COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Vocational education in schools

THURSDAY, 7 AUGUST 2003

ADELAIDE

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

INTERNET

The Proof and Official Hansard transcripts of Senate committee hearings, some House of Representatives committee hearings and some joint committee hearings are available on the Internet. Some House of Representatives committees and some joint committees make available only Official Hansard transcripts.

The Internet address is: **http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard**

To search the parliamentary database, go to: **http://search.aph.gov.au**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Thursday, 7 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.

WITNESSES

Committee met at 8.59 a.m.

BOUNDY, Mrs Marlene, State Program Manager, Futures Connect Strategy, Department of Education and Children's Services

HYDE, Ms Susan, District Superintendent, Central South West, Department of Education and Children's Services

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into vocational education in schools. I need to remind you that the proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. Thank you for your very detailed submission. I invite you to make some introductory comments, reasonably briefly if you could, given that we have a fairly detailed submission from you. We can then proceed to questions.

Ms Hyde—We have got a few things prepared. We are quite happy if you interrupt us so that we have a discussion. Rather than present the findings, which you already have, we want to take this opportunity to tell you about some new developments that have occurred since then. As an introduction, when we did the consultation, we naturally consulted with the government departments but we also went to other statutory bodies like SSABSA, the board of studies. You would probably know it. We talked to the industry training boards, employers and some of the unions. We found, in all, general support for vocational education in the schools. Support is seen by the huge uptake by our students in the last five years, by schools, by teachers and by business and industry in the way that they have supported students in work placements, work experience and all of the other things that they do to assist.

When we drilled down into people's views, we did find that some issues were contested. As to the purpose of vocational education in schools, there is still a bit of contestation out there in the community. We found a number of concerns and issues raised such as whether school teacher training was sufficient, whether they had enough industry experience and whether what the young people learned in industry was appropriate and effective and associated with their vocational education and training course. We found different perceptions of the outcomes. I say 'perceptions' because we found that people had a lot of opinions but did not really have much data to back it up. So that was very interesting. I mention this because I still think we have a way to go.

Certainly the Commonwealth has made a great effort over the last 10 years in particular, but there are still ways they can support schools in this state and young people, particularly in the communication between the stakeholders, to keep talking about what the purpose of this change is, particularly in promoting the partnerships between business and industry. We have done a lot of work in that area. I think that more work could be done in that area. The idea is that vocational education is for all students, not just for some students who want to go into a certain industry pathway. It is to take the broad view of vocational education in preparing all young people for their work lives rather than just the vocational education and training view that it is just for going into a certain trade or a certain industry or a certain employment.

We feel that in South Australia with the South Australian curriculum standards and accountability framework—it is a mouthful—or what we call the SACSA framework, enterprise

and vocational learning is embedded in that curriculum and across it. It gives young people the opportunity to undertake vocational learning or vocational education. I believe you have already been to Willunga High School. You can see VET in particular, and the vocational education and training courses. This afternoon at Salisbury High school, which is the lighthouse school for enterprise skills, you will see a different version. It is more embedded; all the young people are doing quite intense enterprise and vocational learning incorporated with their studies. So we think that is quite important.

When it comes to VET, we believe that South Australia has controlled the standards of VET at the state level. We think that is really important. As I said, there are still some issues that we have to work through, particularly in consistency between courses and outcomes and sustainability. That is a really big issue for our schools. I am sure you have heard that right across the country. Since this government has been in office and since we have actually prepared this, the South Australian government has introduced a number of initiatives. They have raised the school leaving age. That happened at the beginning of this year. That was a costly—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—To 17?

Ms Hyde—No, to 16. We had it at 15. It was a costly thing in itself. They have got a focus on improving attendance. They have actually put more resources into improving the attendance of those young people who are right at the cusp of leaving school, the 14-, 15- and 16-year-olds, where a number of our young people start to fall out. The student mentoring project is an initiative reaching over 800 students using 83 teacher mentors across 45 schools. That project has just started. That is also there to support young people who are in transition and at risk of leaving. Marlene will talk more to you about Futures Connect, which really is the wider, broader strategy for secondary schools to improve the services to students in schools and for students in transition. It grows the partnerships and consolidates VET and explores ways to make that sustainable.

The overall focus is to improve retention and for young people to stay at school to the end of year 12. This government is very, very clear about that. It is their aim in all of these new strategies. I would like Marlene to talk to you more about Futures Connect, unless you want to ask some questions about what I have just said.

CHAIR—Marlene can make some comments.

Mrs Boundy—I will make some brief comments following on from the submission, where we focused on enterprise and vocational learning and vocational education and training for those students in senior secondary school. We have taken on board the agenda of *Stepping Forward* and the key priorities of MCEETYA, where young people just have not been engaged in learning. They just do not want to be at school. How do we prepare them along this great process of life? The Futures Connect strategy is more about a personalised approach to learning. It is focusing on young people at each year level and teachers getting closer to each person within the classroom. The aim is that each person in the next couple of years at school from year 8 will develop an individual learning plan. That is worked through with the teachers in the classrooms so that the teachers actually have a better understanding of what these young people want to do, their goals and their aspirations.

So by the time the young person gets to maybe year 10 and 11, they are thinking, 'What do I really want to do with my life? Do I want to be a diesel mechanic? Do I want to be a nurse? Do I want to be a veterinarian?' Whatever that path may be, it is identified in the plan. Along each year of the learning process at school, we hope that the student actually sees the connection and sees the links in the learning that is actually taking place within the classroom. We get to year 10 or 11 and we might want to be a diesel mechanic. What are some of the subjects? What are the key curriculum areas? Do we need maths, English and conflict resolution? What are the skills we actually need? That has been identified in the plan. We hope that young people get a connection to be able to say, 'I'm doing this because.' Out of that, we hope that there is motivation. We hope that they come to school more often and they are really enjoying what they are doing. You would have seen that yesterday at Willunga, where young people have been remotivated. They are coming to school because they want to be there. So we hope that we are actually connecting from year 8 to year 9 right through to year 12. So it is more that personalised approach.

In this approach, they have the learning plan. Over the years they develop a transition plan, which is a portfolio that records the evidence of their successes, not only the report from school but the other activities that they are involved in. So there is a connection with their life in the community, at home and with the people they are living and working with.

When young people leave school, a lot of them do not know where they are going and how they are going to get there. So it is called an exit plan or an exit map. Maybe we need a graduation map or something. It needs to have a better name. But that actually connects the young person with further education goals. It actually enables the young person to ask the question, 'Well, how is this going to best represent me when I go and talk to other people? Who do I need to see about where I need to go? Maybe it is Centrelink. Maybe it is an institute of TAFE.' But that is identified in what we call an exit map. So the strategy also supports people sitting around the table at the local school level with those key stakeholders that are all involved in a young person's education and training and livelihood. Again, you would have seen that at Willunga. Willunga could not have done what it has done without involvement from the community.

Across the state we have developed 17 local community partnerships that bring together all those key people. So together we are trying to acknowledge the fact that education cannot do it by itself. The training sector cannot do it by itself. Together, we can actually ensure that young people do have a successful transition to the world beyond school. That is basically in a nutshell what Futures Connect is about. It links to the student mentoring program. It links to the initiative of the attendance counsellors. So everything is trying to bond this young person with the people within the school community.

CHAIR—Thank you, Marlene. That comment about schools and the training sector working together leads me to the first question. On page 22 of your submission, you talk about the growing number of schools opting to purchase training courses from other RTOs rather than trying to do it themselves. We have had some concerns as a committee—it has been put to us a number of times—that there is duplication between what schools are doing and what TAFE colleges and other providers are doing. It would seem sensible for schools to be able to access other courses where they are available rather than duplicating and going to the effort and expense of doing so. That view was put to us again at Willunga yesterday regarding the hospitality course there. The hospitality teacher said, 'Look, it would be a lot simpler for us if we

could use the hospitality courses at TAFE, but the cost is about three times what it costs us to provide the same course. Therefore, we do it ourselves. We pay to bring a chef in and so on.' Could you outline for us as you see it the benefits and the disadvantages of schools using TAFE and other RTOs more than providing those VET courses themselves? What obstacles are there, such as duty of care issues, transportation, logistics such as timetabling issues and so on? How do the state government and the Commonwealth government better facilitate greater interaction between the two? How might it be funded?

Mrs Boundy—I will start with the good things, the huge benefits involved in young people experiencing life at an Institute of TAFE or life at another registered training organisation. In South Australia, the South Australian government actually funds the public provider of training institutes of TAFE to provide a service to young people in senior secondary school, to provide the quality assurance and the opportunity for young people to experience VET in a school environment. The Institute of TAFE provides the quality assurance and ensures that the teachers are at the appropriate level of professional development and in accordance with the Australian quality training framework. That is a partnership that has been established within the South Australian government.

CHAIR—But students still need to purchase the courses?

Mrs Boundy—A lot of the training is done within a school environment under this model of a partnership arrangement. With these standards being raised with the Australian quality training framework, a lot of schools do not have the infrastructure within their tech studies rooms or their kitchen facilities or their equipment to provide that national standard of training. So it makes sense to go to an RTO that has complied with the AQTF, does have the infrastructure, does have the industry experience and does have the equipment to assist those young people in gaining the appropriate certification, be it certificate I or certificate II. Now Willunga is one very good example over the past few years that has done a lot of that entry level training at the school in partnership with Onkaparinga TAFE. As the students progressed to the more industry specific components of the training, they were then having to purchase that activity from the Institute of TAFE, which meant a bit of travel.

The benefits are that, when the young people go to an institute of TAFE, they experience, firstly, an adult learning environment. They experience training over a two- or three-hour period sometimes. Sometimes it is even up to 5½ hours. They go for a whole day. They experience commercial kitchens. They experience what it might be like to work as a diesel mechanic in the automotive engineering facilities perhaps at one of the institutes of TAFE. So they see it in an industry context. We have to remember that the training packages were designed to industry standards. In most cases, schools are now finding it difficult to meet those industry standards. So we need to move towards a stronger partnership with our RTOs to ensure that young people can see that progression into the training sector.

CHAIR—Is the government considering reducing the charges that apply to schools wanting to access those TAFE courses? Obviously, as I said, at Willunga that is one example. I suspect that example is repeated many times over around the state and indeed around the country, where schools are discouraged from accessing TAFE courses simply because of the cost and end up trying to do it themselves.

Mrs Boundy—That is right. TAFE are actually funded on a different model from schools. A fee structure has been set up specifically for young people in schools. There is a different code. To access a VET program, yes, there is a cost. But they are the costs that have been legislated by the government. They are just funded differently. I know this afternoon that you are meeting with two TAFE directors so that you will be able to drill down on how they are actually funded.

CHAIR—Isn't there an argument, though, to say that if the state does want to encourage greater take-up of VET and does want to overcome the problem of duplication, it ought to be legislating differently so those charges do not apply to schools wanting to access TAFE?

Mrs Boundy—That is a good question. At the moment, schools are actually funded to educate the student from reception to year 12. With this broadening experience of young people in senior secondary years, we are now encouraging schools to look at freeing up their resourcing in the senior years, in years 11 and 12, freeing up part of their budget allocation and looking at their timetabling, looking at their staffing and making a decision maybe two years ahead of time—very strategic planning—about whether they are going to offer certificate I in automotive engineering. If that is going to be part of their curriculum offering, how do they ensure that that is part of the timetabling and it is incorporated into what we call their global budget so that they can free some resources up that move over to the TAFE sector to pay for that training?

CHAIR—But isn't the purchase of those courses more expensive than the school—

Mrs Boundy—It would be.

CHAIR—The temptation within their global budget would be to continue to run maths, science and English classes because they are cheaper than buying VET courses from TAFE.

Ms Hyde—Let's say it is a challenge that has not been resolved. Schools in particular are looking at sustainability. In the end, with some of these courses it will be consolidated. For instance, with automotive engineering, it is really difficult for schools to have the resources to do that. Tourism and hospitality may be something different. There is the challenge of sharing resources. Maybe schools can deliver at the TAFE level using the resources of the TAFE colleges. There are a few examples of that sort of thing going on. In the end, young people might do a training course in tourism and hospitality and find out that that is what they do not want to do. They do not want to have to pay for something like that. That is the advantage of having certificates I and II in the schools.

CHAIR—Sure. Again, some sort of accommodation by the government in terms of legislation and funding would facilitate the process. I will ask another question on the same issue. What about the issue of duty of care? It was put to us yesterday, for instance, that there are difficulties for schools, where principals have a very detailed and onerous duty of care for their students, and understandably so. To let students leave the school to go to TAFE and so on in some ways can appear to compromise that.

Ms Hyde—Duty of care actually does decrease as a student gets older. The duty of care of a 16-year-old is different to the duty of care of a six-year-old. Naturally, there are supervision issues involved, but it is not like a 12-year-old or a six-year-old. It can be resolved.

CHAIR—It can be resolved. Are you aware of any issues where that duty of care may be compromised by school principals allowing their students to attend TAFE, or are you saying it can be accommodated and there is no real problem?

Mrs Boundy—In most cases it is accommodated. I am a member of a working party that is actually specifically addressing the issues of young people under the age of 16 now wanting to go to TAFE for one day a week. How do we change the guidelines to ensure that there is no risk to TAFE, no risk to the principal? At the moment, we are asking in most cases for a teacher to be present. We are finding that a lot of the school teachers that were in school that are now working in institutes of TAFE are registered teachers. So we are attempting to rework the duty of care guidelines. That should be completed most probably in the next couple of years. But the Institute of TAFE directors actually did raise it some time ago.

CHAIR—There are a lot of those questions I would like to ask. However, I will hand over to my colleagues.

Mr SAWFORD—I would like to ask some questions about the purpose of VET and to look at those recommendations you made. Before I do that, I congratulate the person who put the submission together. It forms a very good basis for discussion.

Mrs Boundy—Thank you.

Mr SAWFORD—The questions I am going to ask are going to take perhaps a contrary view to what has been said or ask for further explanation. It is one of the better submissions we have received in terms of focusing on the issues that need to be resolved. In terms of the purpose, later today we are going to meet with the Catholic Education Office and the National Centre for Vocational Research. They make the point that the purposes of VET in this nation and in the state are confused. That is a consistent message we have got all over Australia from various groups of people. You mention in your summary that you have a holistic approach. I have a whole series of questions. I do not want long answers. I want short answers. I am going to give you short questions. Departments are very good at giving long-winded answers and cutting down the questions. I am just warning you that I am going to cut you off if you go for too long. Is the holistic approach based on analysis or synthesis?

Ms Hyde—A holistic approach means seeing the student as a whole. You cannot actually separate educating them for their working life, their family life, their community life. That is what that means.

Mr SAWFORD—I will come back to that later. I think it is an admirable aim where you say you want to achieve a seamless approach and a coordinated approach to education, training and employment. Where in South Australia is there an example of that seamless approach?

Ms Hyde—I think that some of the secondary schools—this will also be further developed through Futures Connect—are trying to find ways to meet the needs of their students. When you go into years 11 and 12, you can choose across all the subjects. Some of them are going to be VET subjects. You might even have to go down to the TAFE for a day. Others will be in the school. That is what we mean by seamless.

Mr SAWFORD—Where are those examples?

Mrs Boundy—Willunga High School is a good example, where they do general education.

Mr SAWFORD—It is part of the way there.

Mrs Boundy—It is a goal. That is where we want to go.

Mr SAWFORD—So it is a goal rather than an achievement?

Mrs Boundy—There are a lot of schools where we are heading that way. Willunga is one example where you have young people on that pathway. In Salisbury you might see it in a different context around general education, enterprise and voc learning and some VET. But you actually have the student working and learning within a school environment along this great pathway.

Mr SAWFORD—Salisbury has had a long fight over a long period of time against the bureaucracy in this state about doing what they actually want to do. I understand what you are saying about Salisbury.

Mrs Boundy—That is the vision, Rod.

Mr SAWFORD—There seems to be a rediscovery of VET after an absence of 20 or 30 years in South Australia in terms of the 430 per cent growth. Why do you think it flat-lined for the previous 20 years?

Ms Hyde—This is a potted version of my theory of it. You are referring to when we had the technical high schools?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Ms Hyde—And when the state moved away from those into comprehensive education in the early 1970s. Until SACE came along, there were still some VET type courses. They were called registered subjects and so forth. The education system really went for a general education and rejected preparing young people for specific areas of work. That is why we moved out of the technical areas and had a general education. SACE was developed in the early 1990s. Again, it reinforced the idea of the general education to the end of year 12 before you start specific training for the workplace.

I would say that over the development of SACE we really did move towards the academic. VET came along with the training reform agenda. That was in the late 1980s, when people started really questioning whether young people were prepared for work. VET is a response to that. We have moved back to the idea of more industry based courses but within the general education that is delivered by a school. So in this state you can do your industry based courses, like your vocational education within SACE, the South Australian Certificate of Education.

Mr SAWFORD—Is that a way of saying we have gone around in circles?

Ms Hyde—In some ways, but I think it has been part of the whole training reform agenda that started in the late 1980s and reconceptualising education and training in Australia and driving that down into the schools. That has been quite important.

Mr SAWFORD—I want to concentrate on the recommendations you have made. The first is about the coordinated funding model. In an ideal world, I fully support that. I have to say from a Commonwealth point of view I would not support it unless I knew that the state actually got their act together in terms of having clear purposes, clear strategies and clear outcomes. So why would the Commonwealth respond positively to that when the states as yet cannot get a purpose even clearly defined? Do you see a problem there?

Mrs Boundy—Yes. We are working towards now this joined-up services approach and a joined-up model. I think we have all seen that we have gone off in our little silos. So the new approach is getting around the table and talking about it. I think that is what is significant with the Labor government initiatives that have come out since March last year. We are trying to bring people to that table and work more collaboratively and cooperatively. We know that there is a plethora of funds that comes from the Commonwealth. Susan and I have tripped over so many little buckets of funding that have been out there in schools. We are thinking, 'God, I wish we'd known about that because that could have supported the department.'

Mr SAWFORD—I acknowledge the problem. There is also the contrary problem in the sense of a lot of the Commonwealth funding going direct to schools to deliberately bypass the state government and the state bureaucracy because there is not a great deal of confidence in either in terms of fairly distributing the money. What is your reaction to that, irrespective of who is in power politically?

Ms Hyde—I think that can actually create a lot of confusion and duplication of resources. I have been a secondary school principal for 12 years. You can forage around and get it from here and there. If we had a map of all of the submissions you could put in, all the little buckets of money that address the transition of youth from school to their adult lives, all the different ways that those young people could be supported, then we would be thinking of the young people rather than whether the funds could be given out fairly and so on.

Mr SAWFORD—A lot of principals in schools today say they would rather deal directly with the Commonwealth than the state. What is your response to that?

Ms Hyde—I would say, 'What is your evidence?' Perhaps that is a perception.

Mr SAWFORD—Let's go to recommendation 2. The point about flexibility in recommendation 2, what do mean by that? Flexibility reflects a process. Shouldn't you be reflecting an idea or purpose?

Ms Hyde—Recommendation 2 is about measuring the participation. There is a committee of MCEETYA that is addressing this. The flexibility is about measuring all of the participation that young people have in their transition from school to work, not just at the end of school.

Mr SAWFORD—I am trying to get to the point of why the purposes are so confused. Shouldn't the concept of flexibility as a process be a different word, like 'diversity', which

reflects an idea? In other words, it gives a bit of evidence that the thinking is not quite logical. It is not quite there. I would have thought a recommendation would reflect ideas rather than process. That would be something you do about strategy.

Ms Hyde—I am happy to change it to 'diversity'.

Mr SAWFORD—It seems to contribute to this feeling that there is a wall in between the Commonwealth and the state. We do not want to see the wall there. We want to try to break that wall down.

Mrs Boundy—I think that wall has been breaking down now because MCEETYA are actually working on this. South Australia is the only state apparently that has part-time enrolments in year 12. When we go into the national figures, South Australia is looking—

Mr SAWFORD—Are most of them adult?

Mrs Boundy—No. They are young people that have chosen to do SACE over two years or three years. No other state does that. All we are asking for is that that flexibility that we seem to have in South Australia be recognised at the national level.

Mr SAWFORD—I am running out of time. In recommendation 3, you state that there ought to be a review of Commonwealth funding to support VET. I totally agree. But before the review has happened, you assume that there will be an increase in costs. How can you have a review and then predict what the result is going to be?

Ms Hyde—We are saying that we are finding VET more expensive to deliver. The schools—

Mr SAWFORD—But it always has been. That is not a new discovery. It was when the tech schools were around. It was a 25 per cent loading on technical schools against high schools.

Ms Hyde—The VET in schools is with ANTA MINCO funds. We received that money to begin with. We understand that. But we know that finishes next year. We know that it is being reviewed now. But we are recommending that those funds continue.

Mrs Boundy—The additional costs are through the Australian quality training framework. There are much tighter requirements for everyone delivering VET to meet those standards. They were not as stringent with the AQF so there are additional costs that everyone involved in the delivery of VET are actually having to take on, be it schools or an RTO. That also incorporates those additional costs to comply with the AQTF.

Mr SAWFORD—I think you missed the point of what I am saying. Recommendation 4 is about teacher training. Where are we going to get our tech studies teachers of the future?

Ms Hyde—That is a Commonwealth issue.

Mr SAWFORD—Where are we going to get them?

Mrs Boundy—We hope we have young people in schools that actually have a passion for those trade skills. We hope that they are encouraged to do maths and science and the general education curriculum. We hope that that passion continues through into years 11 and 12 and that they do some relevant skills training. Maybe they are interested in becoming a teacher and following through.

Mr SAWFORD—In the past we did it very well here in South Australia. In fact, talking to those VET teachers at Willunga yesterday—I am sure the same thing will apply at Salisbury if we meet them—I found they are all in their 50s. There is a lot of altruism in terms of the energy level that they put into what they are doing. They are passionate about it. But the reality is that in five years time most of those people are not going to be there.

Ms Hyde—You may not know, but we are very concerned because we do not think that there is a tech studies course in teacher training.

Mr SAWFORD—I think you are absolutely right, Susan.

Ms Hyde—We have a teacher shortage already in tech studies. Out in the country we have a number of high schools that have not been able to put technical studies teachers into their courses. It is going to get worse. The universities are not training them.

Mr SAWFORD—The last question concerns recommendation 5.

Ms Hyde—Maths and science is the same.

Mrs Boundy—That is right.

Mr SAWFORD—We have a national problem there.

Mrs Boundy—And English teachers.

Mr SAWFORD—You mentioned qualitative and quantitative outcomes, which is quite appropriate. How do you clarify those qualitative and quantitative outcomes—I go back to the original question—without clear purposes? How can you do that?

Ms Hyde—I understand that the purpose of vocational education in schools is contested. We could say that about the purposes of many things in particular in education. I am not sure whether we are talking about vocational education or VET when you say that the purposes are confused.

Mr SAWFORD—If you go back over the last 100 years in technical training—call it what you like; I think it is the same thing—it has oscillated from meeting the needs of industry to having almost a liberal education. I would have thought a modern vocational education would include all those things. It would meet employability skills, it would meet some of the needs of industry and it would also have some aspects of a liberal education. I would have thought that would be fairly easy. That is what has happened for 100 years. When you read the submissions that come forward to us, they go for one or the other. I have never seen one that says all three—never. After eight months of this, I am amazed that no-one has come up with that.

Ms Hyde—That is not how we view it here. Vocational education is just part of the whole education that a young person gets. It is a part of it.

Mr SAWFORD—My colleagues are going to kill me for saying this, but this is the Karmel mantra from 30 years ago, which I thought we got rid of.

Mrs Boundy—The industry skills specific training that you are referring to we refer to as VET, the vocational education and training.

Mr SAWFORD—I understood when you say VET and training that it means the same thing.

Mrs Boundy—It is VET.

Mrs MAY—The program of Futures Connect that you have developed, has it developed through necessity in seeing how VET has grown so quickly? Your submission talks about a 430 per cent increase, which is an enormous increase. There are a few things I would like to know about with respect to your government or the government of the day, as far as funding is concerned. Has the funding kept pace with that increase?

Looking at Futures Connect there is a huge emphasis put on the teachers being involved in this pathway. A number of teachers we have spoken to around the country feel like they are drowning anyway. A lot of them have been asked to take on and deliver courses and they have had to do professional development. Through Futures Connect you are asking them to do a bit more again. What resources are you giving them to enable them to take those new pathways with those students? One of the biggest issues we have found is having teacher relief for professional development, even going to visit kids in workplaces and keeping up to date with what they are doing in the workplace. I gather from most schools, and even from Willunga yesterday, that their budgets are stretched to breaking point. Both state and federal governments have responsibility as far as funding goes. Where do you see your responsibility? How has that responsibility grown? What are you doing about it to keep pace with that growth in VET?

Mrs Boundy—The Futures Connect strategy is basically a four-year strategy with $4½ million recurrent funding each year.

Mrs MAY—How is that $4½ million distributed?

Mrs Boundy—That is disseminated through the state with a small state team into what I referred to earlier as the 17 clusters. Schools can access the funding through the cluster of schools that they belong to. There is money set aside for program funding which takes into account professional development opportunities.

Mrs MAY—Is that over and above the $4½ million?

Mrs Boundy—No.

Mrs MAY—That is not a very big bucket.

Mrs Boundy—It is not a big bucket of funding. Out of that $4½ million comes a number of salaries. There are 30 officers that are located across the field. They are also funded out of that $4½ million.

Mrs MAY—There are 30 officers funded out of $4½ million?

Mrs Boundy—They will support schools and school leaders in implementing the strategy at the local level.

Mrs MAY—Does that mean doing relief teaching?

Mrs Boundy—No. There is no relief teaching. The TRT and the backfill actually comes from the school's global budget within their resources.

Mrs MAY—Have those global budgets grown over the years with the growth of VET in schools at—your figure—430 per cent? How much has it grown?

Mrs Boundy—The global budget does not take into account VET in schools. The VET in schools funding is an additional allocation of funds that comes via the Commonwealth through ANTA. There is also additional funding that comes to the state through what we know as the Enterprise Career Education Foundation. That equates to about $990,000. The ANTA VET in schools funding to the state government schools is approximately $1.12 million. Now the state does not actually add another several million dollars to support that. The funding actually goes to the schools for the delivery of purchased training and for professional development to ensure that if a teacher wanted to do automotive engineering, they have the appropriate industry skills. They might have to spend two or three days or whatever in industry revamping their skills. So the state does not provide additional funding to schools for the delivery of vocational education and training.

Mrs MAY—But they are expected to deliver it?

Mrs Boundy—They are encouraged to provide a broader learning experience for their students.

Mrs MAY—As part of the Futures Connect program, you talk about career advice and that connection with communities and industry. We have also heard during the inquiry that careers advice in schools can fall very short. Most career advisers we have talked to have a teaching load as well as giving careers advice. Some schools also have a VET coordinator. So they are trying to work hand in hand. But it would appear through the inquiry we have certainly identified a huge need for a careers adviser, particularly in a large high school, where those students need ongoing career advice. That would be looking at even doing resumes, like a block of time with students over a period of time to undertake career education with someone, delivering that on site without having that teaching load and a student having to make an appointment and maybe wait a few weeks. We are talking about pathways into workplaces. Those careers advisers themselves feel that they do not have the time to deliver it and maybe do not even have the resources or the up-to-date skills or knowledge of the industries that are there. Could you comment on that?

Ms Hyde—South Australian schools do not actually have careers advisers as you speak of them. We have student counsellors. Some of them give career advice.

Mrs MAY—What would you see as the difference?

Ms Hyde—I know in New South Wales, for instance, they used to have a thing called career advice. In South Australian schools, the career advisory service would be more of a team effort. For a start, you would learn about careers generally in what is called year 10 society and environment. It is actually a course. As far as I know, all students would do it. Some students would do that in year 9. So they learn about the world of work broadly and how to write resumes and so on.

Not all but most schools would have someone to whom they would go to help them prepare resumes, if that is what they want. Schools also get their JPP provider. That is quite common in our schools that run those services in those schools as partnerships. Career advisory services need to be a whole school activity, from running the career expos for the year 9 and 10 students to subject teachers talking about this subject leading to that career. It cannot be left to one person. I wish we had the opportunity to show you some frameworks that schools have developed to ensure that there is a coordinated service for their students. However, you can lead young people to the water, as you know. Quite often, career advice really needs to be just in time. That just-in-time career advice is what Futures Connect is aiming to improve in schools.

Mrs MAY—We certainly heard from students that they felt they would have benefited from having career advice over a period of time rather than letting it wait until year 11 or year 12 or even year 10 when they are trying to decide on subjects or where their futures are going to be. They also indicated to us that it was a matter of having pathways open to them, being informed about opportunities out there. I just feel within the schools, and certainly from talking to students and teachers, that it is not an overall or far-reaching advisory capacity that these people are working in. You talk about counsellors and advisers. You are talking about two different people. It would seem both could be required in a school plus your VET coordinator. But all these people have extremely heavy loads. I think the students we have spoken to believe there is room for improvement as far as disseminating that information and giving them the pathways are concerned.

Mrs Boundy—Can I invite you back in two years when Futures Connect has been up and running for a couple of years? That is the vision. Futures Connect is about a senior school strategy. We are actually working with schools in primary schools and working with principals to look at opportunities for students to be involved in community activities. Hence, the duty of care paper that needs to be written where people go out. It will be a whole of school approach. It will not start in year 11. We hope students are informed from a much earlier age. But Futures Connect was launched on 28 April this year. It is still early days. That is what we are trying to address—exactly what you have raised, Margaret, through your interviews with students.

Mrs MAY—With Futures Connect, you say that each student will have this pathway. You have transitions and a learning plan and exit map. School staff are going to have to work with these people. I return to my original question: it is another imposition on teachers with no extra resources, no extra relief. How will they deliver that service?

Mrs Boundy—We hope that they are to be in contact with a lot more people that are involved with young people. The Institute of TAFE is a perfect example where we hope that there is a stronger partnership not just in VET in Schools but in those other services that institutes offer around career advice, student counsellors coming into TAFE for a day and getting a taste of TAFE. There are also the other key agencies and the youth workers and the Job Network providers, the NACs, everyone that has a role in helping a young person along that path. Schools will be working much closer with those people at the local level. We hope it does not all rest with the teacher but the teacher knows where they have to go to get that support for their students. There will be support from the 30 officers that are being located in the field. They will hopefully open some of those doors for schools. That is the vision; that is the plan.

Mrs MAY—It would be interesting to see where it leads to.

Ms Hyde—It is like all change. It is making decisions about what is important at the time and changing your practice. It is not just adding on and adding up but actually doing things differently.

Mrs MAY—You wouldn't see 30 new officers with only $4½ million in the bucket another level and another add-on?

Ms Hyde—No. In fact, I would say 80 to 90 per cent of our young people do know where they are going. The hard end is where we really have to focus our attention. It would be interesting to get the statistics on it. A great majority of young people can progress through their high school, finish their year 12, go off and do their careers.

Mrs Boundy—Margaret, it is a really good point. We have to do things differently. It is not about schools doing the same old thing. Futures Connect is about changing the world and asking principals to look differently at their curriculum offerings. It is trying to work out if they work together as a collegiate of schools, how they can operate more efficiently and effectively but also provide every student with a pathway. It is going through troubled times. Change isn't easy.

Mrs MAY—I agree.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You are doing very well. I am the soft one. I seek a clarification. The $4½ million you talk about, is it $4½ million per year for four years? Is that correct?

Mrs Boundy—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is to get it going. I will talk to you in two years. An interesting example yesterday is that we met a guy called Matt, who really was in danger of leaving school. He loved furniture making. If there is a bit of wood, it is furniture when he is finished with it. At the end of the session yesterday we said, 'What would you really like to be doing?' He said, 'I'm doing furniture. I want to have my own business.' We went from a guy who wants to do furniture to running a business. When I spoke to his trades teacher afterwards, I said to him, 'Did you know he wants to run a business?' He said, 'No. I'm going to have to have a good talk to him about his subjects.' That is grade 11. I think that typifies the situation for a lot of kids; I do not think a lot know where they are going, frankly, if our children are any example as well.

Mrs Boundy—Imagine if they had that plan in year 8 and each year level teacher is talking to the next teacher and saying, 'Marlene wanted to do this. This is the pathway she wants.' We realise we do not have it right. We know there are huge mistakes. This is only one strategy that we hope in a few years time—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I personally totally support this. But the key to it all is that it has to be resourced properly. It is already moving the deckchairs around and putting pressure on teachers again to be involved in it, but it has to be resourced properly, be it by the Commonwealth or by the states, in partnership with industry and the community and so forth. It has to be resourced properly. Even something like considering time relief for people. It would be genuine relief in time to allow them to get their heads around a bit of this stuff and a bit of time with kids. That quality moment, as you mentioned, is crucial to it. I think parents have to be heavily involved in order to be educated. The other group that need educating—I am an ex-chalkie and I am certainly an example—is teachers. They need to be re-educated and retrained to look at the world as it is now and at its demands. Again, that requires effort and relief and time to do that.

You both raised the issue. You said you are very concerned that the university does not offer technical teacher training. We talked about careers and whether one person should have it. Careers and enterprise education are pretty crucial as well. What is the department doing in terms of saying, 'Hang on a minute. We've got these demands. They're growing exponentially. What on earth are we going to do about it or what will we as a department say we have to do about it?'

Ms Hyde—I do not know whether we can answer that in a great deal of detail. It is outside our brief here. I know there is regular communication between the department and the universities. The universities are independent organisations. They decide according to their projections and marketplaces and so on about what courses they will run.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—But you are a major client. They provide services. You are a major client, a major employer. In terms of the market, what are you demanding of them?

Ms Hyde—I would need to get someone from the department in here that knows the actual ins and outs. I do not know how they do that.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I am not putting words in your mouth. You did say you are concerned about that whole area. We would be surprised to know—

Ms Hyde—It is just one of them.

Mrs Boundy—The working party that has been established with representation from university, the department and other sectors could well be addressing these issues of broadening the initial teacher training to include not only VET in schools but enterprise skills and vocational learning. How do you teach a teacher the enterprise skills? Some people have that natural ability. How do you teach it? We want it taught. Most of us have been through the teacher training. It needs to be broadened.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I suppose the providers of that education—you have a demand—are not the university necessarily or indeed TAFE.

Ms Hyde—There are registration issues.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I agree. We can deal with all that.

Mrs Boundy—It is a very good point. We have discussions, but maybe they need to be strengthened.

Ms Hyde—It is a way that the Commonwealth can support the states, anyway, with this overall teacher shortage. We know that it is not so much general but specific. It certainly affects some aspects of vocational education and training—not all of it obviously.

CHAIR—One of the difficulties with adequately preparing teachers in their pre-service training is that teachers often do not know what they are going to end up teaching. It depends on the vagaries of the school timetable—where the gaps are and so on. So while you might say, 'We can prepare teachers to AQTF standards in technical subjects, hospitality and IT where there is an expectation or a likelihood they will end up teaching a VET course in school,' a lot of teachers end up, by a timetabling accident, teaching VET. That is a difficulty, I think.

Ms Hyde—Their coming out and knowing what competency based assessment is would be a help.

CHAIR—So some broad teaching.

Ms Hyde—Anything we say in education that we want with regard to teacher education has got a five-year lead-up. That goes for all predictions of what industry skills we need. In education it is a long time. It is 10 years, when you start thinking of young people. There is a 10-year lead-in to when you can actually get it. So the whole issue of responsiveness to what skills the industry needs and the education sector's ability to respond to that is a hard one.

Mrs Boundy—In the initial teacher training degree, the teachers actually go off and do a teacher placement. We would like to see the teachers going out and doing an industry placement, not just in industry but in the workplace. We do not want to see students leave school and think, 'Wow, I want to be a teacher.' They go to teachers college and they are then in a school. We are wanting to broaden students' experiences. We actually need our teachers to have had some experience in what we call the real world or the workplace.

CHAIR—Would you extend that also to a compulsory unit on careers education generally? That has been one of the recommendations put to us. A lot of teachers end up teaching on careers and they have not been prepared for it.

Mrs Boundy—That is right. If you were to talk to employers, they would say, 'What do teachers know about work?' So we actually need our teachers to experience what work is like. They are the things that I believe need to change.

Ms Hyde—I think being a school teacher is work in itself. That is one thing. It is not so much about the world of work. It is about how teachers need to be educated to meet the needs of young people. These days we know a lot more about that. It is not just about career education. It is

about how you do, for instance, individual learning plans and how you meet the needs of young people these days, which is very, very different from 30 years ago.

CHAIR—That is the pre-service teacher preparation. What about professional development? It has been put to us that there needs to be a lot more opportunity for teachers to take two, three or six months out of a classroom into industry, particularly those teaching VET courses. Someone has to fund that. The Victorian Chamber of Commerce model is working in some instances. They are funding 50 per cent and the education department is funding 50 per cent. Is the South Australian government considering anything like that to assist with the release of teachers into industry to gain that experience?

Mrs Boundy—I do not think I can answer that. I am not aware.

Ms Hyde—The previous strategy certainly had a big professional development component.

CHAIR—Can you see benefit in that?

Mrs Boundy—Absolutely.

Ms Hyde—There is benefit in that. This government's focus is on retaining students to year 12. They have put the resources into the Futures Connect strategy. That is to reach all young people so that all young people in schools have a better understanding of the world of work and a pathway through it.

CHAIR—I suppose it comes back to what Margaret was asking. If we are going to effectively cater for the needs of students, keeping them at year 12 is one thing but assisting teachers in teaching them and teaching them VET courses really is an essential part of that.

Mrs Boundy—You would have seen yesterday at Willunga the commitment made just in viticulture alone. A couple of years ago, the principal made the decision that the teacher needed to be in industry for something like six or eight weeks. That commitment actually came from the school. It was the global budget that actually funded that. The school had made that commitment. Yes, it is absolutely critical in the delivery of any type of education and training to our young people that our teachers are appropriately professionally developed.

Mr SAWFORD—Marlene, in terms of models and structures in which vocational training is delivered, we have seen a couple of very impressive ones in Australia. Both were set up for political reasons. One is in New South Wales, which is Bradfield senior secondary college, whose core business is vocational training. On Monday this week, we went to Mandurah, which is 80 kilometres from Perth, where they have set up the seamless institution. Their core business is TAFE. Over 70 per cent or 1,000 kids have access to accredited VET. But they can still do tertiary entrance in that. It is the reverse of the comprehensive high school where general academic education is the mainstream with some add-on VET. It is the reverse of that. There are 1,000 kids. About 800 to 1,000 seemed to be a number that is required to give the diversity and to allow the general education option pathway. I think when the numbers are smaller, clusters is a very valid strategy. I do not have a problem with that. I think we would all encourage that to continue. But even yesterday at Willunga, VET teachers wanted their place in the sun, too, just like everybody else. They do not have a place in the sun. When they are asked, 'Would you like

to work in an institution that has 1,000 kids and has VET as its core business?' they all jumped at it. They want that. Is South Australia giving any consideration to the Mandurah or Bradfield model of vocational training?

Mrs Boundy—They were. Plans were afoot for the Victor Harbour facility becoming a TAFE and a senior school campus. That is not progressing at this stage.

Mr SAWFORD—Is there a reason for that?

Mrs Boundy—I think it is resources.

Mr SAWFORD—It would be a great pity if you did not have a model like that.

Mrs Boundy—They were well down the track with the plans.

Mr SAWFORD—Is there a model being considered in the metropolitan area?

Mrs Boundy—Not along those lines, no. In a lot of cases, we have TAFE and school on the same side.

Mr SAWFORD—Maybe that is a recommendation we should be making.

Mrs Boundy—It is a good question. We have excellent partnerships where school students access TAFE but it is not that model that you have just described in Western Australia.

Mr SAWFORD—We have the TAFE directors coming in this afternoon. I do not want to pre-empt what they are going to say. I get anecdotal information that the casualisation of staff in TAFE in this state is becoming a huge problem. Nobody knows where they are going from one day to the next let alone one week to the next.

CHAIR—I will finish with one last question. One of the difficulties, it seems, across the country is the tension between students wanting to enter university and those wanting to do TAFE courses at school. One is the perception problem that there are two tiers of education. Practically, there is a problem for the aspiring uni students. If they do VET courses, it does hinder their TER score and their potential to get into the more demanded courses at university. I understand the South Australian education department is looking at developing a couple of courses that universities will accept for entrance.

Mrs Boundy—There are 13.

CHAIR—There are 13. Every state seems to be doing different things. New South Wales already has about eight curriculum framework courses. The Western Australian system is different and so on. It would seem to me that there needs to be a uniform national approach to this. Would the South Australian government be willing to sit down with other education departments and other governments through MCEETYA to work out a uniform approach across the states so that students have a way of still accessing university but also doing a VET in school course? Further, they would have an alternative pathway to university via TAFE if they go in that

direction. That is going to require each state giving up a degree of autonomy in where they are at the moment in order to fulfil that uniformity.

Mrs Boundy—Each state does it very well, but they are all different; you are right. That is generally speaking.

Ms Hyde—This is not just the state departments of education sitting down about this. Constructing the TER is a university business. In this state, all VET in senior secondary is accredited in the South Australian Certificate of Education. What counts as a TER score and how it gets scaled up, down and so on is a matter for the universities. Gradually you have got the universities to the table with regard to the TER. It is a national thing now. You can get a TER here and go to the ANU. That was not so some years ago. It is not just the state governments; it is the universities as well. Even though we will have 13—

Mrs Boundy—I think we are moving to 16.

Ms Hyde—There are 16 VET courses. When it gets to how much they count along with your mathematics, your physics, your VET certificate, my guess is that they will be scaled down considerably. This does create the different tiers. That is why we think it is very important that vocational education is seen as being for all students. I think that Victoria got a bit closer to it a few years ago but I think they wound it back a bit as well.

Mr SAWFORD—It is probably more true at the TAFE level than at the school level.

Ms Hyde—There is articulation between TAFE and universities.

CHAIR—Articulation of courses but not necessarily access.

Ms Hyde—You can take a pathway through TAFE into university in a number of courses in this state.

CHAIR—In a number of courses, but it is not universal. I think that is the problem.

Ms Hyde—No, it is not universal. But it is certainly a pathway.

Mrs Boundy—It is certainly a pathway that students can take.

Ms Hyde—After spending 10 years in the northern suburbs, it was the main way that young people got into university.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. There are a number of other questions we would like to have pursued but we have run out of time.

Mrs Boundy—Thanks very much for the opportunity.

CHAIR—Thank you again for the submission.

Mrs Boundy—Thanks for your feedback on the submission.

[10.11 a.m.]

FITZSIMONS, Mr Bernie, Senior Education Adviser, Catholic Education Office

O'BRIEN, Mrs Helen, Coordinator of Curriculum and Education Services, Catholic Education Office

CHAIR—Welcome to our inquiry. Thank you for joining us today. Thank you for your submission as well. I invite you to make some introductory comments about aspects of this inquiry that you consider relevant this morning, bearing in mind that we do have your submission as well. We will then proceed to questions.

Mr Fitzsimons—I will introduce my comments on the paper I have just given you, which is a further clarification of information provided in October 2002, by acknowledging that we have shifted to a broader definition of vocational education. Catholic Education SA applauds that. Most of our comments in the response have been directed specifically at VET in schools.

I refer you to the first term of reference, which is the range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, including teacher training and the impact on vocational education in other programs. I will lead you through some comments.

The data that is provided demonstrates the significant growth that this organisation has generated through the provision of ANTA funds. However, much of this growth must be attributed to schools significantly absorbing most of the cost of VET provision rather than any assumption that VET can be delivered at less than one ANTA dollar per curriculum hour. If this absorption is to be sustained, there needs to be a recognition that: Catholic schools attract relatively little state government support for VET; schools are currently targeting expenditure on other valuable aspects of learning to foster rather than sustain VET; pressure for broader subject offerings within a school impacts significantly on infrastructure costs; there is a significantly greater cost than for provision of general education, if certificate completion and advanced competencies are to be delivered and assessed in a credible manner.

In our earlier submission, there was mention of issues relating to both spread and depth. I will make a few points of clarification relating to the spread of VET programs. We state in this submission:

> Various forms of recognition of VET for tertiary entrance will challenge lasting school and community resistance to VET.
>
> Similarly, there needs to be acceptance that integration of Vocational Education into mainstream subjects could increase engagement, achievement and retention. This will facilitate spread and minimise the need for new VET subjects competing with existing subjects.
>
> A more consistent level of agreement across industries and with the education sector on the level of competence that can be achieved by a senior secondary student will make VET options more appealing to a wider student group.

Research to confirm outcomes from VET in Schools programs for all stakeholders that will facilitate further uptake by students. Besides accreditation, other understated outcomes include soft/employability skills, future enrolments with TAFE and other RTOs, plus improved tertiary retention through greater familiarity.

CHAIR—I will interrupt for a moment. Since you have given this to us in detail here, rather than reading through the whole lot, it might be better to use that time to focus on the two or three key points. We can then proceed to questioning since we have all this information here to read, anyway.

Mr Fitzsimons—If you would like to me to do that, we could perhaps jump to the three summary points on the final page and then enter into discussion. Would that be acceptable?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Fitzsimons—The three key summary points from the Catholic Education SA perspective are these:

Catholic Education supports the introduction of broader frameworks for Vocational Education and Transition of Youth (*Footprints to the Future*). However it notes that ongoing and credible delivery of VET is a crucial component of these strategies. Therefore ongoing funding and joined-up approaches will be necessary to achieve successful outcomes.

If Commonwealth strategies are to be aligned with those of the State, there needs to be assurance that this will be inclusive of Catholic schools.

There is a continuing gap between the cost of quality VET programs and general education. This cost cannot be fully absorbed by schools. The additional resource implications for schools to embrace changes in learning, address changing accountability requirements and the dynamic nature of training packages, identify further need for ongoing Commonwealth support.

CHAIR—Thank you for that and for your original submission. Helen, did you wish to make some introductory comments?

Mrs O'Brien—No. I am happy to go into discussion now.

CHAIR—I will ask my colleague Mr Sidebottom if he would like to lead off with questions.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Thank you for this additional material. Believe it or not, we did read it before you finished it. That is great. The way you have presented some of this is very succinct and really hits the nail on the head. I am interested in looking at your system and how you have gone about introducing vocational education and VET in your schools. You overheard some of the earlier discussion. How is your system dealing with the recruitment, training and sustaining of teachers to present your programs in the broader sense and more specifically in the VET training? What challenges lie ahead for you? How could the Commonwealth assist in that?

Mrs O'Brien—We have made a conscious decision as a sector to maintain what we call a consultancy service aimed at professional development for teachers across all of the curriculum areas. We have done that in the face of really shifting patterns across the nation at the moment.

We have always said it is a bit like buying a house. The thing to remember is location, location, location. How do you get good education? Well, it is PD, it is PD, it is PD.

We have maintained a very strong consultancy service right across all of the curriculum areas and including the work that Bernie does in this whole area. That is our major thrust. We are a small sector so we have to be careful—I guess all sectors have to be—about how we spend our educational dollar. But the smaller you are, the more you have to be prudent about that. We have tried to be very prudent in terms of delivering PD, recognising what is a system responsibility and then recognising what is a school responsibility. We have set up a professional development structure. Bernie operationalises that.

Mr Fitzsimons—For existing teachers, the VET coordinators from each school are linked on networks. They are brought together at least once a term. To get efficiency, we actually strive to have a common day with at least the non-government independent system, if not the state system. It is a frustration that there is a heck of a lot of inefficiency and people duplicating PD. Through the formation of the Post-compulsory Association here in South Australia, we have actually tried to extend that even further, recognising that there are other players such as designated contact people in TAFEs and Jobs Pathway providers all doing very, very similar work. We have tried to get an even more joined-up approach to the delivery of PD. For industry specific teachers, we have embarked on running focus days that introduce an industry perspective, the training package, SSABSA arrangements that can accommodate delivery in a school and then some showcasing of teachers that are already doing it. We get a fairly healthy attendance at them.

With respect to giving teachers the VET qualification, we have gone beyond just the delivery of the work certificate IV qualification. A lot of teachers were frustrated that it remained very theoretical and they saw no application. So we have embarked on a process of taking them with that knowledge, putting them in industry and exposing them to how delivery and assessment of competency based work occurs in at least three different work environments. The problem is resourcing it—the TRT for the teacher to come out of school and then funding a day such as that. The follow-on to that has been teacher and industry placements.

There is a half-day induction program followed by a five-day release of the teacher, requests that the school try and match that time and then a debriefing of those teachers after they have all completed their placements. So they are some of the major approaches we have taken.

I think in more recent times, now that we have the broader picture emerging through *Footprints to the Future* and the vocational education framework, we have been able to get the cart behind the horse and give VET a meaningful place for a lot of teachers. I think there was very much a perspective early on that it was labour market driven and so on. We can now present a picture of how this actually provides engagement and achievement for students and so contributes to more meaningful learning and retention. I think that area of PD has probably been very powerful in getting much more acceptance from whole school communities. The one that remains is training of incoming teachers. We continue to have conversations about how that might occur.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—How might that occur?

Mr Fitzsimons—I think some of those models that I have just described could happen down there in teacher training. But what they probably need to revert back to is effective teaching methodologies, whether you are talking about VET, science, or society and environment or whatever. I think there are some common underpinning strategies there. I know when I trained as a teacher I did not get much training in that sort of area.

Mrs MAY—Do you have a reluctance from teachers to put their hand up for that PD? Do they want to become involved in VET? Do you have a problem attracting teachers to delivering VET in schools?

Mr Fitzsimons—I think we did early on. As I have just described, people had a bit of a misunderstanding of what VET was and what might be the common and great outcomes for students undertaking VET or even broader vocational education.

Mrs MAY—But now they are quite happy?

Mr Fitzsimons—Now it is changing. Part of their resistance is that they are really between a rock and a hard place. They have a system that is still driven by factors that do not really encourage VET. If we look at the structure of the SACE, until recent times, a student really had to drop any VET participation at the end of year 11. Teachers were obligated to deliver a very content driven course with a TER score being the sole success indicator. We are gradually getting change there.

Mrs MAY—In your paper and your summary, there are a couple of things you have mentioned here. There is the continuing gap between the cost of quality VET programs and general education. The department representatives, prior to you being here, talked about global budgets and how schools were having to eat into them or be a bit more creative in how those budgets were dispersed. How do your schools cope? Do your schools have individual budgets to work with or is it all driven from head office? Could you explain how that is driven?

Mrs O'Brien—It is a different approach to our government colleagues. In the main, the money comes into the sector and then through various formulas is sent out to schools. Then it is operationalised at the school according to the school's vision and statement of purpose et cetera. So there is local management of all of that. So that is for diocesan schools. We also have some Catholic schools that are virtually Catholic and independent. So money would come from the Commonwealth directly to them. But in the main, it comes into our sector. It is apportioned according to various formulas. At the local level, the community, under the principal's leadership, decides how that money is used.

Mrs MAY—With the growth of VET, how are your schools coping with that imposition on their budgets? Would you say it has been difficult?

Mrs O'Brien—Yes.

Mr Fitzsimons—It has been difficult, but I suppose it has unearthed some fairly innovative approaches that could provide some learning for systems that may have been a bit more heavily subsidised to achieve those outcomes. Teachers have explored some very interesting collaborative partnerships with training providers to get what becomes affordable and workable

but is still credible with all players. An instance is using a local community club to provide kitchen facilities for the delivery of a hospitality program rather than having to go and access facilities at a training provider at a greatly increased charge.

Mrs MAY—Are any of your schools RTOs themselves?

Mr Fitzsimons—No. The relationship with TAFE and other RTOs through the partnership arrangements has been too good, really, for schools to consider that. Schools have also placed a big value on the broader career outcomes that students gain from moving into a TAFE environment and having a bit of experience of that. I think some of those outcomes have probably been a bit understated.

Mr SAWFORD—A lot of groups that have come before us have said that the purposes of VET in Australia are confused. You are another group. What should its purpose be?

Mr Fitzsimons—In the first case, it should be to provide engagement and achievement for students. If we go back to the national goals for schooling—

Mr SAWFORD—I wish you wouldn't.

Mr Fitzsimons—It depends how you interpret them. We have to consider the prime outcomes that we really want for every student coming out of school. Surely it is a successful transition to society. I think VET provides a lot of relevance that leads to engagement in learning. I would be very sad if VET remained as an add-on subject. I think that is why there is a need for us to actually integrate VET within general teaching.

Mr SAWFORD—That leads me to the next question. Your system has duplicated the growth in VET of the state system of almost 400 per cent in a very short time. That was after 20 years of flat-lining in South Australia, going nowhere. So it has come up from a small base but it duplicates the state system. One of the reasons for the flat-lining of VET when technical schools were abandoned and no substitute was in place for comprehensive high schools was the fact you mentioned of integration of vocational education into the mainstream. That was the reason VET fell off the tram last time. You mention in the submission you have given us this morning that there needs to be an acceptance of integration of vocational education into mainstream subjects. I think that would be the worst thing we did. That is what we did for 20 or 30 years when VET disappeared. Why would you go back to doing that? You used the word 'integrate' a while ago.

Mr Fitzsimons—The way we would do it now would be quite different to the way it was done at that time. I think there is an acceptance now that a VET program is a vocational education and training program. It is not purely a training program. You are not just teaching straight skills. You are teaching the soft skills, the thinking and the learning that is associated with it. I do not think we are preparing, as we did in a 1960s or 1970s home economics class, young girls and boys to become good cooks in the kitchen. I think a hospitality program in the 2000s is markedly different in its content and delivery. It creates great links across to other learning. I was listening to the last discussion about the student who wanted to set up his own business. It is not just about learning the skills of becoming a mechanic. It is about learning the whole business that underpins that. It might create a platform for a whole lot of pathways.

Mr SAWFORD—That is one of the reasons why technological training for the last 100 years has oscillated from one purpose to another when all the purposes should have been included. VET has oscillated from meeting the needs of industry, as it did after wars and depressions, into being a general liberal education, when it got lost in the 1970s. It is now more involved in employability skills. Shouldn't VET be all three of those things?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Why doesn't somebody around Australia actually say that in the purpose? Why do we have to extrapolate that out from everybody? It is not too hard to actually say that, is it?

Mr Fitzsimons—No. I would agree with that.

Mr SAWFORD—Why are people going from one thing to the other all the time? You have acknowledged the confusion in the purposes in your original submission.

Mr Fitzsimons—Unfortunately, with the introduction of VET in the mid-1990s, the performance measures that were stated did not allow you to actually recognise one or two of those areas that you have just described.

Mr SAWFORD—Would you like to explain that.

Mr Fitzsimons—It was largely about outcomes based purely on participation in straight programs and numbers of apprentices. There was no chance to recognise the soft skills that a student might develop—the career and decision making skills that a student is practicing, the linkages and networks they are creating that might actually support their transition.

Mr SAWFORD—I accept that. You mention also in hospitality it costs your system $750 a student in order to do that. In isolation it sounds expensive but maybe it is not. Do you outsource all of those courses?

Mr Fitzsimons—No.

Mr SAWFORD—Would you be better off outsourcing them? I am trying to work it out. For 60 or 80 students, you would have the cost of a teacher's salary and you would outsource it without having the problems. If you had the teacher in the schools system, how many students per week would come to them? Would it be 60 to 80?

Mr Fitzsimons—It varies from school to school.

Mr SAWFORD—In other words, the cost is irrelevant whether you do it in the school or out of the school.

Mr Fitzsimons—I think you would find the cost of students accessing hospitality training outside the school would be markedly more than that. That figure we have quoted there would be for the delivery that has sought to minimise costs through some pretty innovative relationships. For example, a school here in the city has a commercial kitchen. It has a peppercorn agreement

with a training provider so that the training provider will deliver training to the students at a greatly reduced price in return for access to that facility out of school hours. That is the only way that they have been able to cut that price. I quoted the other one of using a community kitchen rather than an official training kitchen. It is about bringing a chef in as an hourly paid person to provide the quality and credibility that the teacher cannot and then still going into hybrid arrangements where the students might have to go off to a TAFE or another training provider to do a top-up in the remaining few advanced competencies. All those strategies have been embraced and you are still looking at a cost of around that mark. If we were to just outsource the whole lot, I dread to think what the cost to schools would be.

Mr SAWFORD—But you would be captive to them?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—I accept your wariness, Bernie. Your system must cluster as well. There are registered training organisations other than TAFE. Is there a lack of real competition in this sort of market?

Mr Fitzsimons—In some areas, yes.

Mr SAWFORD—If you could choose clusters to suit yourselves when a situation demanded that, you could choose to outsource it when it was the best option or you could choose to have alternative arrangements, what should we be recommending to the Commonwealth? Is it to allow you to work effectively in any way you choose, be it clusters, outsourcing or using RTOs? Is there a danger that at the moment we force a system like yours to go down one direction and make you captive?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes, there is that danger. I guess my reservations with outsourcing the whole lot is if we look at the more holistic view of what we are trying to do with the student, it is the school that has the relationship with the student. I have some fears that if you outsource the VET program completely, you may lose some of that relationship, and some of the benefits of the learning and management of that student may be lost. If we were talking purely in VET terms, I would say yes, there are great efficiencies and credibility in going that way.

Mr SAWFORD—I put this question to the government people. Is your system big enough to create a 1,000-student senior vocational technology college at years 11 and 12 where you control your own destiny? Have you given thought to that as a system?

Mrs O'Brien—It is a moot point as to whether we are large enough to do it or not. I do not know that we would want to do it. The reason we would not want to do that is not because that would not be a marvellous idea, because it obviously would. What would it be saying about the access to these sorts of structures for all students? What we are saying as a sector is that every student ought to have rich access to this. Going with the model that you are suggesting, Rod, for us as a sector is that we would not be able to finance that across our schools, most likely. So it is about how you enable every student to have appropriate access to this sort of structure. Our reasoning around that is that it ought to occur at every school level, although I am not saying that your suggestion is not—

Mr SAWFORD—Is that because in the Catholic system you have to market yourself out there in the private world and basically your most successful marketing is in terms of your academic achievements rather than your VET achievements? Does that create a problem in your system?

Mrs O'Brien—I am not sure I totally agree with the position that you put there, Rod. I think all schools now market themselves—

Mr SAWFORD—I just read the advertisements that come up each year from the Catholic education schools in my own area. I know what they are pushing. They are not pushing VET.

Mrs O'Brien—If I look at the performance of our schools, some of our schools have such rich vocational learning VET programs that that is what they offer their local community. So we have some marvellous examples of schools saying, 'This is a major thrust in our school. If your child comes here, this is the experience they'll have.' We have other schools as well who are saying, 'We've probably not even really begun to enter the whole VET arena yet.' So we have got that spread of our schools.

Mr Fitzsimons—I will add to that. I refer to a comment I made in this clarification.

Mr SAWFORD—The one you gave this morning?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes. It says that various forms of recognition of VET for tertiary entrance—

Mr SAWFORD—Where is this stated?

Mr Fitzsimons—This is at the top of the second page. It says:

> Various forms of recognition of VET for tertiary entrance will challenge lasting school and community resistance to VET.

I think one problem has been that schools are driven largely by tertiary entrance. Tertiary entrance is defined as TER scores. One thing I have challenged SSABSA and other players over the last couple of years about has been that there could be other ways that tertiary entrance selection could occur.

Mr SAWFORD—What is that?

Mr Fitzsimons—Wouldn't it be beautiful if a student was able to have three subjects, for instance, that got a TER score and that gave them time to do other learning that created tremendous folios to demonstrate their other abilities? If you look at students coming through VET programs, you see them producing these amazing things. I staged a PD session for careers counsellors and VET coordinators in schools last year. I actually got representatives from the universities to come along. We got them to describe that competency based delivery and assessment was happening very, very strongly in a heck of a lot of university programs. We also got them to define what they consider to be the factors for successful entry, participation and transition through their courses. Most of those success factors line up with your soft skills and your key competencies and so on that I think VET generates very strongly. Then we got almost

an admission that although the TER score is used as a filter for entry, there are other selection factors that come into play very strongly.

Mr SAWFORD—Universities have a lot of control, don't they?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think they should be tested? What if we gave TAFE degrees and built the TAFE system up to be a stronger system and a competitor to higher education? Would that go some way towards meeting those needs that you have just explained, which I agree with, by the way?

Mr Fitzsimons—It could go some of the way. I think it needs some good conversation with common language about what everybody is after. When I look at that list of success factors—Monash University did research on this in the late 1990s; it corresponded beautifully with what the universities here described; I also have conversations with business and industry—it is really the same things being expressed in different words. I think the conversation stuff could overcome a lot of it. But what I am saying is that if that is what is really needed for whether you go into work, further training or university, creating a vocational college would deny the opportunity for many, many mainstream students. They really need those outcomes too.

Mr SAWFORD—I know. The vocational colleges I am thinking of just reverse the academic high school. They still allow the liberal education to occur. But their core business is vocational education. For other schools, their core business is academia. That is fine. Both are valid. That is all I am saying.

Mr Fitzsimons—What comes to my mind is that the Apprentice of the Year here in South Australia a few years ago was a lad who had gone through an apprenticeship and then on to engineering at Adelaide University. He was the outstanding performer in the course. Elements of VET probably underpin good teaching and learning in all courses.

Mr SAWFORD—In the 1960s, the technical schools won all the mathematics, physics and chemistry prizes too.

CHAIR—I return briefly to the issue of outsourcing. You made the point about a loss of relationship. Is that really a big issue given that we are talking about students who are maturing—they are 16 or so—and they are still in the school for most of their studies? The South Australian government representatives here this morning indicated that there are benefits—I think I would agree to some extent—for those students who have been exposed to a different learning environment, the stimulation of an industry based or TAFE learning environment. Aren't those benefits and the potential cost savings—I will come back to you in a moment—outweighing the perhaps slight diminution in the relationship and nurturing that occurs in the school?

Mrs O'Brien—That is an interesting question. I think they possibly could. One of the major issues I see around that whole area is the status of the student. The student is enrolled at the school. The structures we have at the moment are pretty rigid around all of that.

CHAIR—And you have a strong duty of care.

Mrs O'Brien—Yes, that is right. So even if you were to manage the duty of care well, and you would expect that that would not be a difficulty, there needs to be some challenge to the concept of what makes a student an enrolled student in a school. I think we have to have into the future some greater flexibility around that so it enables the student to be placed in a variety of areas.

CHAIR—But your typical student might do one VET course and so 80 per cent of their study is still in traditional general education. You are not really diminishing that relationship and their involvement in the school all that much, are you?

Mrs O'Brien—No.

Mr Fitzsimons—No. As long as you had an infrastructure that could allow students to still gain some case management within the school, I think it could work quite well.

CHAIR—On the funding aspect of it, you have said, Bernie, that there are significant cost increases with outsourcing. That is largely, though, isn't it, a result of the way in which TAFE charges non-government schools for those services compared to what they charge government schools?

Mr Fitzsimons—That is part of it. But the costs across the board are still beyond the means of many schools.

CHAIR—If government were to take a more holistic approach to funding VET generally and recognising that there are efficiencies in avoiding duplication of schools and TAFEs doing the same thing and they were to reduce the cost of providing those services to schools via TAFE, would that not then be a much more attractive option for your system as well?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes. I guess I am thinking, though, about your average teacher in the school, the commitment they have to VET, what understanding they have if it moves fully out of the school. One thing we have achieved in the last eight years or so is actually building that sort of understanding and valuing. I still think there is probably a need for some sort of hybrid arrangement where teachers in the school remain a player or partner by delivering some foundations and then work in partnership in all sorts of ways for the remainder.

CHAIR—Is it not possible that that foundation, for instance, may be in more generic skills, such as employability, career advice and those sorts of things, and that the industry specific course would be provided through a specialist trainer such as TAFE? Would that hybrid arrangement work?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes. It could go that way, yes.

CHAIR—I refer to your summary. You talk about the funding issue. You say that ongoing funding is necessary. Obviously, that is a point well taken. You talk about ongoing funding and joined-up approaches. Could you elaborate on what you mean there?

Mr Fitzsimons—I think it has been frustrating in recent years that you have had some funding coming through the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation, or ASTF now, some coming through DEST, some coming through ANTA, all having different accountability requirements but all wanting you to do very, very similar things. I think a lot of time and effort has been spent in being accountable rather than getting on with the job and generating the outcomes. If there had been a pooling of those resources, it probably would have been much easier and much more effective in getting real outcomes and in getting these programs up and running much quicker. If we go further now with *Footprints* coming in, I look at operations like Jobs Pathway providers, local government youth project officers all doing very, very similar work. But until we got them around the table in these regional cluster groups, they had not really had any conversation. It was quite a revelation of the efficiencies that could be achieved if we did get around the table.

CHAIR—You mention clusters. In terms of your work placements, you mention in your submission that there are challenges in finding adequate work placements for students. You mention the difficulties in the construction industry. You also conclude that challenges with work placements is one of the reasons there has not been a greater take-up of school based apprenticeships. Do you have a cluster arrangement with other schools where you work together to find work placements for your students?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes. I have worked very strongly with the other two schooling systems and ECEF to make sure that our regional clusters are fully inclusive.

CHAIR—You have a full-time coordinator funded through ECEF for those, do you?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes, although now ECEF are only providing about 0.5 and schools are once again contributing quite significantly to the operation of those clusters.

CHAIR—Finally, in thinking about the division of responsibilities between state and federal government and acknowledging the need for increased funding commensurate with the rapid take-up of VET in schools, in your view, is an appropriate way ahead for the Commonwealth to be ensuring that there is adequate and secure funding for workplace coordination for all clusters of schools throughout the country? Is that one of the best things that a government could be doing in terms of directing its funding?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes. But I think we have outgrown the coordination model that was introduced in the mid-1990s. I think the notion of having one local coordinator who does a full brokerage service for work placements is probably beyond the capabilities of one or two persons in a region.

CHAIR—We have outgrown it in terms of the sheer numbers.

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes. I think a coordination model that is a collaborative arrangement between that regional person and the schools might work far more effectively. So the regional coordinator might go out and create the relationships with business and industry, enter that into a database that the schools can then all dip in and out of in a very coordinated fashion.

CHAIR—So you would have a workplace coordinator in each school liaising with the cluster coordinator?

Mr Fitzsimons—Yes. One of the reasons that a lot of the responsibility got flicked over to the cluster coordinator when the ASTF came on board was that a lot of those school based people were not resourced. They had the title but no time or real support to do any of that task.

CHAIR—Of those coordinators within each of those schools, what percentage are released from face to face teaching? Do you have full-time coordinators in your schools who are working on work placements? Are they half-time?

Mr Fitzsimons—It varies. It comes back to Helen's point earlier about local funding decisions. Most of them would wear two or three hats. Career counsellor and VET coordinator is a classic. Some of them go on to be general subject coordinator or negotiated curriculum coordinator. They are the titles. The time allowance would vary from nothing through to about 0.5. We do not have any that are full time in that role.

CHAIR—Given an obvious acceptance that there are limited funds, what do you think is a necessary and reasonable amount of funding in terms of release from teaching for that school based coordinator?

Mr Fitzsimons—My personal perception, with us now broadening the view to the vocational education framework and the *Footprints* type messages that are coming through, is that there has to be a complete redefinition of the work of at least one person in each school. They may be non-teaching. One thing that keeps haunting me is principals talking about non-contact time. I say this is not non-contact time. This person is doing other work. If we are talking about changing learning, that learning does not just come from the classroom but from the community, peers, work and so on; you need someone to get out and harness all those learning opportunities. So I think we are looking at having at least a full-time person in each school doing quite different work.

Mrs O'Brien—If we want to privilege this area in the same way that we privilege other curriculum areas, you have to have the same—I am sure you would agree—level of resourcing. It would be people resourcing pathways for those people, recognition of the type of service that that teacher gives to the school and a valuing of it. Until we get to that point, we are always going to have this feeling of transition or trying to claim status for an area.

Mr SAWFORD—So giving these people a place in the sun which they do not have at the moment is a big challenge, isn't it?

Mrs O'Brien—Yes, it is a big challenge, but it is an essential ingredient if you want to say that this area of learning stands alongside any of the other traditional curriculum areas that we value.

Mr Fitzsimons—We have to make sure they are sun smart before we put them in the sun, though.

CHAIR—Good point.

Mr Fitzsimons—I want to make one other point that I think is pertinent. I have been doing quite a bit of work on the careers blueprint coming in from the Canadian model. I think it is this resourcing that underpins the success of that model. In the discussions we have been having of late we have been looking largely at the content of the model rather than at the infrastructure that is required to underpin that model. I think it is going to be very sad, for instance, if that careers blueprint comes in and people are not given the time and support to do it properly. If a poor old teacher gets it as just another load with no time to do it, something that could be really fantastic could fall a bit flat.

Mr SAWFORD—I want to clarify one thing Bernie said before. When you were talking about TERs, you liked the idea of kids being able to front up on three TER subjects and then allow them a bit more flexibility to do other things. I like that idea. Is three the lowest you could go? Could you do it on two? Could universities make an assessment on two?

Mr Fitzsimons—No. In the work that is being done, Flinders University, I know, have had a good look at it. Three seems to be a good number. There is no great difference between three and five.

Mr SAWFORD—I agree.

Mr Fitzsimons—It is interesting. I had Professor Erica McWilliam from QUT down here recently talking to principals. She talked of a principal in New South Wales, whose name I do not know, who has actually challenged universities. She has gone to the universities and said, 'Here's my students' portfolio of work. I want you to accept them on that.' I really think some of that conversation and challenge would be fantastic.

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

Mrs O'Brien—Thank you for your time.

Proceedings suspended from 10.55 a.m. to 11.10 a.m.

KARMEL, Dr Tom, Managing Director, National Centre for Vocational Education Research

KNIGHT, Mr Brian, Manager, Provider of Financial Collections, National Centre for Vocational Education Research

CHAIR—Thank you for joining us this morning. Thank you for your very detailed submission. I invite you to make some introductory comments. We will then proceed to questions.

Dr Karmel—I would like to say a few things. As you would realise, vocational education in schools is not a new thing. You only have to go back and look at the technical high schools, which were the epitome of vocational education in schools. What is new is the delivery of AQF qualifications in a school setting and the fact that these qualifications count towards the senior secondary certificates. That is what is really new about the policy push over the last few years.

Our submission focused on the data, as you would expect. We had some pretty good data on the numbers of students attending. They came from the information from MCEETYA and the ministerial council. We also had quite detailed data on school students in publicly provided post-school settings. These would be students doing TAFE subjects at a TAFE.

We now have more detail. I would like to table a publication for you which has some cross-classifications for what we call the VET in schools. These are students getting the education in a school setting. In our submission, we only had total numbers. But with the 2002 data we can actually provide you with a split by field of study, which starts getting a bit more interesting.

I would also point to one of your terms of reference, which talks about accessibility and the effectiveness of vocational education for Indigenous students. In our submission, we did not actually provide you with any data on Indigenous students, but with the 2002 data collection we now have available to us, we could provide you with some cross-classifications, if you were interested, in terms of fields of study, state and so on.

CHAIR—If you could, that would be helpful, thank you.

Dr Karmel—We would be happy to do that. The other thing I would like to say is that, although we have quite good data now on the actual students, I would have to confess that the data we have on outcomes is pretty weak to date. In our submission, we talk about a number of research studies, which give you a bit of information. I would also point to a project that we are currently involved in with the Australian Council for Educational Research, where we hope to use the Australian Longitudinal Survey of Youth to actually follow through what has happened to, in essence, the first cohort of students who are going through the VET in Schools program to see exactly what they do after they leave school and how effective the program has been.

Unfortunately, we really have just commenced that project. We will not have the results for some time. The other thing I would point to—again, this is a hope for the future—is that we currently have a student outcomes survey. We deliver to a very large sample of students who

graduate from a TAFE or leave TAFE after completing a number of modules. We get employment outcomes and their views on the quality of their education. If there were sufficient interest, I think there would be a possibility that we could expand that collection to actually cover the VET in school students. I would have thought that would be one way we could get national data in due course, but we do not have that data at the moment. It may be the case that individual states do some follow-up studies of their students, but we are not aware of any of them being in the public domain. They are really the opening comments I would like to make.

CHAIR—Thank you, Dr Karmel.

Mrs MAY—Congratulations on the data you have supplied to us. It is certainly very comprehensive. You have obviously identified gaps in the data and in the delivery of VET programs in schools. I think one of the interesting things for me was that 70 per cent of the take-up of VET in Schools is by children in rural areas. They are more likely to take up VET courses than within the cities, I suppose, for want of a better word. I wonder, though, if you could talk about or make some comments on the type of programs that are being delivered in schools. Your submission talks about the five industry groups, the five major areas that they are being delivered in. I gather from the data you have collected or comments you have made that that should be broadened and in fact students have more access to the delivery of different programs. They do not have that sort of access. Would you comment on those two areas, please.

Dr Karmel—I will make a couple of comments. When we think about the nature of the programs of VET in schools, there are two dimensions we need to think about. One is the field of study and the other one is the level. We have some data now on both of them. In terms of the level, you are talking mostly about certificates at the level I and II with a small amount at level III. Now in educational terms, certificates at levels I and II would mostly be thought of as being at a school standard. Certainly if you look at the OECD's definitions, they would tend to equate the certificate level III with the completion of year 12. In a sense, we are not talking about post-schooling level education. We are really talking about a different form of education at school.

In terms of the fields of studies, all I can really say is that they are heavily concentrated at the moment in a number of areas, particularly management and commerce and some engineering related technologies. They are the major areas. It is patchy. The extent to which you think that is a good or bad thing I cannot really comment on. Obviously some areas are more suited to this than others.

Mrs MAY—The data you have collected, how is it going to be utilised throughout education? Will it go through to schools? How will programs be developed based on data that you have collected from the survey?

Dr Karmel—I am not sure that I am the best person to answer that question. We put this information out into the public domain for everybody who wants to use it. We would be expecting that the schools would be using the data to think about the areas that they should be going into. It may also be the case that some of the industry groups themselves can think about areas that they can go into.

Mrs MAY—What about state departments of education? Have they been in contact or is there a dialogue between yourselves and them?

Dr Karmel—Certainly the information goes to them. We would be expecting they would be looking at it pretty closely.

Mr Knight—I can add to that. We have been working quite closely with the MCEETYA transition from school task force on developing data collection arrangements for VET in Schools. A lot of the statistical information we produce actually finds its way back to people in the system via the transition from school task force. That is an ongoing relationship that we have established in the last one to two years specifically to address some of the information gaps relating to vocational education in schools. So it tends to go back through the MCEETYA task force rather than directly.

Mr SAWFORD—I am pleased to see a research organisation being involved in a longitudinal study. We do not have a good record in this country, do we?

Dr Karmel—We have some.

Mr SAWFORD—Not much. But I am pleased to actually see that. With respect to this dynamic of the growth of VET in schools in the early 1990s—in South Australia it was really the late 1990s—why did VET flat-line after the publication of the Karmel report in 1973, 30 years ago? My colleagues are going to die at my asking this! Why did VET flat-line for almost 20 years? In New South Wales, they took an initiative in about 1993. In Western Australia, it was in 1993. In South Australia, it was in 1997. We have not got to Victoria, but they seem to be ahead of us in some way. Why did it take so long? Do you have a view on that? Do have you a statistical view on that?

Dr Karmel—Speaking on behalf of NCVER, I probably do not have any view at all. Speaking personally, it is an interesting question. Last week, I attended a conference at Group Training Australia. They had a little roundtable discussion. One of the issues they put up was whether we should bring back the technical high schools. There was a lot of interest in and debate about it. I think what happened with the Karmel report—which of course was not me—was that there was a view at the time that the problem with the technical high schools was that it was in a sense streaming our society. Students going to those high schools virtually had no chance of going to university. So the recommendation was for a comprehensive education system. What happened then was basically the victory of the academic stream narrowly focused on university entrance in educational terms. There were lots of good things happening in the technical high schools at the time but they got swamped through the education departments.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not believe you can go back to a system that is no longer a system. That is back to the future and I do not believe in that. But I think of technological schools of the future. An example is at Milner Street in Hindmarsh. There is a direction we can go. It always appeared to me that the academic high schools were very jealous that the technical schools had a 75 per cent increase in funding per capita over them. There was envy. The other thing that occurred was that the technical schools started to win the academic prizes because they had an academic pathway for their more able students. Particularly when they started winning the maths I, maths II, physics and chemistry prizes, it really shook up the establishment in higher education in universities in this state and across Australia. Wasn't it true that they were perhaps too successful?

Dr Karmel—I cannot really comment on that. The other observation I would make is that in recent times there has been a real heading back towards what one might consider to be the model that operated in those traditional vocational areas. You now see in medicine, for example, that quite a few of the universities use problem based learning. As I see it, that is essentially the paradigm that had operated in some of these vocational areas. So I think some of the values are actually re-emerging.

Mr SAWFORD—You mentioned school based apprenticeships. We went to Mandurah, which is 80 kilometres out of Perth, on Monday. They have set up a seamless transition with TAFE and Murdoch University with almost 1,000 pupils. It is a year 11 and 12 vocational secondary college. Its core business is VET, but it is still allowing university entrance to occur. In terms of school based apprenticeships, would they be more successful in that context than they would in the current one? Do you have any research on that?

Dr Karmel—Do we have any research on that?

Mr Knight—No. We have not done any research on school based New Apprenticeships as yet.

Mr SAWFORD—Have you done any research on the Bradfield model in New South Wales, the secondary college set up in 1993? It is really the same concept.

Dr Karmel—There are a number of these precincts around the country. I think there are quite a number now. Certainly from the higher education perspective there have been some reviews done on it but not focusing on the apprenticeship side of it that I am aware of. I am certainly happy to look on our research database to see if there is anything, but nothing springs to mind immediately.

CHAIR—Dr Karmel, you mention in your report that there is significant variation from state to state in the level of take-up of school based New Apprenticeships. What factors have led to that differential?

Dr Karmel—Brian might have some more information on this. I think it basically gets back to the attitudes of the education departments and the extent to which these things are pushed.

CHAIR—Rather than logistic or regulations or practical problems?

Mr Knight—There were regulatory problems in some states that were slow to be removed. For example, there are a couple of states that continued with declared vocations for some years after it was agreed nationally that they be abolished. That actually had an impact on the extent to which school based New Apprenticeships could be offered in traditional areas. I understand in some states there were issues with awards that had to be addressed. In Queensland, for example, they moved quite quickly to resolve those issues. In other states, it took rather longer. As Tom said, there was the extent to which the education authorities were prepared to give school based New Apprenticeships their support or promote them.

CHAIR—So those issues have been addressed now in all states? Is that what you are saying?

Mr Knight—More than they had been, say, five years ago. I honestly cannot speak on behalf of every state and territory. You cannot carry in your head all the detail. But certainly the figures would suggest that the take-up in all states and territories is now much higher than it was, say, five years ago for school based New Apprenticeships.

CHAIR—Are you aware of continuing obstacles or barriers that are slowing the take-up of apprenticeships?

Mr Knight—Not at this stage, no.

Mr SAWFORD—When you look back at technical training in this country over the last 100 years, it seems that the initiatives have traditionally occurred after depressions, such as 1890 and 1930, and after world wars, such as World War I and World War II, and intrinsically the big injection happened during the Whitlam government in the 1970s. In some ways that does not fit in with what is going on. Federally, we do not have any extra money for VET in schools. The state budgets, other than by natural increments, do not seem to have put any more money in. However, the systems have managed to grow. In South Australia, the point was made by the department they have grown by 430 per cent. In the Catholic system, it is about 400 per cent as well.

You mention the lack of labour market analysis as a problem in the provision of programs. I would like you to comment on that. A lot of people are telling us that the purpose of VET is confused throughout Australia. It seems to have oscillated between meeting the needs of industry on the one hand and then providing a more liberal education on the other. More lately, the propaganda seems to talk about integration and employability skills. Is the non-clarity of purpose of VET in Australia a problem? You make a point about the lack of labour market analysis as the problem in the provision of programs. How does that relate to all of that?

Dr Karmel—I am not sure where to start with all that. I will go to the growth. Certainly with secondary schooling, the numbers are basically driven by the number of students who wish to attend. Obviously, everybody could attend if they wish to. The big growth in VET in schools has really been because students have been choosing to do those subjects when they have started being provided. If you look at the numbers, although the overall number of school students has gone up, most of the growth in VET in schools is because of students actually picking those groups of subjects and attending school rather than not attending school.

In terms of the purpose, you are quite right about the complexity of it. There clearly is tension between the technical part of vocational education and what one might describe as the generic part. In recent years, the generic part has received a lot of attention. We have done quite a bit on generic skills, such as employability skills or whatever you want to call it. There are debates about whether they should be embedded within subjects or taught as separate subjects. You talk about the difficulties with clarity of purpose. This is a debate that is developing. People are now realising that there is more to employability than just the technical skills. Given the way the world is changing, perhaps some of these basic foundational skills are really very important.

The other thing I would point to in terms of vocational training in general—this is a bit wider than VET in schools—is that there is a huge number of students attending VET with very many different purposes. So there is no one single purpose for vocational education and training. Some

people are interested in entry level training. Some wish to upgrade skills. Some are getting into new areas. Some people are just doing it for personal interest.

You also talked about the labour market. I am not quite sure what I can really say there. In terms of the analysis that we have here, that is where we are weak in terms of linking the outcomes of these programs with what is going to happen to these students. That is something we are going to have to work on in the future.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—My apologies for not being here earlier. I am from north-west Tasmania. Given that, I am particularly interested in the attachments that you have included with the submission by Kilpatrick, and particularly in terms of VET outcomes for rural students. I was wondering if there were some implications in the submission for practice, for further research and for policy. I wonder if you could give us a bit of an overview from your own experience about the importance of VET in schools, particularly in rural areas, and the need particularly to look at the journey of females in VET in rural schools and the outcomes thereafter. I thought the implications for practice, for further research and certainly for policy were very useful indeed. Could you just enlighten us a little more about that. It is fairly detailed. It has community implications and outcomes. I found one thing that was interesting in the sense that a lot of the outcomes in terms of employment and staying in the region were similar for those that did not do VET and for those that did VET. I am interested to hear any comments you can make on that.

Mr Knight—I can make some comments. The general finding from Sue Kilpatrick's work was that VET in schools seems to have slightly more positive outcomes in terms of post-school employment and other things in rural areas than not in rural areas. That is the general finding. I think, though, that there was also a study—I am not sure if it is Kilpatrick or someone else—where there was a comparison of where students got to two or three years after leaving school. That is in there as well. Basically, it showed that students who had done vocational education in schools two or three years after were in about the same situation as those that had not. So the real effect of doing VET in schools was actually a short-term thing. It expedited their transition to the work force or post-school activity. It did not seem to have really long-term effects that made any difference.

Having said that, I would emphasise that studies such as the Kilpatrick study are very valuable. There are some limits on them as to the extent to which you can generalise from them. They were not based on large numbers of students or anything like that. So there is some very good and valuable information in them. You could not, for example, generalise policy for the whole country from that one study.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—From 31 respondents.

Mr Knight—That was for one part of it. I cannot remember the actual number. I think it was about 140 or something like that. So it was not a big-scale study. But they are the sort of comments I would make. We could probably provide more if you want it. Basically, it is in the full report.

Dr Karmel—The other thing I would add is that one has to be careful in looking at VET in schools in isolation. You really have to look at the education system as a whole. It is really the outcomes of people in the regions. The one thing we do know about rural areas is the actual

participation in VET overall is higher than average. It is certainly much higher than in the urban areas. So VET is playing a much more important role in those communities relative to the cities, whether it is VET in schools or as a transition to VET after school.

CHAIR—In your submission you refer to differences between states in a number of different areas. There are differences in the degree to which VET is embedded or non-embedded. There are differences in the degree to which compulsory structured workplace learning is part of VET courses. There are differences in the degree of focus on university entrance or compatibility of the VET programs to university entrance in particular states. There are differences in the way that TAFE is accessed, whether TAFE courses are charged to students in public schools or not. Do you see that as a problem? Is the state by state variation a good thing in terms of allowing states to better adapt their VET courses and their approach to VET to their own particular needs and their own general education system? Do you think that there are stronger arguments for national uniformity?

Dr Karmel—That is asking about the value of federation, in a sense.

CHAIR—It is not quite that broad.

Dr Karmel—Obviously there is tension between having a diversity of models and having some uniformity across Australia. I do not know whether I am in any position to really comment on that. If you talk to the individual states, I am sure they will all be able to defend why their particular approach is better than everybody else's.

The one thing I would say is that we are talking about study within a national framework. We are talking about all students doing an AQF qualification. They are under a quality assurance system through the AQTF. So there are certainly national elements. I see that as a very positive thing. I also think it is a positive thing that we can get data right across the board so you can observe some of these differences. That has been a problem. It is only in 2002 that we are getting reasonable data from all states. But I do not think I am really in a position to—

CHAIR—I will ask a more specific question. There is the issue of embedded VET versus non-embedded VET. Do you have any information as to the relative effectiveness in terms of preparing students for what industry needs and, therefore, the take-up of these students into apprenticeships in post-school options?

Dr Karmel—I said before that our data is weak at the moment in terms of outcomes. That is something we should be looking at in the future. Brian might have a view now.

Mr Knight—We are aware of the variation in practice in relation to embedding. But there has not been any research undertaken that compares the outcomes for the embedded model versus the non-embedded model.

Mr SAWFORD—I will take a slightly different lift on that. I appreciate your comments about federation. We had South Australian education department people here this morning basically making a recommendation about coordinated funding. In other words, there was evidence there of wanting a national approach. In your submission, you acknowledge the non-clarity of purpose of VET. Catholic Education has done that in the few states we have been to. So have state

education departments, to their credit. Without taking the federalist view, is it almost appropriate, even in terms of a research organisation like yourselves, that basically there needs to be a national assessment of what is going on in terms of not only the purpose but the strategies and the outcomes? It needs to be researched thoroughly. Are we at the stage where we ought to be doing that?

Dr Karmel—I think that is right. Certainly when talking about the outcomes, I would very much like to have some sort of national outcome survey for this. In terms of it being timely, there has been such growth over the last four or five years that it is getting to the time when we should take stock, as you say, and have a look at some of these issues. If somebody has the funds to do so, we would be more than willing to do that.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think we would be well served if we were considering a strong recommendation in that area?

Dr Karmel—Getting some national data on outcomes would definitely be worth while. If you have that, it gives you a basis from which to address some of the research questions. If you do not have that, you can recommend to do research, but because of the resource implications, you tend to do case studies. You never quite—

Mr SAWFORD—So it is too qualitative and not quantitative?

Dr Karmel—Well, that is my view. Have you got any observations on that?

Mr Knight—No. I agree.

Mr SAWFORD—Have you got any recommendations of a general nature that you would put to us that we ought to consider?

Dr Karmel—That is certainly the area that has exercised us mostly. I do not have any other recommendations.

Mr SAWFORD—Brian?

Mr Knight—I want to make a comment that I hope would clarify things a bit. It is actually covered in our submission. It is important when you talk about VET in schools not to narrow the focus to VET in schools as defined by MCEETYA because there is actually a much broader set of vocational learning activities. A lot of the rhetoric recently, because of the political focus, has been about VET in schools as defined by MCEETYA. That tends to have brought the focus on VET being undertaken as part of the senior secondary certificate in years 11 and 12. That has taken some of the focus away from vocational learning more generally. It is important to be aware that the MCEETYA VET in schools is by no means all of it.

Mr SAWFORD—It is interesting you bring the term ‘rhetoric’ in. For eight months we have been subjected to contradictory rhetoric from a whole range of areas in this inquiry. Even perhaps a month ago the chair and I were almost getting to the stage of being basically totally confused over where we were about to go. I think that is fair enough to say, isn’t it?

CHAIR—Speak for yourself!

Mr SAWFORD—Thank you for that.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I think that was very pertinent.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. That has been very helpful. Thank you once again for your submission.

Proceedings suspended from 11.43 a.m. to 12.01 p.m.

CARN, Ms Catherine Anne, Entry Level Training Manager, Construction Industry Training Board

LARKINS, Mr Stephen Francis, Chief Executive Officer, Construction Industry Training Board

STEWART, Mr Robert, Chief Executive Officer, Master Builders Association of South Australia

CHAIR—Thank you for your time today. Thank you for your very detailed submission as well, and for some very constructive recommendations. Do you have any comment to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Larkins—I am the newly appointed CEO of the Construction Industry Training Board. I took up my appointment on 14 July. Consequently, I am still in the process of assimilating a lot of this information.

Ms Carn—I have a particular focus on apprenticeships and traineeships and VET in Schools—supporting those programs.

CHAIR—I invite you to make some introductory comments. We will then proceed to questions.

Ms Carn—We have an entry level training committee. Basically, it is made up of industry personnel, people from the Department of Education and Children's Services, registered training organisations and industry. I think originally—I am not too sure what year it was started—they said they had the issue that we were not attracting young people into the industry. They came up with a VET in Schools program. We call it Doorways 2 Construction in this state. It is a model of a program. It is a certificate I in construction from the training package in general construction. We have modelled into it that it has to include career activities and work placement. So for anybody to offer that, that is what they need to do. It is given industry recognition.

Basically we try to link. The CITB might think about a program in an area or a school will contact us or a development board will contact us. It might be 12 months before we start that program. We get all the interested parties involved, including community, parents, teachers and schools. Everybody is involved. We then plan a program, which is based on the Doorways 2 Construction program. We try to set it up as a cluster program. You have one program and up to six or seven schools, and their students will feed into it.

We work very closely with the school personnel, the teachers. The construction industry does not provide funding for the programs. We provide a lot of support. We try to get some marketing done for the program to encourage the students to enter into it. We also provide resources like the learning guides for each competency, evidence guides and logbooks. We also provide professional development in the industry area for the teachers that deliver it. We also identify issues. We work through quality issues with the program. For example, if a teacher is moving on

or retiring, we try to feed a new teacher into that program so it is sustainable and it does not fall down. That is basically the role of the Construction Industry Training Board.

CHAIR—So the teacher is one of the teachers in the local schools?

Ms Carn—That is right. We try to identify teachers that have an industry background. That is preferable. That is what we try to do. If they do not, we have professional development things set up for them. They might take a week off and work with the industry to get an overall view of that or they might go off and do a course. They might not have a background in carpentry and they want to upskill in that area. We would support them in that.

CHAIR—I notice in your submission—

Mrs MAY—What sort of support is it? Is it monetary or budgetary?

Mr Larkins—We actually part fund in construction with the department coordinator, so we share the cost of that between the department and the board. From there it is a coordination role.

CHAIR—I notice you have these one-year scholarships for teachers to spend a year in industry. How long has that been working?

Mr Stewart—That is into its third year.

CHAIR—Has that been effective?

Mr Stewart—It has been very good. The object of the scholarship is to rotate the teacher, bring them into the CITB and the program, get them acquainted with how the program works and then put them back into the education system and bring another one in. Over a period of years, we build up a resource of teachers who have worked with the program.

CHAIR—That teacher is paid by whom?

Mr Stewart—Half the salary is paid by the CITB. The other half is paid by the education department.

CHAIR—And the salary is their teaching salary, I presume?

Mr Stewart—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you have any intention of expanding that program? One a year does not seem to be a lot of extra teachers moving into the system.

Mr Stewart—It is very hard to get one a year.

CHAIR—In terms of trying to find someone interested?

Mr Stewart—I think it is quite ground-breaking to enter into the relationship with the education department.

CHAIR—Do you not have more teachers wanting to take up that offer?

Mr Stewart—Not at this stage, no.

Ms Carn—I think there is an issue there. A lot of the teachers that deliver the program are in their 40s or over, so they are looking at retiring. Superannuation becomes an issue. For them to go into a different role, they take that into account and say, 'It is not worth my while actually leaving the department and doing something different.'

Mrs MAY—So they are not just taking leave from the department? They actually leave it?

Ms Carn—They do not leave it. There are issues. Even now we have trouble getting contracts signed with the department because it is a new thing and it is a new thing to have a scholarship with a teacher working in industry. The teacher we have in there at the moment is paid at the level of a teacher but he actually works the conditions that we work, which is nine to five for five days a week. If the union came in on that, it is not allowed because it is not recognised as a pay level.

CHAIR—How do you manage that with the unions?

Ms Carn—It is not brought up as an issue because it is really just a one-off. Nobody mentions it.

CHAIR—And it seems that you really need more support from the education department in terms of superannuation issues and encouraging more staff to take up this sort of offer?

Ms Carn—They would need to build into their framework pay levels to see how that is best dealt with, yes, so teachers can come out of their schooling and then go back in without any problems with pay issues and things like that. They are wary of that, the teachers.

CHAIR—On the same issue of getting adequately trained teachers with industry experience into schools, you recommend the need for a national initiative to move people out of industry into the classroom. What sorts of things do you think that initiative should include? What sorts of barriers do you think exist that discourage builders and construction industry workers wanting to take up that sort of initiative?

Mr Stewart—One of the barriers would be the time frame and the recognition of prior learning. I think it would take a tradesperson 18 months to get the required standard of education to become a teacher and then enter the program. Eighteen months is a long time, I suppose, when they are not earning income and they are studying, so to speak, to make that transition. That is one of the issues.

Ms Carn—We do have a teacher who has a trades background. He has now moved into running one of these programs at Windsor Gardens Vocational College. He went to the University of South Australia and did the course. He did eight months at university and then

registered as a teacher. I suppose it is a matter of getting out to the industry personnel to say, 'Are you interested in coming into the school and delivering it?' I am not too sure that that would be the issue.

CHAIR—So where does the initiative have to come from? Is it from the industry or the education department or from someone else?

Mr Stewart—I think it has probably got to be a joint initiative because you have people with a trade qualification who want to change direction, I suppose, to go into the education system. So it would be beholden on the industry and the education system to develop the appropriate mechanisms to allow that to happen. Each of the programs currently have industry people attached to it in the form of engineers or architects or builders or trades people, but this is taking it to the next formal teaching step.

CHAIR—Are you talking with the department of education about this sort of approach?

Mr Stewart—We have an ongoing discussion with the department, as Catherine mentioned. The scholarship is unique. To get that up and running was a huge win, I suppose. It is a matter of then developing that further with the department.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—This is an inquiry into VET in schools. Your first recommendation is that you do not want VET in schools. You do not want the term used because obviously you have reason to believe it is leading to confusion. People do not know what they are talking about half the time and it may be reinforced there. I am really interested in the view you have about not using the term 'VET in schools'. You also make some very fundamental statements about what should be funded. I assume that is through ANTA and the industry. If they do not meet your criteria in terms of being very work placed, work based, industry based, they should not be funded through ANTA. Is that correct? Would you like to expand on that a bit more?

Ms Carn—With the first recommendation for VET in schools, I believe that is really around the purpose of VET in schools. I was involved at a TAFE level as a VET coordinator and worked with schools for three years in setting up programs. You have a lot of schools delivering a competency here and a competency there. They may or may not be embedded into the school curriculum. Sometimes you just speak to students and they do not even know they are doing a VET in Schools subject as such because it is so embedded. So that first recommendation about VET in schools is really saying, 'Let's recognise programs that deliver a full certificate or have an outcome for that certificate.' It might be that it retains students at school or gives them employment opportunities. You look at schools and the ANTA funding is so spread at a state level. It is so spread over the programs; each school gets a little bit. When you get some programs that are doing things that are quite substantial, the funding is not enough to keep them going. With that first recommendation to discontinue VET in Schools, it is more to put a focus on the certificate level courses. It might be that they just offer a certificate I. It does not need to be any higher than that. It could be a certificate II.

Mr Stewart—There is a school of thought that VET in Schools is down here somewhere instead of an essential program, as industry see it, to develop young people into career opportunities in the building industry. The reason why we changed from VET in Schools to Doorways 2 Construction is that D2C meant exactly what it is: here is an opportunity through

these various approaches for you to enter the building industry with a trade or a tertiary degree. VET in schools is an overarching term. What does it really mean? That is the concern of industry.

The other concern clearly was that the curriculum used was written by industry. We had the view that a lot of these VET in school programs are run but they are not focused on specific outcomes. They are run because there is money for the school to run them. What the building industry wanted was a program that had its own curriculum that would ensure the outcomes that the industry wanted at the end of the program. I think that is quite an important point.

Mr Larkins—It would be fair to say that that feeds into a proper structured continuum beyond that rather than just running to nowhere?

Mr Stewart—Absolutely.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Again, I suppose it follows the logic of what you are saying. You are saying funding should be more closely tied to the achievement of outcomes, including employment or evidence that the student is enrolled in further study. Again, it is fairly fundamentalist in terms of how the funding should be allocated. You have to have the outcomes. They have to be fed through. Of course, then it is the ability of the systems to actually develop the data to make these assessments. What is your experience in terms of trying to get data related to your programs or your industry supported programs?

Mr Larkins—I think it is fair to say that CITB has a significant asset in the form of a very comprehensive web based system which provides for the registration of trainees. We can pick them up basically from almost cradle to the grave. That parallels the collection mechanism for the levy and so on. But with the introduction of the trainee numbers and so on, you can plot exactly where they go. We have very accurate data on that.

Ms Carn—Basically, we register every student that does a Doorways 2 Construction program on our system. Once they are registered, we also collect data on the competencies they have achieved. We keep in close contact with each program. We keep records of results. We ring up the students and do postgraduate surveys. We say, 'Where have you gone? What are you doing? Are you going back into school?' We keep all that data. With our system, we can track if they get picked up into apprenticeships or if they get picked up just by the industry. They might be working as a current worker. We can track where they are going.

I met with a group yesterday. We have an apprentice who did the program who is in his fourth year. He did it four years ago. I could track him. I could say, 'This is what you've done since and this is the training you have done on top of it' and follow through. So as far as data goes, we manage that. But all the programs, at first they did not really like it. But they have come on board and they keep logbooks and they send everything through. We really just collect it and collate it. But they actually collect the data from the students. So it works.

Mr Stewart—An analysis of that is that those programs that are not performing to a certain level are re-assessed. We want to ensure that we have quality in the programs. If one does not perform, we have the ability to take it out of the system and replace it with another one.

Mrs MAY—Your submission talks about recognising those programs that have weaknesses and are not related to industry. You are saying you can pick them up through the collection of data. What would you do if you identified one that was not performing? You have made reference also in your submission to preferring schools to work with RTOs rather than having embedded courses at schools. Is that what you would prefer?

Ms Carn—At a state level, what happens with VET in schools here is each VET in schools program is auspiced with a registered training organisation. The majority of our programs, except for the Regency TAFE one, are delivered by the school. All the RTO does is accredit them and manages the quality and assessment of the program. So the school is actually delivering it and it is just that auspicing agreement between the two with the RTO.

Mrs MAY—You liaise with the RTO, then?

Ms Carn—Each program has a whole list of partnerships. It is RTO and industry. We liaise with the whole lot. Most of the programs have a governing committee. It is made up of a representative from each of those organisations. They work very closely together to keep the data and to manage the quality of the program. We have an issue at the moment with staffing in the programs. If a teacher is going to retire or take leave for a year, we have an issue of how we continue. I have a teacher coming in tomorrow. He has the problem that he wants to take a year off. We have to move another teacher into his position. At the moment, that teacher is based at another school. The school will not release him. Our next step is for us to go to the department and discuss that issue and see what we can do at a departmental level. It is really basic. If that does not happen, the program will not continue.

Mrs MAY—Wouldn't moving teachers always be done through the department anyway? Can that be a personal preference of a teacher to request the move? Do you approach them first?

Ms Carn—They have already approached them and the principal at the school has said no, it is not to happen.

Mrs MAY—On a different tack, as far as careers in the industry are concerned, how do you get that information to the students with respect to opening up career pathways? Do you work with career advisers in the schools, principals or through the RTOs to give students a better understanding or a good idea of the sort of opportunities that are available in the industry?

Mr Stewart—It is a combination of a number of factors, all of which you mentioned. But it is also very much built into the program as a marketing program. It is really about changing people's attitudes to the industry. That is done by way of the web site, which is quite interactive. People can log on to the web site, look at different things and the links, and it follows it through. They are things like: what is a carpenter? What does a carpenter do? What are the conditions? What are the wages? What does an engineer do—civil, mechanical, electrical? What does an architect do and what are the different types of architecture? It is very much a marketing program driven by a specific video that is being developed for the schools and then specific pamphlets that mirror the web site images of the various trades and occupations. So it is about changing people's attitudes towards the industry and the career paths available.

Mrs MAY—Would you go into schools on a career information night and show your video to parents?

Mr Stewart—Absolutely.

Ms Carn—And the teacher that is in the scholarship position, that is part of their role to liaise with the VET coordinators in the schools and the career counsellors and to make sure that they are basically there for the career advice. A big part of their role is to get the information out. It is also to promote the programs already up and running. They are saying, 'You are at Salisbury High School. We already have a program here and this is what it offers you.' So it is about promoting VET in schools but also the careers.

Mr Stewart—In addition to that, we list industry people to act as success stories. They say, 'I was an apprentice. I am now managing director of a company that turns over $100 million a year. This is how I did it.' They talk to the children, the parents, the teachers. It is all of those people that have to have attitudes changed, from our experience.

CHAIR—Is it cutting through, do you think?

Mr Stewart—Absolutely.

CHAIR—There is a perception that those sorts of trades are—

Mr Stewart—Well, when would you read a good story about a builder? That is the problem and that is one reason why this program was able to bring together all the different factions of the building industry to promote the industry and promote career opportunities.

Mr SAWFORD—Sounds like a political party!

Mr Stewart—If you know the building industry, let me tell you there are some factions.

Ms Carn—We have recently had some private schools that were coming to us, such as Blackfriars school, which is going to work with some private schools. They say, 'We want to do this program.' That is a huge breakthrough. Initially, we had a lot of students coming into it because they were problem students. They would do a VET in Schools program. Over the years this has run—that is six years from 1997—there has been a change in the students that we have attracted to the program. They are looking at it more for career opportunities. They will look at it and say, 'I can start off here but I can end up in engineering. I can go through that system.' So it has been a change of attitude over the years.

Mr Stewart—Especially in the private schools.

CHAIR—Do you think there is a role for some sort of advertising campaign on this issue? You are going into schools and effectively communicating with the kids. Do you think there would be any benefit in television ads or something like that to show students that there are really valuable, interesting and potentially lucrative career opportunities in industries such as building and this is how you go about it?

Mr Stewart—When we established the program, we looked at that as an option. We felt that the niche marketing on a more direct basis would be more effective. I think it has been. Rather than the scattergun approach, we have gone to particular schools or communities and delivered the spiel about opportunities, pay rates, conditions and those sorts of things to dispel the views that were broadly held about the building industry being dirty, dangerous and lowly paid. We looked at that but we felt that this more targeted approach would have better results, and I think it has.

Mr SAWFORD—A consistent theme in this inquiry, which has been going for about eight months, is the point you raise about the lack of clarity of purpose of VET. For the last 110 years there has been a lack of clarity of purpose. It has oscillated between the needs of industry and the needs of individual students. There is nothing new about that. Wouldn't the purpose be better served if it was not a battle between one and the other but an inclusive battle that included both?

Mr Stewart—Absolutely. But I have to say that the industry has been very backward in coming forward to promote itself. They have got a lot to answer for prior to this program for not actually being proactive and trying to influence the education system. This is in a small way the building industry's attempt to do that. I agree with what you say.

Mr SAWFORD—Your experience of the education department is as a bit of a blocking force, from what I have anticipated.

Mr Stewart—It has been interesting.

Mr SAWFORD—That is a bit disappointing, really, because I would have thought that state government departments like to project themselves as being very strongly in favour of joint partnerships with industries and other groups. You seem to be giving us a view that that is the rhetoric at one level but at a practical level, where you want to do it, it is a bit more difficult.

Mr Stewart—There have been some very good connections made with individuals within the department. SSABSA, for example, have been very proactive in supporting the program. We should not give the view that we have had these massive problems with the education department. It has been a learning curve for us as industry as I think it has been for the education department because we want to do things differently, I guess.

Mr Larkins—The problem we have is no different to any situation where you have an entity—in this case, the department—that has been structured towards the delivery of a set of products. It has a bureaucracy and a whole set of rules built around it. Rob's point is that we are trying to come away at a tangent. A lot of the problems seem to be organisational and sometimes even philosophical. It is fair to say that the level we are pitching at has been de-emphasised philosophically in education for the last 20-odd years. That has led to another misnomer, which is the point that Catherine made. At one stage, most of the people coming into VET were kids who were seen to have had problems in what has become essentially an academic environment.

The answer always straddles it. This applies as much to people who are going to undertake a tertiary pathway as it does to people who are going to take a trades pathway. The problem we face is no different to every other segment of Australian society and industry. It is as much a recruitment issue as anything else. We are facing a unique demographic challenge. A corollary

would be the Defence Force. It is an organisation of probably 50,000 people. I hate to think how much they spend on advertising. It is horrendous. But they have to do that to attract the new generation of people. Every sector is facing those similar sorts of problems.

Mr Stewart—The interesting thing in the tertiary sector of education is they have been stunningly successful at marketing their product. We all know that university is not for everyone and that everyone that goes to university does not end up with what they thought they would end up with. They might end up with a degree, but that does not buy a job. We are saying, 'If you do this course and you become a tradesperson, you will end up with a job.' That is what we are saying.

Mr SAWFORD—Higher education was part of the agenda of dismantling the technical schools. They were part of dudding the resources to junior secondary in the primary schools. They got rid of their competition. That is what they did.

Mr Stewart—I was lucky enough to be a participant in the economic summit here. Education was one of the platforms of debate. We had to turn that around because it was purely focused on tertiary education. What we are seeing through this program is that the curriculum one size does not fit all. In the south or the north of Adelaide there has to be a change in the thinking of the curriculum at certain schools. One size does not fit all.

Mr SAWFORD—Your model of scholarships is a good one. I think you ought to pursue that a little further. One of the other things that Catherine was so kind about was saying that studies teachers are in their 40s. Our experience is that they are in their 50s. There is a huge crisis coming up in less than five years. They will all be gone. That is a consistent situation right across Australia.

Ms Carn—That is right.

Mr Stewart—That reflects workers in our industry too, the age profile. That was the other reason for wanting to establish this program—to address that old age profile.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You do not just have an age profile issue. You have a gender profile issue as well. You talk about recruitment. It has not changed at all here. I just looked at your survey group. One per cent of enrolments were females in what is a very diverse industry. What has changed? You said a lot of things have changed over 20 years. What can your industry do to recruit females both into your VET courses and into the industry in general?

Ms Carn—I came from an industry that predominantly when I started was male. I did my apprenticeship as a chef. When I went into that, I was the only female in the kitchen with 14 workers. That has changed. I see the building construction industry as very much male oriented. I meet up with these females. We do have females in the school programs. Until they get role models in the industry, I do not think it will change. We need to promote role models of females in the industry. It changed at a level for me. In our technical schooling when I went to TAFE, they started bringing in female lecturers. We then started getting a lot more females into the industry in the cooking area. That may be an answer with changing the female-male ratio. There are careers in the industry. I make an effort when I am out on career activities. As they walk past, I say, 'What are you interested in doing? Have you looked at the building and construction

industry? There are drafting jobs and business administration jobs. You could be a business owner.' I give them examples. They have actually never thought of it. So it is also changing.

But there has to be an effort by everybody. I went into a school the other day. I went through all the careers. The career counsellor said to me, 'I didn't know there were so many careers in the building and construction industry.' I also think that career counsellors in schools and career advisers need to have information. I know it is very hard. There are all these industries out there. There is a huge range. That all needs to be presented to students.

Mr SAWFORD—Some have a significant teaching role as well and they have drawn the short straw at the beginning of the year.

Ms Carn—That is right. If we want to give career advice, it has to be consistent all the way through to these students.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Would you say that the industry itself is blokey in just about every sense of the word, even marketing?

Mr Stewart—Certainly this program is not blokey from a marketing point of view because we recognise the issues. Undoubtedly the industry has a history of being like that. There are some jobs that, to be fair, women just could not do. But there are a significant number of jobs that they could do. That is why I mentioned earlier that this program is really a marketing program, which has outcomes at the end which mean jobs.

Mr SAWFORD—What couldn't a woman do?

Mr Stewart—She would find it pretty hard to do some of the labouring jobs.

Mr SAWFORD—I have seen a few women being brickies and throwing them up.

Mr Stewart—No, brickies are not a problem. We have carpenters in our groups. That is not a problem. There is painting and tiling. There are a lot of jobs that they can do.

Mr SAWFORD—There are a few women there, but they are the odd ones.

Mr Stewart—As we said before, it is really about changing people's attitudes. It is a big barrier. You have to change the attitudes not only of the teachers and the parents but of the students.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—And the employers?

Ms Carn—I met a young girl yesterday. She is doing the VET in Schools program. I said to her, 'What are you interested in?' She said, 'I thought I wanted to be a painter, but I did it and it was boring.' So she said, 'Now I'm looking at all the other areas,' because they get a chance to do everything, such as tiling. She said, 'Then I'll make a decision about what I want to do. But I do like the drafting side,' because they have been doing plans and things like that. But it gives her the opportunity to experience it and then make a decision rather than go straight into employment.

CHAIR—I have one other question. You mention on page 5 of your submission that the ultimate goal is to attract the right type of young person to fill the available positions. You talk about a group training company that has employed D2C graduates, commenting that we are seeing a better quality of kid apply. Obviously there are benefits in that regard from this sort of program. Do you think you could get the right sort of kid applying, to use that phrase, via a more general vocational education course that is focused on employability, skills, a broader range of workplace experiences, the generic skills, OH&S issues and some industry experience more broadly rather than it being a specific construction industry course?

Mr Stewart—I think the program is purposely developed to be specific.

CHAIR—Of course. What I am asking is whether that alternative approach delivers the sort of person that you want.

Mr Stewart—In some respects it could. We focus very much on human relations skills, punctuality and things like that. So a general course could do that provided it was embedded in it.

Ms Carn—I know at a state level they deliver a certificate I in employability skills. That is in the TAFE curriculum. That is really looking at general skills like mathematics and time management and things like that. But I believe that each industry area has a culture. Students need to learn. If they are really interested in going into that industry, I say to students, 'Are you interested in going into that? Go and do some work experience or work placement and then decide if that's what you want to do.' It is cultural. In the building and construction industry they will be out on work sites in 40 degree heat and they have to keep working. If they do not like that, they would not do that. If you have a student who is afraid of heights, they are not going to go into crane operating. They need to experience that at an industry level. I know the certificate I employability skills looks at all the generic employability skills. But a component of that is work placement. They have to go and put it into context.

Mr Larkins—In terms of the right kind of people, the other thing is that it demonstrably translates into a better outcome at the end of the period of formal training later. They are attuned to the requirements of the industry. They are more likely to stick it out and they do not become part of the attrition statistics that most training courses of any kind will demonstrate. People come into it cold and decide it is not for them. The resources you put into that are lost.

Mr SAWFORD—Are you aware of Bradfield senior secondary college in New South Wales?

Ms Carn—No.

Mr SAWFORD—This is a college set up as a one-off by the state government of the day. It has year 11 and 12 with 1,000 kids. Its core business is vocational training. We were in Western Australia on Monday. A couple of years ago, they set up a 1,000-pupil year 11 and 12 senior secondary technical or technological college. It is the same campus as a TAFE. Murdoch University have an outreach as well. We do not have anything like that in South Australia. We used to.

Mr Stewart—The closest would be Urrbrae, wouldn't it?

Ms Carn—We have two vocational colleges. We have the Southern Vocational College and Windsor Gardens.

Mr SAWFORD—That is a cluster system.

Ms Carn—It is a cluster system.

Mr SAWFORD—But we do not have a stand-alone.

Ms Carn—No.

Mr SAWFORD—What is your view of that? Would it be easier for your industry to deal with?

Ms Carn—As far as dealing with the school programs are concerned, at the moment we have 20 programs. They are all running at a level and we increased the quality.

Mr SAWFORD—That is a cluster model. I think that is a good idea.

Ms Carn—That would be just an institute that we would be working with directly.

Mr SAWFORD—I like diversity in education. I do not like sameness. When you have enrolments in schools that are in a small, private system, an independent system, the cluster allows them to take advantage of VET. I like to see VET people have their place in the sun. I reckon it has been taken away from them. I would like to see them with their own high bar that they can ascribe to.

Mr Stewart—It has certainly been treated very much as a secondary thing, which we do not agree with.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you support that concept?

Mr Stewart—I would certainly be interested to have a look at it.

Mr Larkins—There is a geographical issue. It is a reflection of life. This is all about building relationships too. Kids who have done Doorways 2 Construction get exposed to employers and so on. Those employers become more inclined to engage kids. The employment decision is the biggest risk that a small business of any kind takes. If you get it wrong, it is a world of hurt. The only way to develop that confidence is to know the person. I imagine it would be hard to distribute that kind of exposure in a centralised institution just because of the geographic issues.

Mr SAWFORD—You might have 40 different offerings. In terms of numbers, you are dealing with the same numbers. You are dealing with people and that is their core business and they are going to promote it because it is in their interests to promote it. I would have thought that would be a stronger relationship than the one you have at the moment, that is all.

Ms Carn—I think the benefit of that would be that it would pick up students that are not in school and not in employment.

Mr SAWFORD—That is right.

Ms Carn—So you would capture them. Some of our programs will enrol a student part time, because they are unemployed, and put them into the program. So they are catering for those people. But that would be the benefit of what you are suggesting.

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

Proceedings suspended from 12.44 p.m. to 1.32 p.m.

KELTON, Mr Stephen, Director, Regency Institute of TAFE

MULVIHILL, Mr Michael James, Managing Director, Douglas Mawson Institute of Technology

CHAIR—Thank you for joining us this afternoon. I remind you that proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. I invite you to make some general introductory comments. Then we will proceed to questions.

Mr Kelton—It is our intention to make a very short statement, which I am going to make. I am not sure whether Mike completely agrees with it. Then we would like to devote as much time as possible for discussion. Firstly, I would like to reinforce the point that I believe general education is the major focus and the major concern of schools. In saying that, I have strong support for vocational education and training, especially at year 12 level, to broaden the curriculum and increase the successful participation of students at the school level.

I believe we need to have a much greater effort by schools to use TAFE facilities and TAFE expertise to support the initiatives that schools are taking. TAFE has extensive and highly credible links to industry. Our lecturers have all had industry experience. We work hard on professional development to ensure those experiences are up to date. The strength of the high schools, on the other hand, is largely in theory and theoretical education. They are very strong at that.

My belief is that the programs are underresourced. In saying that they are under-resourced, I also recognise that there are higher costs associated with many of the vocational courses that schools run and schools would want to run. That is a function of logistics. In many cases, you cannot fit as many students in the class due to workshop constrictions or health and safety constrictions. You therefore come up with a higher cost per student hour. That makes the courses more expensive. It also gives a temptation to schools to do it cheaper, to go to the lowest common denominator, whereas I believe in this area they ought to be looking at quality provision.

I also want to make a few comments about technical high schools. I am aware that there has been some considerable debate, at least in South Australia, over the last few years about the technical high school system. Prior to coming to TAFE, I taught in a technical high school. I have no doubt that they served us well in the 1970s. Equally, I do not believe there is necessarily a future for them now. The technical high schools in the past were focusing on students going on into a labour or a skill market, whereas today the schools and the education we need have to focus on students with technological and knowledge skills as well as highly technical skills. So I am not sure whether that model would work because it would mean that the schools individually would need to have sophisticated workshop and technical facilities which I believe are beyond their capacity to afford, particularly when you look at the low student numbers involved in the various technical areas.

There are lots of examples of good things happening in South Australia at some of our schools in the partnerships with the TAFEs. In my institute, for example, just this year we have negotiated a different provision with a range of high schools in the Hills which are coming down and using our technical facilities. Their teachers teach them. We have provided some professional development for those teachers. That is working in the Elizabeth area with the Elizabeth campus, which is part of Regency. But there are any number of good examples. Mike's people have done some excellent work in auspicing and negotiating specific arrangements with schools as well.

I believe that the schools ought to be concentrating on broadly based curriculum which enhances lifelong learning, which enhances the Meyer competencies. They ought to be working with the TAFEs to provide the specialist outputs, the specialist facilities, that TAFE can provide. We ought to be working more closely with the schools in respect of professional development. We ought to be using, for example, TAFE's expertise in career guidance and career support much more than we are using it with the schools. So those few comments were meant to be by way of introduction. Mike might want to add or subtract them.

Mr Mulvihill—I support them totally.

CHAIR—That is a brief comment. To begin with, I want to pursue the issue of the greater use by schools of TAFE facilities and TAFE resources and TAFE staff. That has been put to us on a number of occasions. Certainly there are attractions related to that. However, there are barriers and disadvantages as well. One obvious one that has been put to us by schools is their having to purchase TAFE courses rather than running the courses themselves. For instance, at Willunga school yesterday, they were running their own hospitality course at around a third of the cost it would have been to access a local TAFE to provide that course. How do we overcome that financial disincentive to use TAFE?

Mr Kelton—I have real problems with their costings. I do not believe that would be true, with all due respect.

CHAIR—That may be the case.

Mr Kelton—In the last five years, I have been employed in the former larger department of education, training and employment as executive director of HR, where I was playing a leading role in the development of policy and in particular examining the staffing costs associated with schools. Each of our government schools now has a global budget. It would be fair to say that the schools are growing in their knowledge and expertise about what things cost. I would doubt that. I think lecturing costs in TAFE would be exactly the same as the teaching costs in schools. How could there be that difference?

CHAIR—I do not have that information available to comment on that. Taking at face value their costings, I assume they looked at it very carefully before making their decision. If there is a cost to a school of purchasing those courses from TAFE that is greater than the cost of providing it themselves, how do we address that problem?

Mr Mulvihill—Inevitably, there will be a difference. I agree exactly with what Steve said about costings. I do not think they use the same sorts of costing methodologies that we use. We

have taken many, many, many years of increasing sophistication to get to the point where we are reasonably confident that we are accounting for all costs. If we are talking about trade courses or courses that require a good deal of facility and support, those facilities exist in TAFE but they do not exist within schools. They are very expensive. That includes libraries and student service facilities and all the other support we provide in a TAFE institute, an adult environment that has been designed to support flexible learners and self-motivated learners and so forth. So the costs are different.

I will return to the point that Steve was making about the tech schools and the standard of machinery and so forth that was available in workshops. Even within TAFE institutes, we have had to consolidate them into, where possible, single sites. For instance, all the advanced wood trades operate out of one site in Adelaide. They are not dispersed as they would have been with tech high schools and currently with a number of high schools. They are in very small number right across the state. If we are talking, for instance, of a wood trades course, where the course requirements for equipment and replacement of equipment is higher and when you are rolling that into a charge for a student it might not be very great within one school, but if you were comparing like with like, and you were going into a TAFE college, you would be getting a much different service. You have access to a much greater range of options than you would in a high school.

CHAIR—But the critical issue for schools still is the marginal cost rather than long-term replacement issues and rather than even, in some cases, the quality of the resources and equipment there. They are really operating on a fairly tight marginal cost basis. Would it be a better arrangement—rather than the schools purchasing those services from TAFE on a per capita basis—for the government simply to be making those services available free for high school students to access TAFE courses but for the government to directly fund the TAFE according to the extra number of students? Is that a more workable approach?

Mr Mulvihill—I suppose it does not matter where the money comes from.

CHAIR—So long as your costs are covered.

Mr Kelton—We are not running these courses at profit. You asked me a previous question about differences in costing. These are not run on a fee for service basis. These are just run on a recovery basis. So provided someone was prepared to fund it, excellent.

Mr SAWFORD—I wanted to back up what you were saying earlier.

CHAIR—Again on the funding issue—I am not sure of the situation here in South Australia—in some other states, such as New South Wales, for instance, the access of public school students to TAFE courses is free and the government does make up the difference with their own funding. But non-government school students have to pay to access TAFE courses. There is a disincentive for them, so they tend to be duplicating what is happening in TAFE in their own schools. If there was an arrangement in South Australia for the funding just to come from the government to TAFE, you would take the school students without charging them directly. Would you envisage that that ought to apply as well to non-government school students, that it ought to apply right across the secondary schools sector?

Mr Mulvihill—It is up to government policy of the day. We would not have an opinion about that.

CHAIR—You do not have an opinion on it. There are some other issues in terms of obstacles, such as industrial relations issues, duty of care, transport, logistics and timetabling, but perhaps we will come back to them.

Mr Kelton—I will comment on that, particularly in respect of the industrial relations issues. In respect of the enterprise agreement at the moment, it covers TAFE and schools. There are provisions in there to allow for cross-service. We have gone out of our way to ensure that there are no IR barriers. There are issues related to transport. There are other issues, as Mike has raised. From time to time I get concerned, for example, when there are school age students on campus. We do not provide any supervision at lunchtime or anything like that. We do, however, make sure that our lecturers are aware of their particular responsibilities associated with school age students in the classroom with respect to mandatory notification et cetera. But we do not provide any other facilities outside the classroom or the tuition that we are providing. That is another issue.

CHAIR—There is an issue there that perhaps can be negotiated between TAFE and schools if we move further in that direction. I want to clarify one point before I hand over to my colleagues. On the IR issues, you said that significant progress has been made there. That involves issues such as class size and all of those sorts of things, after hours teaching and so on?

Mr Kelton—The progress that has been made relates to the responsibilities of teachers and lecturers in respect of working in either schools or TAFEs. There is the opportunity for cross-service there so that is not a barrier for us.

Mr Mulvihill—There is an issue, though, regarding where the money would come from to fund those students. If it was profile funding, the base subsidy funding, which is used in some states, I understand—if we were to do that here—it would take training opportunities away from the general public in the non-school sector.

Mr SAWFORD—I want to go back to the question Kerry asked about. Certainly the argument has been given to us that schools can do it at a lesser cost or they use cheaper RTOs or whatever. We had it put to us by Catholic Education this morning here in South Australia and Catholic Education and independent schools in Western Australia. I agree with you. I gave them the example of them having 60 or 80 kids doing hospitality. That is the salary of a teacher. What difference does it make whether the teacher was in TAFE or in the school? There is a distinct perception out there that that is in fact the case. I do not know where that has actually come from, but it is there. Now noting you two come from the Karmel school of vocational education—

Mr Kelton—That is related to our age, is it?

Mr SAWFORD—It obviously is. We are of the same age, but I am obviously on the reactionary side. Despite your comments on costs, VET in schools, according to the state education department and Catholic Education this morning, has grown 430 per cent in the state and 400 per cent in the Catholic sector. That seems to have occurred without a great deal of

funding, within their own existing funding. That seems to me to be not sustainable. They are the figures they gave us. You do not agree with them?

Mr Kelton—They have these students in situ in the schools. Each school has a global budget. At least each of the state schools has a global budget. All of the private or independent schools are responsible for their own budgeting anyway. So if they are spending money on something, they are not spending it on something else. The students cannot be in two places at once. To the extent that students are undertaking VET programs, it frees up other resources. What they have been able to do is to look at different ways to extend the resource so as to provide a curriculum for the students.

Mr Mulvihill—It might be just as simple as they are using a VET curriculum instead of the original curriculum with no different equipment.

Mr SAWFORD—Just a substitute?

CHAIR—Most analyses seem to indicate that the cost of providing VET courses is something like 25 per cent higher than the cost of providing general education courses.

Mr Kelton—There is no doubt about that because of the nature of the courses. It is always much easier to teach a theory course than it is to take a skills based course. We find that in our TAFE programs. In the business services area, for example, those programs are a lot cheaper to run than they are in some of the technical programs that Mike's institute would run or mine would run. They are much more expensive. They are double, for example, because of the nature of equipment, the size of the workshop, the occupational health and safety requirements, notwithstanding the fact that the lecturers are paid the same and those lecturing salaries—I could have mentioned this in answer to the IR question—are also very similar to school salaries. There is no difference there.

Mr Mulvihill—But there is another side to the equation. Because of the lack of maturity and lack of context and so forth that young people have in many of our programs, they actually take a lot longer to reach the same level of competence, so the costs could be higher in schools.

Mr Kelton—Yes. I think that is right.

Mr SAWFORD—Would you optimise VET in schools?

Mr Kelton—Optimise it?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Mr Kelton—I return to my opening comment. I believe the function of schools is to give the students as broad a curriculum as possible, a taste of as many different vocational opportunities as they can, to ensure that they are prepared for work and life.

Mr SAWFORD—Implicit in that would be a taste of vocational training?

Mr Kelton—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—In the current context, when the growth is apparently going on, this seems to be a similar message all across Australia. We were in Perth on Monday and Tuesday. One school reported growth from 8.6 per cent of accredited VET, with students accessing accredited VET in year 2000 to 76 per cent this year. That is a huge growth.

Mr Kelton—That is a function partly of the value of the broader curriculum we are talking about. It is also a function of the fact that many students are staying at school longer. It is particularly at the year 12 level that there is a growing interest in the VET in Schools programs.

Mr SAWFORD—There is a lot of unnecessary argument, because we do not use a common language, in describing educational functions?

Mr Kelton—It is the same as the rail gauges.

Mr SAWFORD—It is, isn't it? Do we need a national inquiry in vocational education? This is a national inquiry in some sense. But do we need one that establishes the database? We had people from vocational research here in South Australia. They think the database is considerably lacking and there are holes in it everywhere. You would agree with that?

Mr Kelton—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—We ought to be recommending that?

Mr Kelton—There is a national framework through the ANTA requirements. There is that there already. We do not have the data, as you are indicating, to support that, particularly in the VET in schools area.

Mr Mulvihill—Which would include data about quality and so forth. Again, there is a lot of anecdotal stuff but not any really hard data to support it.

Mr SAWFORD—There seems to be a new dynamic and renaissance in vocational training, which I think is a good thing. Do you have any views as to the structures that are most suitable? For example, some of them can be done in schools, particularly if they have higher enrolments and they can offer the diversity. With the smaller enrolments, the cluster system seems to have some support. There seems to be another model, which is used very sparingly in this country. It is really the Bradfield secondary college in the North Shore in Sydney. It has 1,000 kids with a year 11 and 12 focus. It has a waiting list for enrolments. It seems to be doing incredibly well. Western Australia has set up the Mandurah seamless TAFE for years 11 and 12 with Murdoch University on the same campus. Does South Australia need one of those models?

Mr Kelton—We already have adult re-entry schools. We already have vocational high schools in South Australia. I am sure that our colleagues this morning would have brought you evidence of that.

Mr SAWFORD—That is interesting. We asked them that question. What would you describe as the vocational high schools in South Australia?

Mr Kelton—I would describe them as schools which had a—

Mr SAWFORD—Which ones?

Mr Kelton—In Christies Beach and Windsor Gardens. They are the vocational schools. But there are also adult re-entry schools. They are places like Hamilton, for example.

Mr SAWFORD—What is your view of 1,000-pupil year 11 and 12 senior secondary colleges?

Mr Kelton—I think there are great benefits to be gained there. You tend to have a very different culture and you tend to have a school or a school culture that is addressing the contemporary needs of young adults rather than the day-to-day requirements of preadolescent students.

Mr SAWFORD—Yesterday we put a question to the VET teachers at Willunga. They seemed to support that concept as well. Is it the case that maybe a lot of people who have done tech studies or are involved in VET training do not really get a place in the sun? Sometimes in those comprehensive general education schools their needs and their views about what should be intrinsically a good education get ignored.

Mr Mulvihill—I think the strength really is in the environment, not perhaps so much the curriculum. When you are creating an adult environment, I think it is probably of most benefit to kids that might otherwise be at risk of dropping out of school.

Mr SAWFORD—We have not been to Victoria. We are about to go there. I went on another committee and had a look at Box Hill and at Ballarat. I am very impressed with what some of the Victorians are doing. What is your view of what is happening in Victoria?

Mr Kelton—I have had a look at Ballarat. I was there about a month ago and spent some time with Kerry Cox. One of the great advantages they have there is the vertical integration of their programs. You can do that in a major city like Ballarat. You can do it in the metropolitan area. If we are talking about establishing some sort of a senior set-up, it is not possible to do that in many of our country regions. So we also need to come up with an answer to the question which enables equal opportunity and access to people wherever they live.

Mr SAWFORD—The thinking that seems to be coming out from the director and the deputy director at Box Hill was very impressive. It made us anxious to perhaps through this committee go back and have a fuller example, listening to them. Are they powerful in the VET sector nationally?

Mr Mulvihill—The Victorian institutes have been independent for many years now. They have developed a good deal of flexibility and very strong relations with their clientele, their industry groupings and so forth. They are typically much bigger than the institutions in South Australia.

Mr SAWFORD—Has that issue of independence and governance been an issue for South Australia?

Mr Mulvihill—Well, it is a question that is being looked at right around the country. Each state has currently different views about that. TAFE Directors Australia are doing a study at the moment on the governance arrangements in each of the states. That should be available in a couple of months. There will be an attempt in that study—it is an ANTA funded project—to do some benchmarking against success and whether one model is more successful than another.

Mr SAWFORD—When is that due?

Mr Mulvihill—In a couple of months time.

Mr Kelton—I am sure the committee is aware of the Kirby report. Kirby recommended a fresh look at the powers of councils and the number and configuration of institutes. That impacts on Mike's comment as well.

Mr SAWFORD—It seems to me that if TAFE were more independent, it would be stronger. Is that your view, or is that just putting words in your mouth?

Mr Kelton—It is my view that the current work we are doing in respect of the recommendations from Kirby will lead us to institutes which have a more autonomous council with greater powers. That then reflects upon what the institutes are going to be able to do. We have come from the not too distant past with something like 28 colleges of TAFE. We have gradually got that down. There are moves afoot now to reduce the number even further. Of course, once you reduce the number, you are by doing that giving the institutes the opportunity to become more autonomous and more responsible for their own destiny. They do not need to be as managed as closely by the centre.

Mr SAWFORD—They become a good bulwark to universities as well.

Mr Kelton—Well, that would not be a bad idea.

Mr SAWFORD—What is your view of TAFE degrees? Do TAFEs abide by competition policy?

Mr Mulvihill—I would prefer not to answer that question.

Mr SAWFORD—Either?

Mr Mulvihill—TAFE institutes around the nation in a number of states run degrees where they are not in direct competition with universities. So they are vocationally oriented degrees in areas where universities do not have such an award. I agree with that. I do not think we should be trying to develop degrees to compete with universities.

Mr SAWFORD—I am not suggesting that. I think the bar ought to be raised.

Mr Mulvihill—Yes.

Mr Kelton—And there are certainly many good examples of institutes working with universities on a shared basis. We have many, many examples where the bulk of the teaching or the bulk of the education is conducted at the TAFE institute.

Mr SAWFORD—But it seems to be at the University of South Australia level rather than the sandstone universities. Is that true?

Mr Kelton—It is badged in that way.

Mr SAWFORD—It is a pity, isn't it?

Mr Kelton—There are advantages and disadvantages in that. TAFE is really an Australian phenomenon. If we are talking about TAFE degrees, it does not make a lot of sense to people who are outside Australia. A university degree is something that everybody recognises.

Mr SAWFORD—But if it had an institute of technology name like Douglas Mawson, that has a much more powerful message internationally, doesn't it?

Mr Kelton—Yes, sure.

Mr SAWFORD—Isn't that really what we are going towards, more technology? It is a broader term than technical training. It is a broader term than vocational training.

Mr Mulvihill—So it is much easier to have understood internationally.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It was interesting to hear your comments about what we call Tasmania senior secondary colleges. That is where our VET is delivered. I am finding it interesting going around a number of high schools and seeing the culture of VET there and what is offered in terms of the culture of these colleges. I was interested in some of your comments about that rather than specifically designing a VET college per se. Tasmania had an interesting set-up. I suppose we did have technical schools but they were more embedded in our high schools at that stage. A grade 10 student had a clear pathway to go into technical colleges. I suppose they were the precursor of TAFE. That became unfashionable. In fact, it was some time before year 11 students could even dabble in TAFE again. Again, that became related to VET. I suppose being in the system I always found it was a deficiency. There was a clear pathway through. Given the fact that TAFE certainly in South Australia is involved in the delivery of VET and ensuring that the quality is maintained as you auspice your RTOs, do your teachers ask to go through professional development in terms of dealing with secondary students? I feel there is a difference. I am sorry it is a rhetorical question.

Mr Kelton—I think it is a fair comment. We would recognise that there are very specific and quite distinctive approaches in methodology to be used by our lecturers when they have classes of secondary students. We all need to appreciate the different paths that our lecturers take to get to where they are. Our lecturers are primarily recruited from industry. Some of them may have undertaken some casual employment with us in the past. But certainly during their tenure as a contract lecturer or as an hourly paid lecturer, they are encouraged to complete a professional qualification. During that professional qualification there is some analysis of the pedagogy required to work with young adults. Certainly in the past more so than in the present, there were

many students aged only 15 or 16 coming straight into our TAFE courses. They needed to have the professionalism and the pedagogy to be able to work with those young people.

To specifically answer your question, yes, we do provide some professional development for those lecturers who are working with secondary age students, particularly in things like mandatory notification but also in trying to stimulate their ideas about how they might want to take some slightly different approaches. In saying that, I also want to say that the students that come to us from the high schools are overwhelmingly highly motivated. They do not seem to exhibit the negative behavioural problems that they do from time to time in their own school. There are different reasons for that. Mike has alluded to one of them. That is, we are working in an adult environment. There are different expectations and a different level of trust upon these young people. I cannot think of one example where we have had disciplinary problems with school students coming to our classes. It is basically not a problem for us.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I think that is very important because it is the development of a culture of learning and trust. It is a bit like workplaces in many cases. Would you say that that situation you just described then is not replicated when the learning is delivered in the school? We are dealing with two beasts here, different beasts.

Mr Mulvihill—There are a lot of examples where there is very appropriate adult mature environments for students in schools. We actually get school age kids—this can involve primary age as well as various groups from secondary schools—come and speak to our staff as a group and present to them and show staff how they are learning in schools, which is not really a heck of a lot different than the way we would teach. There is a lot of learning in teams and a lot of research based learning and so forth. But the difference, I think, is the independence and the trust and so forth that occurs within a TAFE adult environment.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Thanks for that. We talk about the people involved in the process of vocational education and training. We often forget about the parents and their understanding of it. I suppose the general run of the mill teacher is involved in general education. I always wonder about the employers' understanding of young people in the work force. I just wonder—I know it is not your field of expertise—sometimes whether there is enough feedback for employers to say, 'Hang on a minute. It's all right to say this is a culture of work so you bloody well like it or lump it.' Excuse my French. I am wondering if there is sufficient feedback to young people who have had that experience both at TAFE and working on the job to say, 'Hang on a minute, your culture might be a fact but it doesn't necessarily mean it's right.'

Mr Kelton—I am not sure how you want us to comment on that.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I am just interested. I suppose we have not discussed any of that.

Mr Mulvihill—Finding appropriate workplaces for students at any stage is—

Mr Kelton—Difficult.

Mr Mulvihill—It is something that requires a great deal of expertise and attention. As you say, not all workplaces are appropriate.

CHAIR—Stephen, I think you mentioned that at Regency TAFE, VET for school students is through classes set up specifically for those students.

Mr Kelton—No. We have a large number of auspicing arrangements. We have specific arrangements with a huge number of government and private schools. We also have composite classes. We just do a little bit of everything. It is right across the board.

CHAIR—So there are classes at TAFE where school students could fit into classes that are already running?

Mr Kelton—There are top-up arrangements. There are also composite arrangements. Only this morning in the butchery section there were students from five different schools, four government and one independent school, making up the composite group. They are going through a module. We are trying to make the opportunities to best suit the student needs.

CHAIR—Is there sufficient flexibility in TAFE timetabling? If we were to encourage more school students into TAFE, is it your view that there is enough flexibility there to accommodate their needs?

Mr Kelton—We have the capacity for that flexibility. I would have to say that what we are doing at the moment is also opportunistic. It uses what capacity we have got at any point in time. If, however, we were looking at a different model, certainly we run classes starting as early as 7 a.m. and others finishing as late as 10.30 p.m. five days a week, although there is not a lot of activity Friday night. So there is also huge capacity for flexibility within the facility, within the hours and also within the weeks. We would have students on campus for all but two weeks of the year, and that would obviously be before Christmas to just after New Year. So there is great flexibility already working in the system.

CHAIR—And it would depend, of course, on how many school students wanted to access your services?

Mr Kelton—That is right. It is also common sense that the greatest pressure on the system is between the hours of nine or eight and four or whatever it is and also Mondays to Thursdays. Friday is not such a busy day for a variety of reasons. If we were looking at a different model, we would have to build in the flexibilities of which the system is already capable.

CHAIR—Would it be also possible to include courses that ran during school vacation times?

Mr Kelton—We are already doing that.

CHAIR—You are doing that.

Mr Kelton—We are doing specifically targeted classes. In the mid-semester break, we had what we call kids kitchen, for example, which was an opportunity for young students of primary school age to come and get a bit of a taste of the opportunities and the skills in the variety of hospitality areas.

CHAIR—Are there any obstacles you are aware of that would make it difficult for schools to access your services at an increasing level?

Mr Kelton—The obstacles is one part of the issue. The other part of the issue is what we are set up to do and what our major priorities are. Our major priorities are associated with the economic development needs of the state. We are talking about an issue that will come to fruition and give us the benefits in the longer term rather than the shorter term. As institute director, I would want to think what were my immediate and longer term priorities in answering that question. With respect to obstacles, we have already talked about teaching methodology and the particular requirements and expectations that parents would have when they send their child to school. They would have an expectation that once that student stepped inside the school gate or the TAFE gate, they were properly looked after. I have mentioned previously that we do not have that provision at the moment and we would need to work on that if there were going to be larger numbers of students coming for longer periods of time.

Mr Mulvihill—The biggest obstacle, which I am sure you have heard many, many times, is the cash in the school system. The institutions are being funded to cater for those young people. Typically those resources are tied up with permanent staffing. So while the school staff are teaching the students with a VET curriculum, everything is balanced. But after that, they typically do not have access to sufficient funds to support them.

Mr SAWFORD—You mentioned permanent staff. Is the casualisation of staff in TAFE and schools a problem in South Australia?

Mr Kelton—Not at the moment. Large numbers of our people have been made permanent. There are hundreds of them. We are looking at about 300 or 400. I do not have the statistics in front of me, but certainly the incoming government has a policy on permanency. We are finding that lecturers who have undertaken about five years of consecutive service go straight into a permanent position. So the incidence of permanency has greatly increased.

Mr SAWFORD—So that is a turnaround?

Mr Mulvihill—Yes, a significant turnaround. The other part of it, of course, is that the access we have to part-time instructors is part of our strength. It is where we get our relevant industry experience and flexibility.

Mr SAWFORD—Permanent part-timers or casual part-timers?

Mr Mulvihill—Well, it can be both.

Mr Kelton—The overwhelming numerical majority would be casual. But there are a few people who like that sort of employment for their own reasons.

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of relationships with schools, I am going to ask Michael about the relationship with Ocean View, which is in my electorate. It is a very partisan question. If we were looking at some of those relationships and trying to analyse their strengths, are there schools that Regency have close relationships with that we ought to be having a look at?

Mr Kelton—Absolutely. I have specifically mentioned the relationships with the Hills schools, where those students are pooled. They are using our technical facilities in Elizabeth. That is an excellent example. We have all sorts of different relationships. What we are doing with Paralowie in the Regency and Paralowie partnership program at our Salisbury campus is another good example. But there are many examples of best practice.

Mr SAWFORD—What about Ocean View, the old Taperoo?

Mr Mulvihill—Again, it is everything that Steve described. We relate to Ocean View on many levels. At the moment, we have a number of Ocean View students who access our Port Adelaide campus—they have a room at that campus, so that is where they come each day. We have a number of those students who are part of a practice firm which is connected to an incubator that is run in Port Adelaide.

Mr SAWFORD—They are doing business studies, are they?

Mr Mulvihill—Yes, they are doing various business studies modules. A lot of those students then are enrolled in various other programs. We have one in textile, clothing and footwear. They are just spread across the institute according to their interests. In their Osborne campus, many of those students were studying TAFE programs, sometimes supported by our lecturers but often supported by the lecturers within the school using VET curriculum. In summary, it is just a relationship where both parties feel very comfortable. The school feels very comfortable about accessing our programs and the relationships with our staff are very strong. At the more senior levels, we are very comfortable in sorting out any of the little glitches that come along and in sharing resources and so forth.

Mr SAWFORD—So it is a unilateral relationship—it is not within a cluster system?

Mr Mulvihill—No. We have a similar relationship with Le Fevre, for instance. We have probably a similar but more of a merging relationship with Croydon. It is really just a repeat of the story that Steve gave you. Most schools in the geographical area that we would sit in have a relationship with us, whether it is an auspicing one or, in some cases, just a little more intimate.

CHAIR—It was put to us by a cluster workplace coordinator in Western Australia on Monday that the cost of accessing TAFE courses was much greater than the cost of purchasing those courses of similar quality from private providers. Is that the situation in South Australia?

Mr Kelton—I always say to my staff that there will be plenty of people who will undercut us, but if anyone does it better than us I will start to get upset.

CHAIR—I thought you might say that.

Mr Kelton—The facts of the matter are that we pay award rates and our focus is on quality and professionalism. We are not interested in doing things on the cheap. We are interested in providing long-term, quality experiences for students. If someone wants to do it cheaper than us they can have that end of the market. You will also find in South Australia—and I do not think it is any different from other states—that many of the people who are working with private providers are ex-TAFE people who choose to work there for a variety of reasons or people who

might not be able to or wish to get a job with us. We are talking about the differences in what is available in the marketplace.

CHAIR—Putting aside the quality issue for a moment—and I take your point there—are you aware of private providers offering similar courses at a much cheaper rate in the state?

Mr Kelton—Absolutely.

Mr Mulvihill—Of course they do, but they do not have to support libraries and student services and all that sort of thing. It is certificate I and II level. Typically they do a very good job. We are left with the higher-level, more expensive stuff. The more of that stuff that is done in schools with private providers, the higher the average cost of the TAFE stuff.

Mr SAWFORD—You said some of those people were ex-TAFE people. Are they disaffected TAFE people?

Mr Kelton—I did not say that.

Mr SAWFORD—That is the impression I got. You are not denying that?

Mr Mulvihill—I do not think it is fair to draw that conclusion. A lot of TAFE people took the opportunity of taking pretty generous separation packages.

CHAIR—Are there any parting recommendations or key recommendations you would make apart from what has already been said? Are there any additional comments you would make to us?

Mr Kelton—No. I tried in my introductory comments to make some positive suggestions about the things that could develop. I will mention some of them. I see vocational education as being a means, not an end. It is a means to encourage and enable and stimulate students to get the life and the work skills that they require at school. Certainly we are very receptive to developing much different and much more comprehensive relationships with TAFE institutes with respect to professional development, with respect to the partnerships that Mike has talked about, with respect to the facilities and also with respect to looking at working with teachers and students in different, more flexible ways.

Mr Mulvihill—The only other thing I would like to add is to emphasise that it is very positive for young people while they are at school to develop a general understanding of TAFE programs and the world of work but not to try to make decisions too early about which specific program they follow. Where that is happening there is certainly no evidence that I can see that those students, if they make a decision in year 10 to follow a program line, are actually then following that through into TAFE and finding employment in that area. So if the VET training within schools concentrates at certificate I and II and provides a general grounding, I think it is very positive.

CHAIR—Are you suggesting that there is not a worthwhile place for school based apprenticeships starting at, say, years 9 and 10?

Mr Mulvihill—I think it would be a much more productive for those people to be developing general generic skills and then making specific decisions later.

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

[2.20 p.m.]

GEORGE, Ms Alice, Assistant Principal, Senior School, Salisbury High School

KENNETT, Mr Jeff, VET Coordinator, Salisbury High School

MEGAW, Mr Richard, Teacher, Salisbury High School

PAPHITIS, Ms Helen, Principal, Salisbury High School

CHAIR—Welcome. We appreciate your time. I invite you to make some introductory comments, if you would like to do that. We will then proceed to questions and discussion.

Ms Paphitis—I thought I might set the context for Salisbury High School first. We are located in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, one of the highest youth unemployment areas. We have a population of over 1,000 students. We have steadily grown in the last 10 years from 500 to over 1,000. We have very complex student population, with about 40 per cent on school card and 18 per cent with a non-English-speaking background. We have 91 Aboriginal students. We have about 13.5 per cent of our student population with a disability. There are three special classes and two unit classes, which are for the severe multiple disabled students. So that gives you a bit of a context of the school and why we offer the curriculum we do. We have a clear aim and that is to see every student placed in either higher education training or employment, or, for our students with disabilities, in community service. We track the students. We want to make sure they have a destination when they leave school. We want to make sure that we provide a pathway to success, and that is our motto.

The team of people I have here with me, particularly Alice, will talk about the senior school offerings. Richard will give a case study of a certificate offering we have at the school and how VET works at Salisbury High. Jeff will give a bit of an overview of VET and the kinds of things we offer. There is a saying: 'When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.' What often happens is that the teacher is ready but the student is not, and they expect the students to appear. We have a very flexible approach to our education delivery. That means offering a plethora of courses for our students to make sure that they are successful when they leave. A lot of that is VET.

Only about 17 per cent of our students go to university. Last year it was 17. Before that it was about 20. But because we are keeping our students at school, our retention rate last year was 86 per cent. The state average was 74 per cent. Because we are keeping kids at school, the proportion of kids who go to university drops. However, of those kids who want to go to university, two out of three—63 per cent—of our students actually were supported and got into university. However, we have the other huge percentage of students who need to be on a pathway to somewhere. Some of them are really ready to go straight into a full certificate course, maybe a certificate II, III or IV. Others just do the competencies to get them ready. I will hand over to Alice, who can tell you all about it.

Ms George—Our motto is pathways to success. It is certainly not one model fits all. Therefore, we need individual plans for our students. Their needs are many and varied. In our experience, we have found that our students are loath to actually leave the campus. There have been TRAC models and the office and retail models where the students did have to do all those work type things. They find it difficult to actually make that next step forward.

We are trying to incorporate more of the VET offerings onto our school premises as the starting point. Consequently, this year we have a private training provider who is delivering horticulture to our year 10, 11 and 12 students. We have just started electronics. Part of that is a robotics component. We have Uni SA working with us in a mentoring capacity there, as well as people from industry who are supporting us in that role too. We find we have a greater success rate when we actually bring things to our students. Eventually, we coax them and get them ready to make that next step forward into the world of work. The reality has been that they have not been ready to do that at 15 or 16.

We are very keen to promote and make our students very competitive in terms of an academic pathway. Equally, there are many other pathways we need to explore. Part of what the senior school philosophy has evolved into is that we need to use our SACE framework and to get the most we can out of that. So while we have a private training provider giving us horticulture and electronics, rather than just offering it as VET stand-alone what we can do is incorporate it into our vocational studies or community studies so there is that dual accreditation happening there.

We are an RTO ourselves—we have had just had our RTO status accredited for another five years. I think that is a huge boon for our school in that we can now look at the scope of our registration and increase that. So, to that end, we are looking at transport and distribution, which is a strategic need in our area. We see that there a lot of industries and businesses in and around our school. We are going to target that, and also community services, because we are told by people in the area that aged care and child care are boom industries in the area as well. So we are going to be targeting those areas. Obviously we need to look at the needs of the district and the area but also the needs and wants of our students and see if we can marry the two together. One of the outstanding programs, which we have had for about three or four years, is our partnership with the MBA and the CITB. Richard will be able to talk about that in greater depth.

Mr Megaw—Two or three years ago I was given the opportunity to deliver certificate I in general construction through the Doorways 2 Construction aspect of the Construction Industry Training Board. When I first took over the program, embedding a certificate I within a school based program was a model that was around. But we were delivering certificate IV in information technology in which the students were basically de-enrolled from school, they were re-enrolled as adults and given a separate identity to try to promote an image similar to school leavers going to further education. So I adopted a similar model. The students work for one day a week with my program and one day a week for a whole year.

In the development of that program I noticed that when the kids were working within the school boundaries the attendance was not as great and the student participation was not as good as it is now, where I take the students out of the school environment and we work on regional sites where the kids have to get to and are working in partnerships. At the moment, our main partnership is with the Housing Trust, working on Housing Trust houses. We have worked with

Westwood. When we take the kids out of the school in a real work situation we find that our successes are far greater.

We have developed a role model where the kids one day a week go to 76 Halsey Road, for example. The Housing Trust supply a house, a builder and the materials, and we work together—Jim, the builder, and I—to give the kids real life experiences in the building industry. When we get kids, 90 per cent of them know they do not want to be sitting at a desk, working in a shop et cetera. They do not want to go to university. They know they want to do something with their hands. Really, the major role model they have is through tech studies or something like that within a school environment. Most of the kids want to be carpenters. We feel our job is to expose them to all of the aspects of the building trade. We find some kids master every aspect, whether we are doing some bricklaying, carpentry work, plastering or painting and decorating. But the majority of the kids can cross off a number of those fields and find that there are one or two aspects that they enjoy, whether it be the painting and decorating, the bricklaying or whatever. I feel my role is to try and put a spark in those kids for them to go on and explore, and gain a traineeship or an apprenticeship in a chosen construction field. So we take them from school and put them in a realistic work situation.

CHAIR—Are you putting a spark in the kids? How many of them are going on to get traineeships and apprenticeships?

Mr Megaw—It is surprising. I initially thought a lot of kids did not have that spark. When you look at them and talk to them in a school situation, they know they want to do something. When you explore that with them, you find some kids are already working with bricklaying parents or they are working on weekends doing particular jobs. For some of them, the objective is just to give them that skill. We are finding that two or three kids during their work placements get a traineeship or an apprenticeship just from being in that work placement situation. That is probably where our greatest success is, and that is why the work placement aspect is very important.

Ms George—This is what I mean about giving students the confidence. On their own, they would not access this sort of opportunity. Once they have been become part of a program that takes them out of the school environment—and ultimately, for the industry-credible experience they need, they need to leave the school environment and they most definitely need to leave a classroom—that is a starting point that is a confidence builder. Then the opportunities grow from there. We are also just beginning a school based traineeship program with Smart Start employment and training. Once again, the students are going through a certificate I in employment skills and training and they are going to do a work placement of about 60 to 80 hours at the end of that. Hopefully, they will be make the contacts with the hand-picked employers that they will be doing their work placement with, and that will possibly lead into some contracts for certain students. Again, these are year 10s, 11s and 12s. So though the year 12s are at the end of their schooling, and most contracts would be for at least a year and possibly two years, they can be reorganised and restructured so that they are actually training and working and moving towards some sort of certification as well.

Mr Kennett—We have actually come along way from the work experience days. In our school, as Richard said, we are actually promoting workplace learning. When the students are going out, no longer are they just sitting there and observing and doing a few tasks. They have a

logbook and the competencies are marked off. The students want it, the parents want it and the employers want it as well. So it has been very successful.

CHAIR—I have a couple of introductory questions before I hand over to my colleagues here. Alice, you mentioned that you are using a private training provider for horticulture and electronics. Were you here earlier listening to the discussion earlier with the TAFE director?

Ms George—At the very end of it, yes.

CHAIR—Could you give your view of the value for money and the quality of those private providers.

Ms George—We do have some very good programs, which are auspiced through Regency TAFE and the Adelaide Institute of TAFE. Hospitality is one of them. Tourism is another. Hospitality for us is a difficult one because we do not have a commercial kitchen and we do not have the facilities, so we still need to do that. However, it is a costly exercise. I do not know how cost effective it actually is for us. With Training Prospects, which delivers the horticulture and the electronics, we have had a few teething problems, I would be the first to admit. Horticulture, which we started at the beginning of the year, came out of a crisis need. Helen was the one who actually thought of it. We did not have a horticulture teacher. He decided that he wanted to finish, in about week 1 of the year, and nowhere in the state could we find a horticulture teacher.

CHAIR—And no TAFE course was offering it?

Ms George—We did not consider that. But we did think of the organisation that Helen knew, we approached them and they thought it was an excellent idea. He actually comes onto the school grounds and delivers the course. Now, critical mass has now been formed and more and more students are coming on board with this idea and the structured work placement that will go with that. Again, it is that confidence building in the beginning, and it is opening up the opportunities that will come from the ability to access those opportunities.

CHAIR—Are you happy with the quality and the value for money?

Ms George—Absolutely.

CHAIR—And the electronics course—was there not a TAFE course available?

Ms George—There would be at Regency. There certainly would be.

CHAIR—Why didn't you pursue that rather than a private provider?

Ms Paphitis—Because we wanted it done on site. We wanted a flexible, responsive approach. That was negotiated between us and the company. They were so flexible. We tested them with horticulture. We wanted to go that way.

Mr Megaw—I have just done a level I tiling course at TAFE over my school holidays as a part of my professional development. I am not a tradesperson; I am a technical studies teacher who has expanded into delivering certificate I in general construction, of which our RTO is the

Master Builders Association. So I am upskilling all the time to try to reach that perfect model where I can teach everything, which may happen one day.

We were put into a TAFE situation and I enjoyed it, but I think the kids would have hated it if they did that particular program. I am talking about school kids. I say that because the normal student that goes to TAFE is spending 40 to 45 weeks out on site, building, constructing and doing all those wonderful things. Then they come in for a two-week block in a school situation and learn. They are gaining that on-site experience all the time. Our kids are in a classroom, they are working, they are hating it—this is the kids I am dealing with. I take them out into a work situation one day a week and they love it. If I were to take them to a TAFE on-site skill centre, I do not think they would like it. When I say that I am sure a majority of them would, but I am sure a majority would not like that classroom, sit-down, construct—and by 'construct' I mean build a brick wall and take it down, tile up a little corner and take it down.

CHAIR—But we were not talking about substituting the workplace experience with the class in the TAFE. We were talking about—at least the TAFE directors were—replacing the school classroom with the TAFE classroom for the theoretical component. Is that not workable?

Mr Megaw—All I am saying is that what is working very well from our point of view is not the skill centre model—in other words, building a mini-TAFE within our school environment, a big shed where we do the same sorts of things. We are trying to get them out. When we built the boardwalk at Westwood—which is in the Hanson Road, Days Road, Arndale environment—the kids worked with the Westwood development and did 80 metres of boardwalk two days a week et cetera. Those models where they get out and do real work experience, real construction, is really putting smiles on their faces. It is really getting them enthused. They are taking their parents around and showing them: 'This is what I built.' So it is the experiences we are giving them in that real work situation, instead of the in-house, covered-over classroom situation.

Mr Kennett—Hence, the need to promote and market it—and I guess that is one of my roles in the school. It is to make sure that students have access to all these courses. One way we do it is through this pamphlet, which is about to be distributed to the students for our subject counselling, where they choose their stage 1 and 2 programs. As can you see, we offer a wide variety of programs, some of which, as Alice and Richard have said, are out of the school. There is a combination of both. We also run modules and units within the school. Once they make the academic choices they have to do, we fit the VET units in behind that to make sure we answer our students' needs.

Ms Paphitis—If you noticed some of the certificate courses you will probably see one there and think, 'What is that doing there?' That is the certificate I in racing, and that is there because we have a teacher who has horses and kids who love to ride.

Mr SAWFORD—We talked about the South Australian Jockey Club!

Ms Paphitis—It is based at Cheltenham. A lot of it is opportunity driven as well as resource driven.

Mr SAWFORD—Salisbury has a national reputation in terms of vocational training. It was often gained in difficult circumstances in the early years, when it was not fashionable to do what

it did. For the record, is it correct to say that Salisbury, like Bradfield secondary college in New South Wales, like Mandurah senior secondary college in WA, defines its core business as vocational education? That does not exclude pathways to university. In an interview I think you did on ABC Radio National last year, Helen, you said that 30 per cent went to uni, 40 per cent to TAFE and the rest to employment. That is, 70 per cent of your business does not go on to the uni stream.

Ms Paphitis—That is right.

Mr SAWFORD—When Salisbury defined itself as an enterprise school, that was a very clever marketing tool. Is your core business vocational training?

Ms Paphitis—Our core business is success for all students.

Mr SAWFORD—That is not quite the question I am asking.

Ms Paphitis—I know, but that is the answer.

Mr SAWFORD—It is a good answer but it is not the answer. Or your mathematics is not too good. Seventy per cent of your work is vocational training, isn't it?

Ms Paphitis—It is preparing our students for success. Obviously, eventually they will go on to one of those pathways. The majority of them go into work, into employment, or further training.

Mr SAWFORD—During this inquiry we have received quite contradictory information from all sorts of people in all different states. All it does is reflect 100 years of oscillation of importance attached to either generic or specific trade skills. That has happened in technical training for 100 years in this country. I have always wondered why we just cannot say we are going to balance both generic and specific trade skills. I do not see that as being so hard. We have been given successful VET in Schools examples, where schools often with small enrolments have made their own individual arrangements, either with private providers or with TAFE. A second model has been with the cluster system. The model that I am becoming very attracted to—not that it suits all circumstances—is the senior, year 11 and year 12, 1,000 pupil model—I think you need 1,000 students to be able to offer the diversity—that you see at Bradfield. For political reasons, Bradfield college in New South Wales was set up in 1993. Surprisingly, it has not been replicated. For political reasons, the Mandurah one was set up. It has 1,000 pupils at year 11 and 12. They still have a general course, but that is the model. South Australia does not have that model. You would be the closest to it.

Ms Paphitis—It was not set up for political reasons either.

Mr SAWFORD—No—it was exactly the opposite. I understand that. It seems to me, from talking to some of the VET teachers at Willunga yesterday and in other states, that sometimes they do not get a place in the sun, the high bar, the VET teachers and the tech studies people. They do not have a place in the sun.

Ms Paphitis—Whose sun? When you say they do not get a place in the sun, I do not know what you mean.

Mr SAWFORD—They work in a system where they are the minority group.

Ms Paphitis—Not in this case.

Mr SAWFORD—Your school is different. They work with a minority group. Is there a place in South Australia for a senior secondary year 11 and 12 vocational technology college that has close links to TAFE and university?

Ms Paphitis—I think every school should be doing that.

Mr Megaw—I would suggest—and I can relate from the Doorways 2 Construction model—that Windsor Gardens vocational school would be the closest one that fits that definition. They are working with TAFE.

Ms Paphitis—It was set up for that purpose.

Mr Megaw—I have been at Salisbury High School for 12 years. The strength of our school has been that it is willing to embrace whatever direction it wishes to go. I can go and offer a proposal, a direction, a suggestion. If it is feasible, the school does not say, 'No, you can't do that,' or, 'That doesn't fit our program.' As long as I can justify it and come up with all the facts and figures, I can do it. The Doorways 2 Construction program started off with just a few kids from Salisbury High. Last year we were given the Northern Futures Connect. All the schools have the ability to send students to our program. So we have taken on a regional focus as well. The Northern Adelaide Development Board has money set aside for unemployed youth. We also take on unemployed youth within that program. From my point of view, I try to be as flexible as I can. I try to accommodate not only our school but a regional focus. I have found that has been very successful.

Mr SAWFORD—Has resourcing the vocational training courses been a problem at Salisbury? We had the department here this morning. They were saying to us that, from 1997, VET in schools has increased by 430 per cent. We had Catholic Education here also. Theirs has increased by almost 400 per cent. There are no funding increases. So it is within their global budgets. That must have an end somewhere, without additional funding. Is resourcing your VET becoming a problem?

Ms George—With ANTA funding running out very soon—I think it is either this year or next—obviously our goal now is to form sustainable programs. That is why we are looking at increasing our scope and being self-managing so there is a sustainability. Can I add that if you actually put VET as an add-on in any school in a curriculum, then they do not get their place in the sun. But integrating it into the curriculum as a viable pathway for students, with neither negative nor positive stigma there but just as another viable option for students to participate in, is the way that you will get your place in the sun.

While I am here in front of a microphone I will get onto my bandwagon. It is absolutely time for us to tell the universities to stop wagging the school curriculum. It is the tail that wags our

curriculum all the time. We actually have to draw a line in the sand and say, 'No more.' What has happened is that for the subjects that have been created for a number of reasons to cater for students across the board, in the rush to become recognised by universities for a tertiary entrance ranking they have upped the ante, become more rigorous and done a disservice to the very students that they were created to cater for.

Mr SAWFORD—We have had 30 years of this. I am glad to hear you say that. I agree with what you are saying. How would you do that?

Ms George—As I alluded to before, for us personally we have seen a lot of developments in VET and we are now looking very much at opening it up into a community learning sphere. So we are going to incorporate our VET programs through the recognised subjects in the SACE. I know SSABSA are working more and more towards that. We are going to use our community studies and the vocational studies, which we are already doing but we are certainly going to increase that, and possibly even push for the acceptance of community studies as a TER subject as well.

There is a new subject coming on board, extension studies, and so on. A lot of our students are part time. I visited classrooms yesterday, because we have some students that are disengaging from school and they are on that university pathway, and asked them: 'Why aren't you are managing? What's going wrong?' They say, 'Well, when I get home at 4 o'clock I'm a bit tired, but then I go off and do four hours work three or four nights a week.' So why not incorporate what they are actually doing in the workplace? They are learning. It is a different form of learning but it is still learning. We have to get away from the concept that learning only takes place in the classroom. Why not incorporate that life outside school into what we can offer inside the school and make it an integral part of the curriculum?

Mr SAWFORD—I am very pleased to hear you say that. I would like to hear that point of view given a lot more strongly and from a much wider place. You belong, as I do, to the non-Karmel school of thought that has done VET enormous damage in the last 30 years. But you are not the majority by far; you are the minority. Even though there has been a growth dynamic in VET in this state in the last six years, there is still a hell of a long way to go. You said that with a great deal of passion and conviction. You know as well as I do that in this state you are minority. And people who share those views, like me, are a minority. That needs to change.

Ms George—What drives us is our school is based on a philosophy of developing relationships with our students. By having those relationships you can see how much the system is hurting our kids unless we provide them with true and viable options. That is what pushes us.

Ms Paphitis—You asked what we can do. Being an RTO, we offer certificate IV IT. We have made an arrangement with Uni SA that those kids who do certificate IV IT do not have to go through the normal process of going to university. They have a direct side entrance into university through doing certificate IV.

CHAIR—It is still a very limited example, though, isn't it?

Ms Paphitis—It is, and we want to broaden that. We could broaden that.

Ms George—Uni SA are doing that. They are trying very hard.

CHAIR—How many of your students who aspire to university are doing the VET courses you have here?

Ms Paphitis—Some of them are doing certificate I in employment skills in year 10, and that is all they might do. Others might do a lot more. So there is a variety.

CHAIR—And in year 11?

Mr Kennett—As an example, in year 12, you can get a II in tourism and there will be certain modules that you could do as part of VET.

Ms Paphitis—It varies.

CHAIR—Are there impediments in the system for your students who are aspiring to university? Are there impediments that are stopping them doing these vocational education courses? There are the sorts of issues you have raised. Are many of your students doing these courses?

Mr Kennett—At year 12?

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Paphitis—No.

Ms George—The university pathway is probably still geared around those traditional subjects.

CHAIR—You talked about moving towards embedding more of these vocational areas and competencies in your traditional SACE courses. Isn't there a problem in doing that with recognition by industry? Industry seems to favour more stand-alone courses rather than courses where these competencies are embedded in your general education.

Ms George—The very same courses I am speaking of—horticulture and the electronics—we are delivering this year as stand-alone. But next year we will deliver them as part of either community studies or vocational studies. The course itself will not change. There will be a bit of finessing.

CHAIR—And you are confident that industry will—

Ms George—It is the same course.

Ms Paphitis—And what it means for the kids is dual accreditation—they get SACE certification as well. Rod, you mentioned 30 per cent university students. We had fewer year 12s so the proportion of students who went to university was much higher. This last year it was around the 20 per cent mark.

Mr Kennett—For those students who have absolutely no idea of what they are doing at year 12, if they do a bit of VET in tourism and a bit of VET in hospitality and horticulture, they can go away later, their resulted are recorded and in a couple of years time when they go to TAFE they can say, 'I will specialise in this area or this area,' based on what they have done at year 12.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—By way of background, I come from a senior secondary college in Tasmania where our years 11 and 12 are in these colleges that Rod alluded to. It is the same as the ACT. So that model is quite pronounced in both those areas. I would like to congratulate you on the model you have where you virtually case manage each student. It is so simple. I know it is resource hungry and everything else, but it is absolutely imperative. In Tasmania, the closest we get to that is a thing called—I hate the name—a no dole project. I dislike the name immensely, but the intention is to look at those pathways to ensure that you are on track. The major thing is to monitor what happens afterwards because that obviously affects the way you deliver it. I will make a couple of comments and then ask a couple of specific questions. When you said your students were loath to leave the campus I could not believe it. I thought: that is an extraordinary school you must have there. But it is important that they have to taste the world of work as well, if that is what they choose.

I think it was Alice who talked about assessing students for what skills they actually have rather than the skills that some boards of assessment think they should have, particularly when they are dominated by the universities. That came out in that Flinders study of boys and education. Half the things they are very good at, much better than some of their teachers, are never assessed. Those things are totally ignored. So I think there is certainly a case there. What percentage of females do the Doorways 2 Construction?

Mr Megaw—I would be the happiest person in the world to accept any female into my program. The answer is zero.

Ms George—We have had one.

Mr Megaw—Before I took over the program.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You list the vocational pathway certificates here. To what extent do any of those listed stray from the stereotype of the students you expect to do them?

Ms George—I am sorry, I did not hear the question.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You have a list of certificate courses or choices. Do any of them stray at all from stereotypes? In other words, do more girls do child care, for instance, than boys—if you get any boys at all—and would you expect virtually all those in horticulture to be boys?

Mr Kennett—I think we are getting a reasonable blend, actually. There are more and more girls doing horticulture. We have a good mix in tourism and hospitality.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Do you market it that way? Do you set out to try to break the stereotypes?

Mr Kennett—We will accept anyone who is interested in doing a course.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I did not ask you that. I wondered whether you set out to try to break those stereotypes?

Mr Kennett—No.

Ms Paphitis—We talked before about the relationship stuff. What we have not mentioned is that as students come to us in year 8 they are put it a care group of approximately 15 students and one teacher and they go up with them every year. Because they are small care groups every full-time teaching staff member has a care group, so I have a care group, as does Alice, and we go up with them every year. I have had my care group of about 15—some have gone and others have come in—for four years. They are in year 11. I know them pretty well. I know what their strengths and weaknesses are. I know how to direct them, with their parents, with the families—we meet with them at least four times a year. So we have a very good idea of what we can pull them towards, or push and pull. That is why they are happy to stay at school, because they have built those strong bonds.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So you as principal have your care group and you are able to care for them as any other staff member does?

Ms Paphitis—Yes. I have my secretary to help me when I am not there.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is an excellent model.

Ms Paphitis—The other gorgeous thing is that, as you know, young people communicate very much with phones, with text messaging, so we do a bit of that too when I am not there.

Mr Kennett—There is a huge amount of trust that actually grows between the staff and the students. It is a pretty good place to work. The students seem to appreciate what is done for them.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It leads me to my next question. I am interested in how many of your staff, what proportion, are long-serving staff. Richard has been there for some time.

Mr Megaw—And I am not the longest.

Ms Paphitis—Quite a lot. And what is interesting is that once people come they do not want to go. Very few people leave. For the first time we have stability. We were able to get 13 teachers on contract through School Choice made permanent because we are a disadvantaged level 2 school, if you understand what that means. In other words, we are allowed to take on contracts as permanent people, which is fantastic because it means we can choose our staff. There is nothing like being able to choose your own staff to have committed people focused on the same things and wanting to stay. Very few people want to leave, so it is great. It is a bit of a culture shock when they first come. Once they come in, they can see the philosophy and they can understand it. People who come in sometimes say things like: 'These naughty kids. They need to be put into a time-out room. Get them out of the way.' But we say: 'No, no time-out room—we do not have that. You have to deal with it. You and the care teacher have to work through the issues and change those behaviours.' Now, teachers who have only been there this year come to me and

say: 'I can see why you do things like that. I think it is great.' It takes a while for them to get away from this punitive deficit model to a positive approach of seeing each individual.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Just let me get this right: because you are categorised as division 2 or whatever it was—

Ms Paphitis—It means a high level of disadvantage.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—you have the ability to hire and fire?

Ms Paphitis—Not fire.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—So you had better get the hire right first.

Ms Paphitis—That is right.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Then you ask for this commitment to the ethic of the school?

Ms Paphitis—That is right.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That is very interesting. Who is this pamphlet directed to?

Ms Paphitis—Students and parents and teachers. Why?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I did not find it that friendly—the language of it. That is just me.

Ms Paphitis—We will take that on board.

CHAIR—In this pamphlet you say that structured workplace learning is offered to all students enrolled in a VET course. Is it difficult finding work placements for that many students? Do you work in a cluster arrangement with other schools? Do you work in competition with other schools?

Mr Kennett—We do have a student services officer who will work with the students to find work placements. We also have an extensive amount of training and development for home group teachers on how to help the kids find places.

CHAIR—So the kids have the prime responsibility of finding a placement for themselves?

Mr Kennett—Yes, and it works well. There is lots of time, and we follow it up and we contact parents. A lot of kids leave it to the last minute to find a work placement. Most of them get out and enjoy it and are very successful.

Mr Megaw—My work placement within the program is four weeks. The kids have to do a work placement that is very much directed towards the construction industry. We tend to find that they already have a network, whether it be relatives, parents and/or whatever, where they can at least get one or two work placements out of the way just from their own sourcing.

Because we are a part of Northern Futures Connect, they offer finding one or two weeks of work placement for all of our students. If you then add the Masters Builders Association, which is a source of work placements as well, most of the kids find that through all those strategies they can find a variety of work placements. The kids also work with a builder for 35 days throughout the program. So they are not just learning from me, they are directly learning from a builder. That has to equate for some work placements.

Mr Kennett—We have a big database of employers, particularly people we have partnerships with. We have ex-students and local business people who will take on students quite willingly.

Ms Paphitis—The other reason we took on the Training Prospects people for both horticulture and electronics was that part of the deal was that they find the work placements.

Mr SAWFORD—You have 91 Indigenous students.

Ms Paphitis—Yes, at the last census a week ago.

Mr SAWFORD—That is a significant proportion. Do you do anything different for these students?

Ms George—We have an Aboriginal education worker, and two workers and a teacher, and they do a lot of coordinating of that. They are involved in the tourism and I know they have been involved in a few other programs. But our Aboriginal education teacher takes that on board pretty well and manages that, so they are involved in a variety of programs.

Mr SAWFORD—Links with home?

Ms Paphitis—Are very strong.

Ms George—Absolutely. We have the youth ambassadors reconciliation ball, and Reconciliation SA are talking about that as being a showcase for reconciliation. What happens there is that Indigenous students are partnered by non-Indigenous students. It was called a debutantes ball and is now an ambassadors ball. It is to promote harmony and diversity and to recognise that everyone has their place in our school community. It is actually spread right out—I counted this morning—to 12 or 13 other schools that have now come on board and are involved with us as well. So there is a very strong push to recognise the Indigenous students in our school and to give them successful outcomes as well.

CHAIR—Do you have any extra funding to assist with that or does it just come out of your budget?

Ms Paphitis—No. Through ATSIC we get funding for that. And through our Aboriginal education teacher, who is so resourceful—I do not know where she gets the money but she does, which is great. So we manage that.

CHAIR—ATSIC gives you extra funds?

Ms Paphitis—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Does sport play a big role, particularly for the boys?

Ms Paphitis—Sport is huge. We have a project team. One of the things that kids say, particularly the year 9s—they want to be active and be involved—is that they want more sport. We offer every kind of sport you can think of. Kids self-select. This is lunchtime activities, but obviously we have physical education as part of the curriculum as well.

Mr Kennett—Our fitness leaders course has taken off in the last couple of years. We have had more and more students enrolled in that.

Ms George—That is the Australian Institute of Fitness. It is a fitness leaders course—I think it is certificate II that they offer.

Mr Kennett—Yes, it is. It is very practical. It is lots of fun. The kids enjoy it.

Mr SAWFORD—Are the boys and girls linked with establishing sporting clubs? Do you have links with established sporting clubs?

Ms Paphitis—We should do that better—we do not do that well enough. Our PE staff are relatively new and young and they are building that up, so that is the next step.

Mr Kennett—We will use them in PE classes. We will link with the local bowling club, and tennis people come in. We all use the local rugby club and soccer club, who will come in and do workshops and demonstration lessons.

Ms Paphitis—That is like a one-off thing. We want to expand it.

Mr SAWFORD—The Jason Gillespies and Gavin Wanganeens are often available to come out, aren't they?

Mr Kennett—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I am mainly interested in your school now.

Ms Paphitis—We will invite you to come at any time you like.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I might spend a couple of days or whatever. I am interested in your graduation ceremony—

Ms Paphitis—Speech day.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—and moving on, or whatever you want to call it. Do you separate your senior secondary from your middle secondary?

Ms George—Just last night I stood on the stage in the gym and warmly welcomed the year 10s into the senior school.

Ms Paphitis—Halfway through the year they finish their middle school studies and they go on to the senior school. We had over 280 parents there—this is just for one year level—and all the students that were graduating from year 10 to year 11. That is pretty good. At the same time that was an opportunity for Alice and one of my counsellors to talk about what is offered in the senior school, the pathways.

Ms George—Best of all, they change from the blue top to the white top.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—There is a uniform?

Ms Paphitis—Yes, there is a uniform. It is casual, but there is something.

Mr SAWFORD—I have one question and one request. How effective is the online career information service that you referred to?

Ms Paphitis—It is there.

Mr SAWFORD—How effective is it?

Ms Paphitis—I have not tested it, actually, to find out.

Mr Kennett—It is used a reasonable amount by the student services officer. We will also use it in senior school pastoral care when we look at job investigations and when we are looking at their choices for next year. We are just getting into it.

Ms Paphitis—It is a time of the year, in the next couple of weeks, when we are going into subject counselling and looking at what subjects they are going to be doing next year. So I am expecting that that will be used for care groups.

Mr SAWFORD—I know you have enough on your plate, but this is a request. When we complete this report, we will have a set of recommendations that will go to government. I would like our committee to consider a set of recommendations that you four drafted. Basically they will get responded to by the federal government. Every state government watches them and responds. Sometimes when they get told off they respond quietly, but they do it anyway and do not tell anyone. The recommendations that you would make for successful vocational education in school would be very useful for our committee to consider when we are coming up to develop our recommendations. Alice, I will go back and read your little bit.

Ms George—I am not too sure what I said. I think I was a bit carried away.

Mr SAWFORD—It was very good. You will get a copy of that transcript anyway. I know it is a big ask but, in brief dot points, could you give us a bit of guidance on where you believe the recommendations should go. I am interested in how you see it, not how you think someone else should see it. If you want to put it in an anonymous fashion and do not want it attributed, that is fine too.

Ms Paphitis—That is fine. By the way, I forgot to mention that Brendan Nelson has been the keynote speaker for the Aboriginal reconciliation ball for the last two years and wants to be there next year. He is very keen.

CHAIR—It would be helpful if you could respond to Rod's request.

Ms Paphitis—We will do that.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. You are doing some great things. Keep up the good work. We would like to keep talking, but we will miss the plane if we do.

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

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 3.08 p.m.