real loss of people. We are already experiencing that loss in a whole range of areas, such as maths, science, technology and electronics. They are crucial areas at the moment that are very, very hard to fill and it is getting harder and harder. A number of schools are starting to look at having students involved in TAFE courses because they are unable to get teachers to deliver some of those programs. I think that gets even harder when you start looking at trying to actually deliver VET accredited courses.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—A couple of things struck me. I was going to ask you whether you have an outreach program. You do, by the sound of it. I just wondered if you had a mobile shopfront. You strike me as a group that is highly exciting. The other thing is exactly that: there would be so many kids out there who have had the experience here who frankly would be so much in advance of those that are supervising them that you would almost need that generational change to occur to get them involved as well and come back and whatever else. More specifically, how

do you choose your iMovie participants? You said you had criteria. Are they all the whiz-bang kids? What criteria do you apply?

Mr Nadebaum—No. It is a short written piece. They apply and say why they would like to do it. We are certainly well aware of particular country schools and disadvantaged schools. We break it down on a percentage basis and say, ‘We need to be looking at 30 per cent disadvantaged schools, 20 per cent country schools.’

Mr Travers—It is on a school basis, not an individual basis.

Mr Nadebaum—And we give them an opportunity to participate. Once again, it comes down to their written application in which they say, ‘We’d like to do this because we are creative kids and have got good stories to tell and we are thinking about these sorts of things.’

Mr Travers—And they come as a team.

Mr Nadebaum—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You have just raised the issue again. How do we resource our schools in the future with staff to encourage and nurture people in electronics and multimedia, maths, science and whatever else? Places like this are absolutely magnificent, but not all kids are going to have access to this, nor staff. It strikes me that unless they can go into specialisation somewhere, it is going to be even more difficult.

Mr Treadwell—One thing we have not mentioned is our engineering pathways schools. There are a number of schools that actually are involved in delivering a range of engineering programs. Those schools were selected. The programs were developed in conjunction with the Engineering Employers Association and our senior secondary assessment board. Teachers were trained in conjunction with engineering employers and SSABSA in delivering a range of those programs. Schools were targeted, and now there are a number of schools that actually deliver them. Part of it is that the schools have to ensure that the expertise is developed. They make sure that there is ongoing dialogue at the school level. Teachers would apply to go into those schools. There are resources coming through. It is developed like that.

John mentioned before that we have a number of specialist or focused schools. A lot of them are related to sport. We actually have volleyball, basketball and cricket. We have a number of music schools. We actually do not have accredited, if you like, VET schools similar to what you mentioned before in terms of the technical high schools. One way to do it is to actually look at schools picking up that mantle and resourcing that mantle both within their own school resources and with any additional funds and then supporting those schools in terms of having teachers that have developed through it. So it is a focus for the school. It is really important that the schools maintain that focus through supporting their teachers. Teachers with those skills and that expertise tend to gravitate towards those schools anyway.

Mr Travers—In taking up your question about how we resource schools, my first thought was generously to do this. I think this place costs the department something like three-quarters of a million dollars a year to run. My very, very crude estimate of what government schools in South Australia spend on ICT or development, together with the department, is something like

\$50 million. They are very rough figures. It would seem to me a very reasonable thing to do to spend the amount of money that is required for this facility. A very large proportion of that \$50 million goes towards infrastructure and equipment.

Everybody knows that the staff development requirements should be something like 20 to 30 per cent of your expenditure in IT. I suspect it is nowhere near that. We are very conscious all the time in the programs we run here that knowing how to use the software and the hardware is a good start. It is useless without an understanding of how to use new or different software or the best of the old-fashioned methodologies with the new tools. So professional development should be a major priority.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have any links with teacher training rather than PD?

Mr Travers—Yes. We have had a regular program over a few years with the University of South Australia, where students come here for a couple of days and receive intensive input from us on the use of IT. But my understanding is that the universities have a major problem achieving their goals with ICT because they need staff who are familiar with teaching the new technologies. They would have very few. The technologies we are talking about have only become available in schools over the last five years. Most of what we are talking about today did not exist five years ago. So obviously most university staff would not have been in a teaching role that recently.

There are all the pressures to learn everything else in teacher training. There is the other complexity that to use the new technologies effectively, you need to be using relatively open and exploratory and investigative styles of learning. You are certainly not sitting behind a desk looking at a blackboard. So beginning teachers would find it pretty difficult to move directly into that style of teaching. It requires a degree of confidence and courage in teaching to use those more open approaches.

Mr SAWFORD—What about links with TAFE?

Mr Travers—We do not have strong links with TAFE.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think you should?

Mr Travers—If we are interested in RTO status and we want to get into that field, yes.

CHAIR—TAFE teachers do not show a great deal of interest in wanting to access what you offer here?

Mr Travers—We have very few TAFE people come here that I am aware of. They would certainly be eligible to come to programs here. That is an obvious area. I will go back a bit. If we achieve the RTO status, one of the things we would do is work closely with one or more TAFE colleges. Croydon near here has expertise in multimedia and other areas we are interested in. I guess we should move in the direction of offering more formalised support in the VET area. As a result of that, that would bring a closer relationship with TAFE.

Mrs MAY—John, we know you are a teacher. Kym, do you have teaching or industry backgrounds?

Mr Nadebaum—No, teaching.

Mrs MAY—So how have you maintained your skills, or have you upskilled yourselves to the level required here? You have done it yourselves?

Mr Nadebaum—Yes, collectively as a group. Individually we have. We have a pretty strong team that relies heavily on each other and sharing expertise and ideas.

Mr SAWFORD—If you were making recommendations to the federal government and you were given just one, what would you say?

Mr Treadwell—In terms of VET in schools? I would be saying specialisation.

CHAIR—Of schools?

Mr Treadwell—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—I am actually very pleased to hear that.

Mr Treadwell—I think schools have a tremendous job in utilising the resources they have. It is very, very hard to have a one size fits all approach. I think that schools need to be able to specialise to be able to deliver programs utilising their expertise. I also think they need to be able to provide a broad-ranging curriculum. Utilising a range of resources and technologies provides that opportunity.

Mr SAWFORD—If we put it in a form.

CHAIR—That is all right.

Mr SAWFORD—I just wanted to get Ross's words. The Karmel mantra was general education with some VET. You are not saying that. You are probably accepting general education with some VET. You are accepting vocational education. You are accepting a more diverse view. Is that how I read what you are saying?

Mr Treadwell—My reading of vocational education is that it gives kids a terrific opportunity. That kid that we saw, the kids that fall out of school—

Mr SAWFORD—David.

Mr Treadwell—David. They get picked up in VET because they actually see a real opportunity. They have been institutionalised in schools. Schools tend to knock some things out of kids. It knocks some of their initiative and enterprise. Teachers just do not have the time in terms of actually working with kids.

Mr SAWFORD—Would you put that view in writing?

Mr Treadwell—No.

Mr SAWFORD—What about John? What would be your recommendation?

Mr Travers—I would agree with Ross. I come from predominantly in recent years a primary background. I am a relative newcomer to the world of VET. It strikes me as an incredibly complex, difficult task secondary schools have. To me, the specialisation notion makes a lot of sense. I guess my bid would be to put support in for starting early. As I was saying, the movie producer person earlier was decrying the fact that some of the really talented people who would be great animators or workers in the film industry, for example, often will potentially be good at that but channel themselves, or their parents channel them, into a straight, traditional university course. If they knew what was out there, if they had experience earlier in their schooling, they would be more inclined to do a hybrid program where they could do both.

Mr SAWFORD—Stephen?

Mr O'Connor—I think for teachers to be able to set challenging tasks for students. It is really important to engage students. Behind that lies very much the importance of teacher training and teacher resources. We constantly see students, particularly in secondary school, basically bored because they are not challenged. I think that is very, very important.

Mr SAWFORD—Kym?

Mr Nadebaum—Moving on from what Steve said, I think it is important that we support structures in place for teachers and students and we have access to mentors and to equipment and expertise where the kids can be challenged and can bring their creativity to the forefront.

Mr SAWFORD—You have a great basis for a Technology School of the Future with 1,000 kids.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. I am afraid our time is up. It has been a fascinating afternoon. Good luck for the future with the School of the Future.

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 3.41 p.m.